

Episode 20. Kids and Santa, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth ...

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

santa, tooth fairy, christmas, parents, questions, rhys, kids, felt, family, real, attribute, children, talk, magic, friends, sense, darth vader, scarred, party, handle

SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Future Focused Parenting, Kira Dorrian

- K** Kira Dorrian 00:02
What happens when two parent coaches, one a Christian and the other 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. Hi, everybody. Welcome back to Raising Adults podcast, Kira and Deana here. And we're talking today about some fun, some fun stuff. And we've just had a couple of months ago, the holiday season. And so we thought it would be great to talk about all the ways that parents handle these things. So today, I want to just give you a really important heads up and disclaimer that you might want to listen without your children, because we're going to

have a pretty open dialogue about how families handle Santa and the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy. Are there other ones I'm missing?

K

Kira Dorrian 00:49

I don't think so.

D

Deana Thayer 00:49

Okay.

K

Kira Dorrian 00:50

So we'll give you a moment to hit pause and remove your children and while, while you do that, we will let you know what the attribute of the month is for February. So attribute for the month of February is generosity and not just generosity of resources, but also generosity of spirit. And it coincides so beautifully because next week on February 11, we are actually having our first guests on the show, we are welcoming Brad and Drew Formsma, who wrote a book called I Like Giving, and they are a father and son duo actually, who just talk about how generosity can truly transform a family's perspective, a family dynamic. It's very cool. We're excited to have them on board. So be sure to listen to next week, February 11. That episode is gonna just be awesome. And so it just ties in so nicely with the attribute of the month - generosity. And if you haven't signed up already, you can sign up to our newsletter. It's pretty cool. Every month we send you a newsletter with a value and an attribute attached to it. And we talk about the definition of that attribute. We give a great quote. For families with a faith paradigm there's a scripture. And then we also talk about activities that you can do to help foster this attribute with your kids, resources, like books, you can read with them, books you can read as the parent, we also look at ways that you can model this attribute as a family. It's pretty in depth and robust. And we're really excited about it. So if you haven't signed up yet, you can go to futurefocusedparenting.com/shop, it's totally free. It's at the very top of the shop section. And you can click on that, and register. We take your email address and your name, and just a smidge of information about your family, mostly so that we can get a sense of who our listeners are. But we don't share that with anyone.

D

Deana Thayer 02:37

I just love that you used the word robust when you were describing that because those of you who have already registered will have seen that this is true. But for those of you who haven't signed up yet, you should first of all, but it's really comprehensive, because there's

things for the parents, but also ways that you're going to impart this value to your children. And even the fact that it's monthly. I like that. It's not so overwhelming as getting something every single week, gives you a chance to really dive deep into that particular attribute. See what resonates with your particular family, how you would model that for your children, help instill it in them, even whether it's one of the ones that ends up making your top 10 or not. So I just really encourage you to check that out. It's totally free and it comes right to your email inbox.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:21

Yep. Awesome. Okay, so hopefully everybody has safely tucked their children away. And so this is a topic...we're going to talk about Santa, we're going to talk about the Easter Bunny, we're going to talk about the tooth fairy. And it is a topic where we are so different. And you know, what is really fascinating is we're also different, okay, so in our family, there's a question about whether God is real, but there's not in your family. But in our family, all those fun friends are real, but they're not in yours.

D

Deana Thayer 03:52

Correct.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:53

So that's an interesting little twisty twist as well.

D

Deana Thayer 03:57

So we decided to do this topic because Deana... actually I posted on Facebook. We were having a Santa issue, I actually think Rhys has figured it out and is like, on a subconscious level testing. Which is why he made this absurd request last Christmas for - this one that just passed - for a real Pokemon in a wish box that would grant all his wishes from Santa. And, and Dave and I were like, what the fuck are we gonna do about that? That is a tall order. It is. And we came up with a really good solution to this problem, which I can talk about later. But you saw the post and you wrote to me and were like, whoa, hold the phone. Santa is real in your house? And so it sparked this whole conversation and you had a million questions, which is a nice flip, A little role reversal.

K

Kira Dorrian 04:48

A little role reversal. So we were like, okay, well, let's just talk about it. That's kind of fun.

- D** Deana Thayer 04:52
Yeah, I was glad you suggested that. She said, Well, why don't we just do an episode on it because I actually texted her offline, off the social media platform of your post. I was like, I'm confused. Why don't you just tell him it's not a thing? So that was really hilarious. It sparked quite a conversation. So now we get to have the conversation in front of you all.
- K** Kira Dorrian 05:09
Yes, exactly. So what are your questions?
- D** Deana Thayer 05:12
Well, I mostly want to go chronologically because I'm Captain order pants. So I just want to know how it started. You just, did you say that there was Santa?
- K** Kira Dorrian 05:23
You realize you're the anomaly here, right? Like most of our listeners probably tell their kids that Santa is real.
- D** Deana Thayer 05:31
And the thing is, I grew up believing in Santa.
- K** Kira Dorrian 05:34
Right. So we're gonna have to talk about that. It started gosh, I don't even...well, I need to explain my why around this because I actually have a really strong why.
- D** Deana Thayer 05:43
So do I. So we should probably talk about that.
- K** Kira Dorrian 05:45
Okay, so you have to understand that growing up as a Jewish child, in a Christmas focused culture is really hard. You are, it's sort of like, the whole city is having a party that you're not invited to. And they're going to spend a whole month talking about that party, celebrating that party. There's gonna be inside jokes and songs and merriment, and you

weren't invited to the party. And so as a Jewish kid, you're raised, you know, see, I had the flip. I was raised, Santa is not real, because we're Jews, and here's the truth and blah, blah, blah. And so, that was really hard. I felt other, I felt alone. I was bored.

D Deana Thayer 06:33

Did you have resentment about that? Oh, yeah, I have deep resentment because I begged my dad, I was like, look, can't we just have a Christmas tree? Like half of it's not even Christian anymore, which I know drives you crazy, which makes total sense. But as a non Christian, it was like, can we just have a tree? Like everyone's houses are so beautiful and and then here's the other piece that's really important and funny, given that we've kind of just come out of our Christmas season, as a Jew. You're watching like all these movies and commercials. And so you're sort of led to believe that something really magical is happening on Christmas Day in those homes. Like there is something magical and you're missing, you are missing it. And so I have to tell you my first Christmas with Dave, I was like, so, so when is the magic gonna happen? Like, I was really surprised that it's just another day, like you're with your family, and that's lovely. But I was sort of like, oh, I was sort of expecting like, I don't know what. Like me always gonna be like, magical snow in the house. Fascinating.

K Kira Dorrian 07:38

I mean, it's just, it's ridiculous. And of course, like, on some level, I knew that wasn't the case. But I mean, I, there's no other way to describe it. Just imagine if like, every single year there was this huge party and you weren't invited. You would just develop ideas about what that, what's happening at that party.

D Deana Thayer 07:53

That makes perfect sense.

K Kira Dorrian 07:53

Right. So I had a lot of resentment that. I mean, they wouldn't let me decorate. I was like can we put up Hanukkah lights now? We're Jews. Jews don't celebrate Christmas. This was like, you know, and my dad - bless him - was making probably the right decision. To be honest with you if I had married a Jewish man, I don't know what we would have done. And I understand his reasoning especially given that we are like, within touching distance of Holocaust survivors, there is a, there's a deep need of the descendants of Holocaust survivors and my generation to, to preserve this religion. So that to the side, I, I would say I

was a little bit traumatized by that entire experience. So when I married this Christian man, I went all in for Christmas. I love Christmas. And, and so when we had the kids, I wanted them to have that magic. Because to me, it was like I was denied that magic and by the time I was exposed to it, it was too late. Right?

D

Deana Thayer 08:52

Yeah, you're an adult. And yeah.

K

Kira Dorrian 08:54

And I think also for a lot of adults, what is magical for them about their adult Christmas are the memories that came with their childhood Christmas. Now that doesn't have to include Santa, but so many families that's a part of it. So that was our, my why, was really like, I want my kids to have the magic I didn't have.

D

Deana Thayer 09:14

So I do have a why, and it's a strong why, but it's also kind of a delicate why. So I'm just gonna say that due to past circumstances I'm very, very sensitive to dishonesty. And for me, this felt like lying to my kids. And I was just absolutely unwilling to do that.

K

Kira Dorrian 09:33

Yeah, I mean, I think that actually makes a ton of sense. And I think a lot of families and this is certainly where we're at is like, okay, how do I unravel this now that I've created this situation? And so we, we had the tooth fairy come to fruition first, and it's always Rhys. It's so interesting, like, they're both so smart and bright and, and different, right. And this is just one of the areas that he is really switched, super dialed in. He's super dialed in. So he said to me, this was like, I want to say this was like nine months ago. He said to me, Mommy, I have a question. He just lost a tooth, and we put it under the pillow. And he said, Mommy, I have a question. And I need you to be honest. And want you to look me in the eyes and be honest. And so at that point in my head, I was like, if he asks me outright, I'm going to be honest, because I am like you in that. Once we had set this, I was like, as soon as they ask me straight out, I will tell them the truth. I will not like, perpetuate. Yeah, that's doesn't feel right to me. So when we do a lot of creative answering, what do you think? Right? We do a lot of that. But it was like if I get a direct, be honest, tell me the truth. I'm going to tell them the truth. So he says, tell me the truth. Look me in the eyes. Don't lie to me. Do you take money out of my wallet and put it under my pillow when the tooth fairy comes in? And I was like, no, I do not take money out of your wallet and put it under

your pillow, because I don't. And then he let it go. The next time he lost a toothe, he said, Mommy, I have a question. I want you to look me in the eyes. And don't lie to me. Are you the tooth fairy? And at that point, I was like, alright, there's no way around, right? So I said, well, do you really want me to answer that question? And he said, yes. And I said, okay, yes, I am the tooth fairy. And he took this long pause. Rhys is really good with the long pauses. So he took this long pause. And he said, wow, mommies and daddies do so much for us.

D

Deana Thayer 11:39

Awww...

K

Kira Dorrian 11:39

And I was like, I know, leave it to him to be like that. Anyway, so I said, yeah. And then he took another pause. And he said, but why do you lie to us? And I said, well, mommies and daddies and parents want their children's childhoods to be as magical as possible. And so that is part of the magic. And he kind of nodded. And I said, are you sad that you know? And he said a little bit. And I said, yeah, I get that. That makes sense to me. And I said, but here's the cool part is now you get to be a part of that magic for other kids. And so for the kids who still believe you get to be a part of keeping that magic.

D

Deana Thayer 12:20

That's what I was gonna ask you. See I have a million questions. Okay. Is that then, how did you protect Rhiannon?

K

Kira Dorrian 12:25

But it has been amazing because he has been the best little actor in the world. So he loses a tooth. And he like, you know, he puts the thing under his pillow. Rhiannon, look! A dollar from the tooth fairy, like he goes all in and then when she loses a tooth, we'd let him help us put the dollar, and be a part of that.

D

Deana Thayer 12:45

That's cute.

K

Kira Dorrian 12:46

So it's been actually pretty amazing. And I'm assuming that's how we'll handle Santa because like I said, he, he knows and he's just really, so in all likelihood, it's going to go the same way. He's going to be the first one and then have to help protect it for her, yeah, unless some kid says something, you know, at school or....and I actually think Santa, he's going to be devastated by the Santa news. He will not be quite as devastated by Santa as finding out that Darth Vader is not real because he's met Darth Vader. And that was the other thing, like, we took them to Disneyland when they were four. And it was miraculous to watch these little people. I mean, they are immersed in this magic. So that's sort of how we've handled it. And he's adorable. Like when we're out in the world. We've been out with friends before and one of the kids lost a tooth and, and he looked at the mom and was like, oh, I guess the tooth fairy's coming tonight and winked at her. Wink, wink. So he's really gotten into it. He's been, he's been delightful about it. But like I said, this was the first year where I kind of knew this was our last year with Santa. I just had a funny feeling about it and and so when he asked for this absurd thing, I was so grateful. I got together with some of my mom friends and we like collaborated to write a note from Santa. And my friend Tracy actually, like hand wrote this note in like, oh, red crayon for Santa, which my friend Stephanie had crayons in her bag. I was like, everyone was just so prepared and they had no idea I was gonna ask this. It was just, you know, moms and crayons.

D

Deana Thayer 14:13

So it was a collaborative effort. So what was the solution? Because that is a wild request.

K

Kira Dorrian 14:19

Right? A pokemon in a wish box that will grant all the wishes.

D

Deana Thayer 14:22

Right, it's really next level.

K

Kira Dorrian 14:23

And we have talked about the fact that wishes are hopes, and that not all of them come true, but that putting them out there as a hope is a wonderful thing to do. So we came up with a card that said something to the effect of, you asked for a wish box. Inside this box, you'll find the only kind of Pokemon that can live in our world. And it was a, like a Pikachu that makes noise and talks and stuff like that. And he said, use this wish box to fill with

your hopes. But bear in mind that wishes are hopes and I cannot grant them all. My love and magic will be with you always. Santa. And he seemingly bought it, but it's so hard with him to know. Because then he has these moments where I'm like, I don't know if he, I think he wants to buy it. And he's making himself buy it if that makes sense. You know, like, I'm kind of watching him grapple with this. And but yeah, and so that's sort of how we've handled Santa and the tooth fairy And then the Easter Bunny, we have a big cul de sac Easter egg hunt every year with like, hundreds of eggs and like 16 kids come out running and it's, it's epic. And so they've progressively asked questions about like, you know, you know, do you put the eggs out there? And we've always said, what do you think you know, we try our best to kind of deflect, deflect, deflect, but again, I have a feeling. I have a feeling we're gonna get the harder questions this year.

D

Deana Thayer 15:45

The jig will be up soon.

K

Kira Dorrian 15:46

Yeah. Yeah. So I'm curious, because I think this piece is really important because I don't remember how this was communicated to me. How did you, by making that choice which makes a lot of sense to me, how did you explain to your children to keep that quiet from other kids? Because I think if you're going to make that choice, there is a responsibility then to teach them how how to play along and why they're playing along, which is complicated, too. So yeah, talk about that a little bit.

D

Deana Thayer 16:17

Yeah, we did just, I didn't do a great job of this at first, because I guess I didn't really think about it until they, because I was homeschooling. So they weren't really around a bunch of other kids. But once they were in a school setting, I was like, oh, hold the phone. We've got to make a plan. There's, they're going to be surrounded by other people who possibly believe this. So we kind of did a two fold thing. The first one was very similar to you. I said, you know something that a lot of other children don't know. And you don't want to wreck what they believe. We don't want to wreck that for anyone. I mean, think of the disappointment. I mean, I actually, I have to out myself here. I'm the one who wrecked it for my stepdaughter. And I just didn't know that she was right by me while I was talking to Scott and we were dating at the time. And I felt terrible, and she was nine. So you have to be so careful. So I kind of overstated like really, really be careful, like, maybe we just don't even talk about that at school. That's totally fine. And if you hear somebody else you just, you don't have to add. You don't have to join into the conversation, because it only takes

a couple slips of the tongue. I speak from experience. That was a very ouchie.... I'm impressed he still married me. Actually, it was really disappointing. So anyway, that was one thing is that I kind of encouraged them to not talk too much about Christmas at all, which was pretty easy. I was really blessed that when they first went to school, they were in a Montessori. So there were so many different cultural paradigms and also different belief systems. So Christmas was not highlighted like it is in the surrounding general culture, if that makes sense. It was just more, we take a winter break. They didn't even, it wasn't a Christmas break. It wasn't anything like that. But I did talk to them about not talking to other people. And then the second piece of it though, was if they ever get asked point blank, because kids will do that. I mean, they will, they're stinkers like that. I always said you refer them to their family. So you know, that's something for you to talk about with your parents. And they did get asked a few times and have to do that. Oh, that's a, that's a discussion for families. So that's how we did it. And I don't think they wrecked it for anybody, but I might have to circle back and ask. I don't remember, but I don't think they ruined it. I have ruined it for my own stepdaughter. But...

K

Kira Dorrian 18:25

Well, funny story. So we have some friends that, Rhys became friendly with the little boy, and both are Star Wars fans. And this family...we just sort of met them through school and so we haven't known them very long, but I know them well enough to know that they're atheists. And so they also have taken your path of you know, from the get go, that's just a story that people tell as part of the Christmas magic for some families, blah, blah, blah, but they've always told their kid that Santa was not real. So funny story. He, this little boy and Rhys were playing Star Wars and they're a huge star wars family and I did not know that. And Rhys mentioned, as you said, just a couple slips of the tongue. And I had not thought to prepare him for this, says something about Darth Vader being Luke's father. And, I mean, again, it just never - I'm not a big Star Wars person - never occurred to me that you have to protect that. And so I guess, she came up to the car and she was so lovely and so funny about it, but she's like, yeah, my husband is not speaking to you anymore. And I was like, oh my gosh, what did I do? And she explained what had happened. And she said, you know, we were like, waiting to show him the movies because there's this thing on YouTube where you can video your child watching the scene, where Darth Vader gives the big reveal. Luke, I am your father... their reaction to finding out on YouTube and they had been waiting till he was old enough to do it and my kid fucked it up. So I was like, I am so sorry. I'm so sorry. And I said it, when the time comes, if you would like your son to tell mine that Santa is not not real I am okay with that. It was so awful. So it's, it's you have to be so thoughtful as a parent, right? You kind of have to think about.

D Deana Thayer 20:08
Look at all the things we have to be careful about!

K Kira Dorrian 20:12
I know.

D Deana Thayer 20:13
So I should say what we did do. I mean, I'm kind of boring. There isn't much of a story because I wasn't, all this keeping the magic. But I did tell them about St. Nicholas, who was a real person, was later sainted, and what he did, and making wooden toys for the children. So we talked a lot about that. And then we went and visited...we live in Washington State, and there's a Bavarian village only a few hours away called Leavenworth. And we went there and they actually have someone dressed up as St. Nicholas, and he even in the town gives out apples to the children, which is one of the things St. Nicholas used to do. So we told them, hey, this is a this was a real person, but here's what it's become and what people do with it and their families. And so they at least knew that part. But the rest, we were very real about, I never even put on a gift tag that it was from Santa. And part of that also came from - not that this is part of my why, I'm not like residually upset at my parents or anything - but I was pretty scarred when I found out. And so my parents did the whole 'from Santa' on the tag and let us believe in it for a long time and I actually caught them wrapping gifts late on Christmas Eve.

K Kira Dorrian 21:17
y biggest fear this past Christmas was I was like, you know, they go to bed later. They don't always like just pass out the way they used to. And I was like eating the cookies, like horrified that one of them was going to come down.

D Deana Thayer 21:30
Yeah. And we did all that too, set out the cookies and milk. And so when I caught them red handed instead of it being this lovely conversation where you had this chance to just address a question, it was, it was kind of traumatizing for me and I thought I also don't want to do that.

K Kira Dorrian 21:44

So let me ask you just out of curiosity, because I think a lot of our listeners that have been doing the Santa thing would be curious, like as someone who was scarred by that. What do you, how would you have liked them to handle it? If they did go ahead with the Santa, like would you prefer that they headed it off at the pass and sat you down one year and said, look, we need to tell you something? Would you? You know, like, obviously getting caught is the least desirable. Yeah, you know, but is there a way that you would have wanted that handled?

D

Deana Thayer 22:15

Well, it's so hard because I think this is also a little bit dependent on the child to. Some are going to be only seven like Rhys, already asking questions. I wasn't that way. But I also think for some families that might not feel good to preemptively wreck it so to speak, because maybe they had a couple years left of their child believing. I can say, of course, my first preference would have been they just never did it. But my second preference probably would have been a conversation at maybe eight or nine. Hey, you're old enough. Now we'd like to let you in on something. So it made me feel special and kind of like I was earning a privilege almost because I was old enough to know, but not where I had to just find out in a yucky way. I probably would have appreciated the heads up.

K

Kira Dorrian 23:01

Yeah, no, that makes sense.

D

Deana Thayer 23:02

And it's so hard to know what's the right age? Right?

K

Kira Dorrian 23:04

And what's right for your kid? I mean, yeah, it's a great example of like, like I said, I was sort of traumatized by not having the experience, but it's different because it's not the same as your kids. I doubt they've been traumatized by it, because they've had the Christmas and they, they're at the party.

D

Deana Thayer 23:17

Let me tell you, not only are they not traumatized, my daughter is actually giving a speech on why we should not tell our kids that Santa is real. They have this as a topic in her rhetoric class right now. And they got to pick which side they're on. I think she's the

only one, maybe there's one other student doing everyone else is pro. So she's, she, at least personally is not only not scarred, she's like an advocate for like, let's be honest, and it's hilarious to see. I mean, she's only 16. But she's, she's hard in the camp of no thanks. So it's just, when she told me that I was like, oh, bless your heart. So well, I don't think I've wrecked her.

K

Kira Dorrian 23:53

No. Oh, and I'm sure you haven't. I mean, and again, it's like they're at the party. They just don't get the chocolate fountain or whatever. Like they're still celebrating Christmas. And it's funny because, you know, I think one of the things that, that having the mothering experience as a kid did was like when I married a Christian, it was like, I felt like it was like almost a ticket in to the party, if that makes sense. And which is one of the reasons we talked about this in the episode where we talked about what happened when we went to church. Like, I think that I had assumed that somehow we were, we had a golden ticket that we clearly don't have, but I got into all of it. So like Santa photos, I wanted my, you know, the tradition. I wanted all the Christmasy things that I had seen in other homes, and I wanted it exactly like that. And now I sometimes look at it, and I'm like, is this what I really want? Or is this just like a ramification of the experience I had? Does that make sense? Like, is it who I am? Or is it some kind of response to my eight year old self? That maybe as an almost forty year old isn't, isn't actually appropriate? Does that make sense? Yeah, I'm still really unpacking what all that means. But I will say we have Santa photos every year. And Rhiannon this year was like, Santa looks different in all these photos. And I was like, uh-huh. Why is that? I said, well, you know, you change hairstyle and Santa sometimes does too. And you know, but we're, we're definitely like coming out. I like I said, I think this was our last. Our last one. Did you take the kids to Santa photos?

D

Deana Thayer 25:29

No. Because I was also really scarred by that. Yeah, I always cried. I did not like strangers. I could not understand why I was thrust onto the lap of someone I didn't know. I literally never did that. And again, I mean, it there, we all operate based on the experiences we bring to the table. So I recognize like you said at the top of the episode, I am in the way minority and I recognize that, but I have very real reasons for being over here. Yeah, so that's, yeah, no, we did not do that.

K

Kira Dorrian 25:57

Okay, well, we hope you enjoyed our conversation about all things make believe. Deana has a quote for us today.



Deana Thayer 26:05

Yes, and it's so perfect because I want to just recognize that you all just have to make the decision that feels right for your family, and just be real and authentic. So this is a great quote, quote to remember in case you feel like maybe you've mishandled it. There is no such thing as a perfect parent. So just be a real one. And that quote is by Sue Atkins.



Kira Dorrian 26:25

All right, so if you have any questions, or you want to send us some ideas for a spincycle, or an episode, you can email info@futurefocusedparenting.com. And if you want to sign up for that attribute of the month, futurefocusedparenting.com and click on the shop button. And just a reminder to all of our listeners that next week we have Brad and Drew Formsma on the show talking about their book *I Like Giving* and how generosity and giving can transform your family. So be sure to listen to that next week, February 11. Don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Our handle is [@raisingadultspodcast](https://www.instagram.com/raisingadultspodcast). Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer, and recorded in my laundry room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 27:07

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