

Episode 95. Fostering A Love Of Reading

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SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Kira Dorrian, Future Focused Parenting



Deana Thayer 00:00

I think of reading as like the key that unlocks this amazing door. And so why wouldn't we want to help our kids unlock that door? And the reason I say that it's the key first to education and then to life is, if you have a child who struggles in math say, it's pretty isolated to how they interact with numbers or how they handle functions and equations. When you have a child who struggles with reading, they're now hindered in a subject like math, because maybe they can't read the story problem, or they're hindered in history because they can't read the textbook or understand those questions about social issues. And so we really kind of cripple kids if we don't pay attention to this reading issue, because it's really the gateway to unlocking all the other school subjects. And then I think later that translates into it's really the gateway to life. How do you think critically about things? How do you read and learn about social issues or politics or faith issues, or any number of things that comes through reading.



Future Focused Parenting 01:00

Welcome to Raising Adults, the groundbreaking parenting podcast that starts with the end in mind. We're your co hosts DeanaThayer, and Kira Dorrian. We created Future Focused Parenting to take families from surviving to thriving. So join us as we help you stop raising kids and start Raising Adults.

K

Kira Dorrian 01:23

Well, hi, everyone and welcome back to Raising Adults podcast. We are so happy to have you here with us in the laundry room office combo pack that that is our existence now. So thrilled to have you with us for another week. Deana, how's it going in your life this week?

D

Deana Thayer 01:43

Things are good. I am going to share with our listeners just this hilarious moment I'm having. I was just telling Kira about. Before we record we do a lot of interesting things to get the sound to be good. Because the truth is while Kira and I used to be together in her laundry room, the truth is she's made it into quite a functional studio. I mean, there's soundproofing foam, and there's this great high quality microphone and the soundboard I mean this all the things and here I am at home with my laptop. And she's given me this amazing microphone to use that's kind of portable, and I can just plug it in. But we've often found like, I definitely sound different not being in the laundry room/recording studio. And so today, the experiment of the day is I have angled throw pillows into the corner of the desk to provide my own soundproofing foam. So I'm currently talking into pillows, Kira, but I'm great, but thanks for asking!

K

Kira Dorrian 02:37

Can you please tell everyone how this is an upgrade from what you were doing? A few weeks ago you had quite the system going on!

D

Deana Thayer 02:44

Yeah, before I actually commandeered my daughter's room when she went back to college. Before this. I was in my bedroom, on the carpet, talking into the corner while laying on my stomach. So that I was close enough to the microphone and the carpet to reduce the echo and it was really not sustainable.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:09

The gymnastics you've had to do to even like remotely have decent quality audio. So I'm thrilled, I think you sound really good today. So I'm hoping the throw pillow are the answer.

D

Deana Thayer 03:20

Well, if anything, no one can question my commitment to high quality sound on rats. As I speak into the pillows.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:28

That's right. Dina doesn't do anything by halves.

D

Deana Thayer 03:32

Hundred percent or nothing over here, guys, I'll lay on my tummy if I have to.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:36

Oh, my gosh, I love it. Didn't we have a day where we had like two or three recordings? We had an interview and we had to do an episode and you were like on your stomach for an hour and a half.

D

Deana Thayer 03:46

Oh, yeah. I was not loving that afterwards. I'm just not as young as I once was. So laying on his stomach for hours, just not ideal. I'm just gonna be honest.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:58

You are a trooper, we love you. Well, listeners, we have a super fun episode today. And it's fun for both of us, because Deana and I both just love to read and read all the time. So it's definitely something as parents that we were very passionate about. But we are not reading experts. So we want to just be clear that like, we are big readers, and we have raised big readers. And so we just want to share some of the things that we did that might be helpful if this is an area that your family might be struggling with a little bit. But we are by no means experts on the topic though. I think you know, some of the things that we want to share today really can be helpful and aren't necessarily things that parents always think about when they think about helping their kids foster a love of reading.

D

Deana Thayer 04:40

That's exactly right. Thanks for highlighting that. We're not experts. That's definitely true of me. But I do at the same time think there are things we can do proactively. And I also think the timing of this is really great this Fall because we're in a really unique year. And I think parents feel like they, in many cases, have very little control over, well, over most of

their life, if we're being honest, but especially over their child's education right now. And yet, here's an area where we can really be intentional and proactive. All those things that you and I talk about is this area of reading. So here's maybe a piece, you can have some control over. And you can help to foster a love of reading. And if you can't get there at least proficiency in reading. And so in this time, where we feel so out of control in so many ways, I think it's refreshing and encouraging when we find things where we're like, you know, but that I can do.

K

Kira Dorrian 05:31

Mm hmm. I totally agree. And in fact, I would say, you know, I have one child who reads kind of like I do, like, literally, I cannot keep up with this child. I cannot get books in the house fast enough. But my other one reads well, but I wouldn't say loved reading until COVID. And just being stuck in the house and like, limited activities would just start reaching for a book and now is really into it. And so I do think you're right that like this is a time where we have an opportunity to actually foster that more than when we're like out and about and running around and activities galore. There's some time and space to really look at this. So it's kind of a good time to be thinking about it.

D

Deana Thayer 06:11

Absolutely. So as always, we should start with our why. So Kira, what is your why for reading

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Kira Dorrian 06:19

I mean, I guess I have a big why in a little why. And I would say my big why is maybe not what should be my big why of those two. So anyway, I'll actually say what they are so that I don't sound like an idiot. So my big why is that I love reading because it takes me somewhere else. It is my me time. It is my escape. It allows me to explore areas of interest in a way that's fun and engaging. I remember being in college and reading Harry Potter and it was like, it was like the whole world fell away when I read that book. And I loved that feeling. And that's how I feel when I read. And so I wanted my kids to have that, to have this place where they can go and escape and find joy and meaning and explore and just have the joy that I know can come from that if they're comfortable and confident readers. The second why, which again, probably should be the bigger why but I'm going to be honest, it's not, is that all the studies out there, show that being a strong reader is really helpful. It's helpful. And we know that to be true, that like literacy affects a whole bunch of different things. And so I just wanted to give my kids the opportunity to be as literate as possible. And I think it's such a wonderful way we learn. I learn so much just from reading.

And I would say I read predominantly fiction and I still learn so much because you're just engaging with all these different topics that you wouldn't necessarily otherwise and the use of imagination and all of that, like it's just so good for our souls. And so I just really wanted that for Rhys and Rhiannon. How about you?

D

Deana Thayer 07:53

Well, those are fantastic. Mine is really similar. So my why is this I think reading is the gateway to first education and second life. And to kind of use an analogy, I think of reading as like the key that unlocks this amazing door. And so why wouldn't we want to help our kids unlock that door. And the reason I say that it's the key first to education and then to life is if you have a child who struggles in math, say, it's pretty isolated to how they interact with numbers or how they handle functions and equations. When you have a child who struggles with reading, they're now hindered in a subject like math, because maybe they can't read the story problem, or they're hindered in history because they can't read the textbook or understand those questions about social issues. And so we really kind of cripple kids if we don't pay attention to this reading issue, because it's really the gateway to unlocking all the other school subjects. And then I think later that translates into it's really the gateway to life. How do you think critically about things? How do you read and learn about social issues, or politics or faith issues, or any number of things that comes through reading, not to mention just the practical of you've got to be able to read signs and traffic signals and all of these things, right? So to me, it's just such a key. And to carry that analogy further, it's also why I think if this is an area where there's a challenge, it is really worth getting some help because if your child is struggling to find that key, or maybe they've got the key, but they're having trouble unlocking the door, we want to get them a tour guide who can help or a locksmith who can help unlock that for them because this is a life skill that will serve them well into adulthood and really until they can't use their eyes well anymore. So to me, it just the importance of it almost can't be overstated. And it's also just such a wonderful gateway to so many experiences like you described. It's like traveling without a plane ticket. It's amazing.

K

Kira Dorrian 09:56

That's a great way of putting it and like traveling outside of Earth right? You can go to places that don't even exist when you read. Oh, I love that. That's so great. Okay, so I'm thinking, let's start with like maybe talking about some of the foundational things that we can do as parents and that you and I did. And then maybe like once they're actually capable of reading, are there other things that help that go from just I'm capable of it into I love to do it? Does that sound good?

D

Deana Thayer 10:25

Yeah.

K

Kira Dorrian 10:26

So I can start with one of the first things that we did, because I think everyone knows you're supposed to read to your kids, right? Like everyone says that: just read to them, read to them, read to them. So we did that. But the other thing I did when my kids were small, that I think was really effective, was how we handled the car. So I did a lot of audiobooks in the car. And so we didn't do electronics in the car. And instead, they had in the backseat books. And then they had read along books. So Disney makes these read along books that I don't know what people would do now, because it comes with a CD. So maybe it comes with a download now, I don't know, but they're amazing. And they're not expensive. They're like \$4. And it's got a story and the audio book. And so I'd play the audio book, and the kids would have the book in the back. So they're kind of following along. And there's a little chime to turn the page and they started to just engage with, okay, here's what I'm hearing, here's what I'm seeing. And it just gave us extra reading time throughout the day where I wasn't reading to them. I mean, obviously we did that too. But they were just engaged in stories and storytelling, and it just used our car time really, really well. So that's definitely one of the things that we did when they were small.

D

Deana Thayer 11:39

I love that. And I love remembering because I used to do those books where it was the noise when it was time to turn the page. I mean, even when I was a little kid that's so fun. Well, we were really pretty lucky because the school my kids were at did a great job with the foundational building blocks of reading. And I got to carry this at home, because we actually got to bring home a set of these cards. So what they did is we learned the 71 phonograms of English before there was ever any reading. So we learned all the sounds of not just the alphabet letters but of some of the diphthongs and consonant blends and things that are two letters or three letters or even four letters together. And so that was really great. We would kind of play games with the phonogram cards and you know make them into almost like flashcards, how fast can we get through. And we even made up a little story for some of the longer ones, one of them has six sounds! And so we had a little story we would tell for the six sounds. And so that was really fun. So this is the this is the story for phonogram o-u-g-h which the sounds are o, oo, uff, off, ah, ow. And so I would tell them the story about a woman who had a white couch, and her dog was named Ough (uff). And she was really careful with this white couch and she loved it. And one day Ough went outside and it was raining and Ough came in and what do you know, jumped on the white couch. And here is what she said, "Oh! Ooh! Ough! Off! Ah! Ow!" And so there you

go. We made it as fun as we could.

K

Kira Dorrian 13:19

Oh, my goodness, I just love you. I mean, you have sung on this show

D

Deana Thayer 13:25

I've read a story...

K

Kira Dorrian 13:26

You know what you haven't done yet? You haven't done a dance. I really think we need to find a way to get you to do like an interpretive dance for our listeners, because that's amazing. Thank you for sharing that. That's so cool, though. But like what a great way to just take something seemingly kind of...not boring, but you know, really straightforward and turning it into something fun.

D

Deana Thayer 13:46

Oh, yeah, you're allowed to say boring. I mean, my kids entered this school at a grade where the other students had been doing this for two years. And so it was part of my job to catch them up. And I think it could have been really tedious. So you have to do what you have to do, right?

K

Kira Dorrian 14:00

Did you write that story?

D

Deana Thayer 14:02

No, no, no, I did not. I did not.

K

Kira Dorrian 14:05

You just performed it with glee.

D

Deana Thayer 14:07

I just performed it with joy and with intention. And I really meant it when I told it. No, I learned it in training for how to train through this particular phonogram program. But I did my own interpretive explanation on it with my kids, which just makes it fun. Now you're right. It would be great if I could do an interpretive jig, although none of you would see it and it'd be right into the pillows.

K

Kira Dorrian 14:29

I mean, we have social media Deana. It's possible.

D

Deana Thayer 14:32

I suppose.

K

Kira Dorrian 14:33

You know, I think there's something to this though about, you know, the Montessori way of learning is that right? You learn the sounds instead of the letters. And I do think there's something to be said in those young years of exploring alternative ways to help your kids engage with what they're seeing and connecting to those sounds that isn't necessarily just that straightforward ABCD and I think that's a really great point that you've brought up that there is a way to make it fun and there is a way to kind of come outside of the traditional box we're used to, to help kids engage with those sounds.

D

Deana Thayer 15:03

That's exactly it.

K

Kira Dorrian 15:04

But we are going to take a little break, and then we'll come back and talk more about what do you do once they are reading to help them love it. So we'll be right back. Well FFPs, we just want to take a quick minute to tell you about our membership program, if you haven't had a chance to check it out, we want to let you know that we have membership available, we want you to become a part of the FFP family. And we've got three different ways for you to engage in membership. And at that very, very top tier, which I'm going to be honest, has been the most popular, you actually get a monthly Q&A with us, which is pretty cool. So you get like all the stuff from the first two tiers, which includes some free stuff and some discounts on our programs. But at that top tier, you actually get all of our online programs for free. And you get this Q&A with us once a

month, you get to hop on a zoom call with us, ask questions, and we give you some parent coaching, like right there and then in the middle of a zoom call. But if you're interested in one of those other tiers, the middle tier gives you access to an amazing library of audio and video, little snippets that we've created that are just about five minutes long, where we take each parenting topic that we love to talk about and just break it down into here's your quick tips in and out in less than five minutes. And then in that first tier, really what you're doing is saying that you think that our content is valuable, that first tier is just a little bit of money every month that helps our show grow, that helps us continue to bring you content. And it's just a way of showing us that what we do here at Future Focused Parenting matters to you. So that's a great way to get involved, too.

D

Deana Thayer 16:35

Yeah, and the truth is, whatever level you choose, we want you to choose the one that truly is a fit for you, not only for your budget, but for your life and for what your current needs are right now. But at any level, we so appreciate your support, and just saying, hey, I support the work that Future Focused Parenting is doing. But if you do come in at one of those upper levels, there are some extra benefits. And we we definitely want you to be aware of that and getting some parent coaching for only \$20 a month is pretty fantastic. So we love getting to share and hear from other parents what issues they might be dealing with, or that are cropping up and then getting to do some problem solving with them. And we want to just invite you to be part of that and join the FFP family at whatever level feels comfortable for you.

K

Kira Dorrian 17:18

That's right. So if you go to our website, <https://futurefocusedparenting.com>, you'll see there's a membership button, click on there, it'll take you right through and you can look at those three different tiers and hopefully become a part of our FFP family. Okay, Deana, let's talk about when kids get older, because I have a couple things that our family do that I really love. Like I personally love the way that we kind of read in our family together. And I think it's really helped our kids find a joy for reading as well. So I'm curious kind of what that looked like for you once your kids didn't need the couch story anymore and knew how to read all that. Like, what did that look like in your house? How did you navigate it?

D

Deana Thayer 17:58

Right, once they weren't just recognizing little phonograms and could actually read words and we're starting to interact with books. One of the things we did, and I've actually

mentioned this on a previous episode, is we incentivized reading a little bit. You and I talk all the time about privileges versus responsibilities and those kinds of things. And so while I never wanted reading to feel punitive, I had no qualms about using it to help them earn privileges. And so for a while, actually in our home, when they were more emerging readers to just encourage them to flex this muscle and to practice reading, we did a minute-for-minute kind of comparison where for every minute you read, that's how many minutes of screen time you get that day. And we were like you Kira we greatly limited screen time in our house. So really any at all was kind of a treat. But this kind of made them want to work to earn a little bit more. And so I don't think there's anything wrong with that, like we've talked about before incentivizing things and using positive reinforcement. Really no problem with that. Now, definitely we want to avoid things like bribes and things of that nature, but letting them practice reading and earning something fun for that. Absolutely. I'm a fan of it. So we did that when they were early on in the reading journey. How about you?

K

Kira Dorrian 19:08

I love that. Yeah, I think that's so smart. Especially if you have a more reluctant reader who does prefer the screens, like what a wonderful way to kind of split the difference. It's a lot like if you go work out, then you can maybe eat a little more, right? It's that same idea of like, we're finding that balance and keeping ourselves healthy in that way. And I think that's so smart. So one of the things that we do that I absolutely love is we do a Daily Read, and I call it the Daily Read, and my kids need to read for 30 minutes every day. But the piece of this that's I think different is most of the time I actually read with them. So I grab my book and we all sit on the couch and we read together. And I think there's a modeling piece here of they see that I actually make time to read and that I value it and we sometimes will talk about it, like if something funny comes up in the book and be like Mom, listen to this, this funny part, or if something comes up in my book, I'll be like, oh my gosh, you guys have to hear this, this is so cute. And so it creates this dynamic of we're doing it together, it's connection time. It's daily. And there's that modeling piece on top of it. And it's great for me because it actually carves out time for me to read as well. Like, I know, I'm gonna get that time if I don't get it the rest of the day. And they see that I prioritize it to that I'm not just saying to them, you have to prioritize this, this is super important that it's like no, no, we as a family prioritize reading and make room for it in our day. And I think that's been hugely helpful.

D

Deana Thayer 20:36

It is, I think, when we can set the example that I mean, we talk about that all the time, right? Being that example and modeling and for you, parents who maybe aren't as excited

about reading, it could even be a growth area for you to sit. Maybe you start a family reading time with just five minutes a day. I mean, it can start small. And there's there's nothing wrong with admitting you have areas to grow. I have many myself. So having them get to see you read is fantastic, Kira. I just think that's great.

K

Kira Dorrian 21:04

Yeah, it's been really lovely. It's a way that we kind of spend time together, that's low key, and they really enjoy it. And then the sort of subset of that is, so we have the Daily Read, where again, most of the time I read with them, but not every time. And then we have something called the Family Read. And anybody can request that. Those usually happen on a weekend where it's like a rainy day and one of the kids will be like, let's do the Family Read and everybody gets in our big bed and grabs a book. And we all sit and just read for like half an hour. And again, it's just like, it's just a lovely way to pass the time. And selfishly, it's also just that opportunity for me to get to read, but also know that I'm modeling that well. So I think that modeling piece is important.

D

Deana Thayer 21:44

Yeah. And plus, there's nothing bad about family snuggles. So you know if you can, it's okay to be selfish for those while they last because they do go away, I'm sorry to say. So another thing we did that I thought was helpful is we did the work, and when I say we I'm talking about the parents, we did the work to find reading material that our kids would enjoy. And the reason I think this is important is they are going to be faced with, throughout their life, but primarily at least for 12 to 16 years of school, they are a lot of times going to be told what they have to read. And so when we're encouraging making reading a habit making reading something we might choose to do in our free time, it's important that reading for pleasure piece is actually pleasurable. And that might be trickier for some kids than others. I have one who I would call just a voracious reader, we joke that we have a bibliophobia, fear of lack of reading material, and yet I have another one who's not as excited. And so there was some work involved to find material that would be enjoyable. And there's no shame in that. Just like I said before, no shame in incentivizing no shame and saying, let's find a story that grips you. Oh, I've noticed you like a certain genre, you like to solve mysteries. Let's go toward the mysteries. You know what I've noticed that even though you're a capable reader, you like more of like a graphic novel, you like some illustrations, let's go toward those. You guys, there's no shame in finding the things they enjoy, so that they will at least keep flexing this muscle, there's that quote, and it's been attributed to a bunch of different people so I don't know who gets the actual credit, but that one that says that "reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body." You know, it's flexing that muscle of training them to read and think and want to do

it. So we want to help them want to do it.

K

Kira Dorrian 23:27

Yes, I love that. And it's funny, because that was actually the the next thing I was going to share is making sure that kids are engaging with reading they actually care about. So I love that we were on the same page on that one. And one of the things we've done is, if they find a series that they love, I will say if you finish a book, I will go and get you another one and off to the library we go to get the next one. I don't care how many trips I have to make to that library, I will go because I want them to know that if you love this, I'm going to keep filling it up. I'm going to keep filling up your reading bucket by giving you more and more and more of what you love. It's a little bit harder now in COVID. A lot of our entertainment budget goes towards books right now. But you know, just that idea of like if you love this, I'm going to support that I'm going to make sure that you that you have the tools you need to be successful. Because you're right I went through a whole phase when I was younger where I did not like to read. Most of middle school and high school I didn't read because I had to read so many things I didn't love and when I fell back in love with reading it was because I was picking, I was choosing and I do think that's really important. And I also think there's an element here around audiobooks...like I have a friend who struggled with reading and she still, in adulthood, prefers an audiobook and I think that whilst we do really need to make sure that our kids can read and have that literacy, I also think it's okay to leave some wiggle room for, if you do have a kiddo that prefers to listen, that you know that they have an opportunity for that. That it doesn't become the only way that they engage with reading, but that it can be like hey, okay, well if you can read for 10 minutes then we can do 10 minutes of an audiobook. Or you can listen to this one on audiobook, but I need you to read this one, so that you're still flexing that muscle, but you're also keeping the love of stories and listening and engaging with material alive.

D

Deana Thayer 25:09

Yes. And with sensitivity to where their leanings are, there's absolutely room for that. So this last thing, I want you to bear with me, because it's gonna sound a little bit like you wouldn't really employ this until they're older. So hang in there. I'm going to explain how we started this when they were younger. And so my third how is teaching children, making sure we teach them how to read with a critical eye so that we're teaching them how to read just not that they're able to read. So going beyond just I'm capable of reading to how do I parse out what I'm reading and what I'm learning. And so that might sound like something that would have to wait until later. But we really started it early, and Kira, and I talk about this all the time, with questions. So we would read something and then ask them, what did you pick out from that story that you particularly enjoyed? Or, what did

you maybe resonate with about that character? What's something new, you learned from what we just read? And so even when I was still reading aloud to them, I was encouraging them to engage with what they read. Because reading without really absorbing it isn't, isn't the same. And I think that becomes really important. Also, in higher education, you want to understand that you're going to be handed things to read that you are going to find out you sometimes disagree with. But if you just always read things at face value, and just take it in, you are going to be ill equipped to kind of grapple with those things. And so now my children are excellent at reading with a critical eye, they often annotate and mark in the margins. And they really think through do I even agree with what this author is saying? And that's because we started with those questions early on. So keeping in mind, giving your kids just the basic skills to read, excellent, definitely lay that foundation. But I think we can go beyond that, to teach them how to read critically, how to really digest what they're interacting with.

K

Kira Dorrian 26:55

I love that so, so much. I actually needed that little reminder today, because Rhys was reading something and he laughed, and he was like, Mom, listen to this, and he read it out loud and I laughed along with him. And then I said, do you understand why that was funny? And he was like, kind of...he understood enough to share it with me, but he didn't know what one of the words meant. And so I'm so glad you said that, because I got that little hit today of like, I have to make sure that even though you know they can like sail as readers that I'm still engaging with them about what they're reading and having those dialogues. So I appreciate you saying that that's really smart.

D

Deana Thayer 27:30

So I do have a quote...and one last encouragement to you parents: I really do think it's important to keep in mind, we can do everything "right" and you can't really control if your kids love it, you really though, can help them at least be proficient, to engage with material in a thoughtful way. And to be effective readers who can at least function and navigate through the world in an effective way. But don't beat yourself up if you end up with you know, one child or even more who maybe it's not how they would choose to spend their downtime, or they, they maybe loved it when they were small and kind of move away from it, or vice versa. That can be okay. We're not always the boss of what our kids end up loving. And so, you know, we can do all these things and they really do help to cultivate a joy in the learning and the reading, but just know that if that doesn't stick in there, there's also room for how each child is wired. And not everyone's just going to love to read. So just wanted to encourage you because I even have one of those. And that's okay. All right...today's quote actually talks about what we were just discussing with really

engaging and digesting the material. And this quote is by Edmund Burke. "Reading without reflecting is like eating without digesting." Isn't that a fun one? And it's so true. I mean, reading in itself is just so great, but we want to absorb it too, and help our kids to do the same.



Kira Dorrian 28:50

Absolutely. Well FFPs, we hope that you got at least something today that maybe you feel like oh, I could try that. I could start doing that with my kiddos and if you love reading as much as we do that maybe you'll think about how you can be a part of that and get your own reading bucket filled at the same time. Don't forget, if you haven't yet followed us on social media, we are @FutureFocusedParenting on Instagram and Facebook, you can always check us out at our website <https://futurefocusedparenting.com>. And if you have not yet left us a five star review with a little note of kindness, we would be so grateful if you would. It's amazing how much those reviews really do make a difference to how successful we are as a podcast. So we'd be so grateful. If you haven't taken the time to do that yet, please do and to the 94 of you that already have thank you so, so much. We appreciate the support from our FFP community more than we can possibly say. We will be back with you next week and hope you have a wonderful, wonderful week ahead. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer and recorded partially in my laundry room and partially in Deana's office. Editing by Alison Preisinger. Music by Seattle band, Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 30:01

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