

Spin Cycle - Kids and Guns, Good Guys and Bad Guys

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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. Hi, everyone. We are here today on Raising Adults with a spin cycle for you. We had a listener question from Julie. And we wanted to address it because in a recent episode, Kira, you mentioned something about how you handle playdates and asking if there's a gun in the house, and is it locked up? And can I even see it and all of that, and this is a kind of a follow up question to that. So we wanted to let Kira expound on her amazing handling of this, because my

people are like, passed it. In fact, the other day because of this, I said, So Marc, what would you do if you saw a guy and he's like, pick it up, make sure the safety was on, why? It's just so different. He's not seven. Okay, so, yeah, let's hear it.

K

Kira Dorrian 00:57

Right. Well, I think Julie's question was, you know, she's coming into the good guy, bad guy phase of superheroes with her son. And so I think that her question is really about, like, what do I do about the gun part of that? And so I had said to her, you know, well, we kind of touched on guns in the safety episode. But it is such a big one to expound upon. And so I just want to be clear, before we get going, that this is not going to be about should we shouldn't we, with guns, like Deana and I want to keep some of the political debate out of... this podcast is a parenting podcast. So let's just put to the side that there's different views on should, should there be guns in the world or not? And let's look at the reality of the fact that there are guns in the world, that kids are exposed to them, and that they are often offered in a toy scenario. So what do we as parents do, to make sure that there is gun safety around all of that? And so I think a lot of it is unfortunately going to going to depend somewhat on your views about it.

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Deana Thayer 01:59

Sure.

K

Kira Dorrian 02:00

But I think one of the most common things that I've heard that I really like even from gun owners, is the idea that a gun is not a toy. It's not a toy. So whether you're for or against guns, the idea of saying a gun is not a toy. Therefore, we do not have toy guns makes a lot of sense to me. I have a very good friend, they're avid gun owners. They hunt, they do all the things, and they are absolutely focused with their kiddo, that gun is not a toy. And we do not have toy guns, which I think is really important and interesting and telling that that's coming from a gun owner, not coming from raging liberal me. So that's certainly how we handled it in our house. Guns are not toys, therefore, we do not have toy guns. I also talked a lot with my kids about what is the purpose of a gun in play. And usually, the purpose of the gun in play is to pretend to kill someone. And so we had, a lot of our conversations were around that, like, well, what do you think about the idea that you're pretending to take someone's life? And that person, that character, whatever, has a mom, maybe has a dad? Right? They have a family. How's that family going to feel that that character died? How are you going to feel that you took that character's life? Like this is a bigger implication than just pow pow, pow, pow. It is about what are you actually

physically doing. So a really good example, is kind of a sidebar. But, you know, I'm a former actor and in drama school, and we did a production in which I had to stab someone on stage and kill them. And I remember that experience being really, really intense, because you have to as an actor physically go through the motions of taking someone's life. Even though you're not, even though you're just pretending, your body doesn't know any different. And I would get really, really violently ill after every time I did that scene, because my, I was like, feel like I'm killing someone. And I know that sounds kind of silly and kind of extreme. But I also think it's really important. We're in an age where people and kids especially because of video games, and all this stuff, we are getting desensitized to violence. And so whatever you believe, let's not forget that when a kid goes pow, pow, pow, you're dead. They are pretending to kill someone. And that has ramifications. So that's sort of what we did was a lot of talking about, well, that means that person's died. You know, we've had a death in the family. So it was very personal to us. Like, that's not something we joke about. We don't pretend to kill people. But we definitely got to a point where Rhys particularly, is a boy and a lot of people say like you cannot have toy guns, they're gonna make them with their fingers. They're gonna pick up a stick pow, pow, pow, you're dead.

D

Deana Thayer 02:03

I heard a story about one boy who bit his sandwich into the shape of a gun PB&J is now a weapon. What happened?

K

Kira Dorrian 04:57

Right? So I think it's, I think with all things, it's about balance and moderation, right? So in our home, yes, we are very anti gun, we talk about the fact that mommy and daddy don't like guns. We don't believe that they're necessary in society. I mean, those are our, our particular liberal views. And so our kids pick up on that. And yes, we have maybe stronger boundaries than other families might have around it. But I try and talk about it more, again, in the context of what is a gun designed to do. In these scenarios, they're designed for you to pretend to kill someone. It's not that I have a problem with the gun, I have a problem with you pretending to kill someone. I have an issue with that. And I don't think that it's something we joke about, play about, or act out in a fun way, death is a serious thing. It's a meaningful thing. And I don't think it's something we should make light of. So that's sort of how we've handled it in our house with regards to the good guy, bad guy. And I think I've touched on this before, but I'll say it again, as a mental health professional, I do not believe in good guys and bad guys, I believe that, you know, the characters in these shows that are the bad guys, I would love to know their childhood history. I would like to know what happened to them when they were small. Because I really believe that,

you know, most of the time, not all, they're definitely people with true mental health issues. They're born with them. But outside of the realm of someone who may be a psychopath. And this is a result, generally, poor choices are a result of something, something that was going on whether that character that you know, venom spider man's guy like venom maybe was unloved as a child or didn't get what venom needed when he was small, you know, and we've just spent a lot of time trying to help the kids understand that it's not a question of good guys, bad guys. It's a question of did they get what they needed when they were young? How is their experience showing up in their behavior, because we know that that's the truth for all children, right? Even just a bad day at school could mean my kid is having a worse day at home. So really helping them understand that separating this idea of black and white, good guy, bad guy. I mean, the world just doesn't work that way. And so that, that's been part of it, too, is and I've seen it. I mean, I've seen it with both my kids where they tend to come at the bad guy thing when they, when there's a character in a show. That's the quote unquote, bad guy. And they say a lot of things like, I wonder what we could do to help that character find love in their hearts, or I wonder what we could do to help that character be more compassionate, or I wonder what happened to that. I mean, they're asking these questions now. Like, I wonder what happened to that character that made them behave that way. And so I think there's really an opportunity to teach empathy, and to teach grace, you know, this, this idea that we're all human. And part of what makes us human is what happens back here can sometimes show up here and sometimes I snap at you because I'm upset about this thing over here. And that just, that's just humanity. So I think that the gun, the gun thing and the good guy, bad thing really can be a great opportunity to dive into something much, much deeper.

D

Deana Thayer 08:10

So when Rhys, did he have a question? You started to say that Rhys recently...what?

K

Kira Dorrian 08:18

Oh, no, he well, his, his big thing is Darth Vader. Oh, and, and he loves Darth Vader, his favorite characters are the baddies. And it's because he's convinced that he will be able to help them find love in their hearts. Like that's his mission in life is like, I'm gonna go to those bad guys, and I'm gonna, I'm gonna rehabilitate them. But he comes at it from that same angle that he's been taught that, like, you know what, they're not a bad guy. They're a hurt guy. They're a harmed guy. They're a neglected guy, and not showing up. And so I see him making these choices and even in play, like how he's, he's trying to help them move through whatever pain they've been through, essentially.

D

Deana Thayer 09:00

Do you also, then, detach the lightsabers and stuff? I'm curious about, you know, how you handle other weapons because other families too, guns aren't the only weapons that come up in play.

K

Kira Dorrian 09:15

Right. So my general rule of thumb and this is, some of this is personal to our house and our beliefs, you could tweak this. So my general rule of thumb is we do not pretend to kill people. So if you have a sword, as long as you're not pretending to kill someone with it, play away, totally fine with me. We do go deeper into guns. I don't allow toy guns in the house because of our personal views on guns. But I appreciate that not all families are going to hold those personal views. To me that the deeper, deeper issue that I would want listeners to walk away with is, you know, what are we saying to a kid when we're letting them pretend to kill someone in play?

D

Deana Thayer 09:51

Okay, that makes sense. I was, I was curious because you mentioned the Darth Vader thing. I was like, oh, Star Wars. They have a whole different arsenal, right?

K

Kira Dorrian 09:58

Yeah. And he can lightsaber battle all he wants, but not with the intention to kill his opponent. And so and that's how it is, I mean with like, with the movies I let them watch and this kind of thing, it's to me that, that's the issue with the violence, the video games, all those things come down to we are sending this message that it's funny. It's fun, it's play.

D

Deana Thayer 10:19

And it's no big deal.

K

Kira Dorrian 10:20

Yeah. And, and that's really where I personally take issue. So I would say to someone like Julie, who it sounds like, is probably somewhat like-minded to me, is, is clearly uncomfortable with where this is going. That if you can take it and, and work on it from that perspective, what are we learning about this person based on their behavior? Because that's going to help them in school. You know, when there's a kid who's having a

tough time at school, chances are something's going on for that kid. So having that empathy and compassion. It's just a great skill to teach anyway.

D

Deana Thayer 10:48

Yeah, regardless. And we love when this happens, by the way. So thank you, Julie. I mean, this is helpful, because sometimes, you may be listening and hear something in one episode that sparks a follow up question. Or maybe you even have an idea for a whole episode topic. And we actually love hearing from you. So we're grateful to Julie, for reaching out with this more involved question on the gun thing.

K

Kira Dorrian 11:11

Yeah, and I would also say that if you are a family that owns guns, and is comfortable with guns and you know, leans in a different direction than I do, then I would still encourage you to talk gun safety. You know, I think everyone can agree on gun safety. I sort of wish this was the conversation we were having, it's like, we just got to throw out this other conversation that's happening. It's not effective. And it's not working. But we all want our kids to not die from a random gun. Like I think we can all agree on that. So I think it's making sure that you're modeling good gun safety, kind of like your mom, love that example, that she's just always letting you know what, where it is, and if it's loaded, and all those things. So just continuing to model good gun safety. And to continue to talk about that idea that a gun is not a toy. It's not funny. There's nothing funny about again, guns are designed to harm and to protect. And so we need to make sure that kids are getting that message.

D

Deana Thayer 12:01

Absolutely. And I think what's so key when I mentioned that on the past episode, is that I'm an adult, and she's still watching out for that. And I really appreciate that. And also, when we're in their home as a family, my mom is a tall drink of water. And so she would put the gun up, and I'm a less tall drink of water. So I couldn't even really reach it, which was great. So then I knew for sure my kids couldn't, which is great. So because it's true, everybody is going to fall kind of at a different place along the spectrum here. But it is about, I think the big message is how do we keep people safe and would your child know what to do if they came across the gun. And I'm just glad that you mentioned that in the safety episode. And that's what made me curious now that I have bigger people, like what would you do? Sometimes our own podcast makes me go, I need to circle back around on this one.

K

Kira Dorrian 12:49

Absolutely. Did you do anything particular when yours were little around this?

D

Deana Thayer 12:54

We didn't really but it's so interesting to me. When I look back, we didn't do toy guns, but I didn't talk about it being so on purpose. I think Marc had one pirates sword, he went through a real pirate phase. But again, we were really, I was really vocal about not pointing it at anyone and anything like that, it was more part of his get up. And he likes to dress the part kind of a thing, but it's interesting as I think back, because I can honestly say this isn't an area where I really camped or picked it as a hill to die on, so to speak. But when I think back to their playroom, there were not toy weapons in it. So that's so interesting to me.

K

Kira Dorrian 13:33

Yeah, you were kind of, you were making a choice about it without realizing it was important.

D

Deana Thayer 13:38

I was unintentionally intentional. We'll just go with that.

K

Kira Dorrian 13:41

Just lie. I was so intentional. It was so on purpose for sure. I think there's one other piece I just want to touch on. And that is what do you do when, so for me, like my family, no guns, and then you go to someone else's house and they have guns. And how do you handle that? Because I know I've had friends who've had this issue. And I don't mean real guns, I mean play guns. So then you know, you're at a playdate and the other kid has toy guns and they want to play shoot them up, shoot them up, and you're as a parent against that, but you also want them to have a good playdate. I mean, parenting, I think is so many of these moments where everything collides and you're just trying to make the best decision that you can. We had a situation once where we were visiting my sister in law and brother in law, and my brother in law was in the military over in the UK, so very comfortable with guns and he had toy water guns, I mean, really like benign objects.

D

Deana Thayer 14:33

Fairly innocuous version.

K

Kira Dorrian 14:34

Yeah, but they were the ones that they look like automatic weapons, you know, and, and my worlds collided because it was like he had brought this out for my kids and it was meaningful to him and he was being so sweet with them and he just wanted them to like have a waterfight and, and Rhys even kind of looked at me like what are we going to do? What are we going to do? Can we play with this? You know, he kind of gave me this look.

D

Deana Thayer 14:56

What did you do?

K

Kira Dorrian 14:57

I let them play with it. I think that there's you know, I think we send our messages very clearly day in and day out. And we also have to know when to be gracious, we have to know when to... and I think our whole culture could learn from what I'm about to say. I think we all need to know when to hold our tongues. And, and when something is innocent, to just let it be innocent. And so I let them play with it. And we talked about it later. And because Rhys was like, how come you let us play with those, we don't play with guns. And I said, you know, your uncle was really excited about those. And you guys were excited about it. And I felt like it was not going to be appropriate for me to get all up on my high horse about my opinion, when he was doing something really kind for you. And so I was, I knew that you knew how I felt about it, I could tell how you felt about it. And that was enough for me.

D

Deana Thayer 15:43

And then what's so great is then that was an anomaly. It was the exception, not the rule. So they know day in and day out. This is how we do it. And I parent that way so hard. And I also consult that way. Because with sleep in particular, what made me think of is, yes, most of the time, guard the naps, do it your way. But then sometimes baby's gonna be sick or you're traveling, and you can have a day that looks different. And that needs to be okay. So, kudos to you for knowing like, well, maybe, maybe this time I'm gonna let that one go.



Kira Dorrian 16:13

Yeah, I wouldn't have let it go if they wanted to do it every day. But I think exactly that. It's an anomaly. Yeah. And also just teaching kids flexibility. Right. But, but also sending this message that, because I would have hated if they went out into the world, and they were just stomping all, all over other people's opinions about guns. That's not okay, either. And so part of how I model you know, the relationship you and I have is a great example of people disagree, people have different opinions. Your uncle thinks this is okay. I don't. But actually, this is one of those moments where I can just, I can just be gracious and let it go.



Deana Thayer 16:46

Well, and we don't want to raise kids who steamroll people. We want them to be gracious and kind and, on that, this is a really important lesson that I think you can use even I mean, little ones all the way up. I'm still utilizing it and training is, picking people over issues and there are going to be strategic times where you've got to make that choice. Pick the person.



Kira Dorrian 17:05

Yep, hundred percent. All right. Well, thanks for listening to this spin cycle. If you have an idea for a spin cycle or a question for us, you can email info@futurefocusedparenting.com. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer, and recorded in my laundry room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



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