

Episode 100. Handling Conflict In Front Of Our Children

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Kira Dorrian, Future Focused Parenting



Deana Thayer 00:00

I think this goes to another area that you and I talk about frequently. And that is setting our children up for life, really preparing them for the realities of life, and helping them avoid that shock, like you said, of, What? All relationships aren't perfect? Why am I having a conflict with this person I love or care about, or my even my friend or a co worker? I mean, if we're not presenting that all relationships will probably at times encounter some conflict, especially close relationships, right? Then we aren't preparing them and that is being future focused. This is a life skill to be able to handle conflict. Well, rather than run from it, or assume it doesn't exist, it's going to happen. So how do you handle it when it does?



Future Focused Parenting 00:55

Welcome to Raising Adults, the groundbreaking parenting podcast that starts with the end in mind. We're your co hosts, Deana Thayer 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.



Deana Thayer 01:18

Hello, everyone, and welcome to another episode of Raising Adults podcast. It's a super special episode today, because it is our 100th episode. So there's the confetti and streamers, I'm sure you can picture them. So Kira and I are just super excited because it is sort of amazing that this little podcast that started with two moms in a laundry room has grown to this level and that we're still here 100 episodes later. And so we just want to thank all of you listeners and FFPs out there all of you Future Focused Parents who have listened to us laugh, cry, talk about our mistakes. And hopefully, you've also gotten some helpful parenting tools along the way. So super exciting. And guess what? A hundredth episode, I mean, it's kind of a milestone. So it's not a birthday, per se, but we did buy ourselves a gift. And really, I'm the benefactor of this gift, I'll be honest. But we finally got me a mic as all of you who've been listening the last several months know, Kira and I have been recording remotely. And we've really had a time of it with piecemealing the situation on my end with different headphones and headsets and earphones and mics and no mic and leaning up against throw pillows and laying on the couch. And I mean it's been bananas.

K

Kira Dorrian 02:37

And laying on your stomach! You were on your stomach at one point.

D

Deana Thayer 02:40

That's right. I was laying on my tummy. I mean, it's been wild. So it's just so nice. It's really important to us that we bring you good sound quality and the pandemic threw us for a loop here as it did in so many other areas where suddenly we were apart. And I wasn't in the laundry room studio with all that great equipment. So happy hundredth episode to us. I now have a good mic and can sound like an actual person and not like I'm in an echo chamber. So that's fantastic.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:07

You sound so good. I love it. I love it and and soon you'll have foam and everything right now you're still under a coat, aren't you?

D

Deana Thayer 03:16

I am. I'm still in somewhat of a tent. Guys. It's it's not a good look. I'm glad no one can see me right now. But the we're getting there. We've got the sound quality improved. And then we're going to get rid of the echo situation without using pillows. I'm so excited to not be up against throw pillows. I can't tell you. So yeah, we're getting there. And it's exciting.

And I feel super grateful. I know we did a replay of our gratitude episode last week. And I'm certainly feeling that theme. I'm so grateful to all of you, our listeners to you Kira hanging out with me all this time.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:49

It is definitely a time to be grateful. I can't believe 100 episodes, it's and you know, the funny thing is, when Deana and I started this, we were like we should do a podcast. That'd be easy.

D

Deana Thayer 03:59

Oh, famous last words.

K

Kira Dorrian 04:02

It's not been easy, but it has been so rewarding. And just I am just so happy that we're here. So listeners, my lovely FFPs we have a gift for you too. So in honor of our 100th episode, the first 100 of you to log into our online resources and purchase the emotional intelligence course will get that course for only 100 pennies that's \$1 for those of you that are bad at math like me. So you can get our course which is normally \$27 for \$1, 100 pennies, the first 100 of you to use this code. So there's two ways that you can log in, you can either go to our website, click on digital resources and find it through there. Or we did make a special link just for our celebration today. So if you go to bit.ly/FFP100, it'll take you right to the course, you put it in your cart, when you check out, you're going to use the code FFP100, all caps, and you will get that program for only \$1, 100 little tiny pennies. So we just wanted to say thank you. To those of you who are listening, this is a listener only gift. We are not putting these links anywhere else. This is for you guys to say thank you for helping us get here.

D

Deana Thayer 05:35

Absolutely. And did you notice the theme? It's 100 theme 100 pennies 100 episodes, were in the hundred mood today. 100%. So please do that. It's such a great course. I mean, Kira, I got to watch it being recorded, and I was even learning things. So just get in on that. But she's right. I'm not putting this on social media. We're not like announcing it anywhere else, as far as the links. We'll talk about the giveaway, but you have to listen to this episode, like you all are right now, to be able to know exactly what code to put in to get that offer. So we hope you'll do it. And thanks for helping us get to 100 episodes.



Kira Dorrian 06:13

Yay! All right, we should talk about our topic today, I suppose.



Deana Thayer 06:18

I suppose.



Kira Dorrian 06:19

It's not as joyous as the giveaway.



Deana Thayer 06:23

No, it's not as happy as reaching 100 episodes but it is still important.



Kira Dorrian 06:28

It's very important. But that's okay. We're not here to just be celebratory. We also want to talk about the real stuff, right?



Deana Thayer 06:34

That's right. We're here to give you parenting tools and tips and strategies. And we're still going to do that today. On the 100th episode.



Kira Dorrian 06:40

Yes. All right. Do you want to tell them? I mean, they know what we're talking about. It was written in the title. I love how we always reveal it. Like they don't know!



Deana Thayer 06:50

Like, ooh, here's what we're talking about today! Yeah, we already know guys. All right. Yes. So we are talking about conflict, and particularly conflict in front of your children. And the important next step of that conflict resolution in front of your children, which we'll definitely get to, because that's a component of this you don't want to skip. So we're going to talk about just some of the schools of thought around that. Should you even be doing it? If you do, what should it look like? What are some tools and tips? And this is an important one because I think even if you mean for it not to happen, it will probably

happen at least once in your life.

K

Kira Dorrian 07:24

Yeah, that's so true. I mean, in all relationships, right? I can't think of any relationship where sometimes there isn't a little bit of conflict where you have to bump up against each other a little bit or work something out, and especially when you're like all living in the same house together, under one roof, quarantined, there's absolutely gonna be some conflict.

D

Deana Thayer 07:44

For sure. So maybe we can start with our why. And then we'll dive in from there. And I know my why, which won't surprise any of you longer time listeners, but my why is around my blended family, and that I had five kids now watching this new relationship between Scott and I. And some of them had witnessed some kind of knockdown, drag out arguments between their biological parents. And so Scott and I really wanted to set up an environment where it didn't mean the absence of conflict, but where we did conflict well, and that it didn't lead to insecurity about whether the relationship would continue. So that was my why.

K

Kira Dorrian 08:23

I like that. Yeah, I think for me, the why was about modeling for my children what healthy conflict looks like and setting them up for reasonable expectations for their own relationships moving forward. Look how succinct I was. I put a period at the end of that one. I was, I was proud of myself.

D

Deana Thayer 08:44

That was concise!

K

Kira Dorrian 08:46

Thank you. I'm sure I'll rabbit trail later. I, like, consciously made an effort after the last episode that we recorded together. I was like, I need to be clear on what I want to say. So there we go.

D

Deana Thayer 08:58

You're the best. And you are right. You gave yourself a buffer to rabbit trail later. How clever!

K

Kira Dorrian 09:03

Yeah, I mean, I know myself well enough to know what's going to happen. So there we go. So I mean, I think your why is so...what's the word I'm looking for? It's a really a smart one, especially given the circumstances. I mean, It's a really important distinction that you and Scott are trying to make in your marriage, to help the kids feel safe in it and help them see it through a different lens than they are seeing the former relationships, I assume. So like, tell us how you guys do that.

D

Deana Thayer 09:35

Yeah. So I think there's a by way of just a general principle thing. I think there's kind of a few schools of thought on this. And I want to just honor that. We're always talking to you, our dear listeners, about finding that way forward for your family and finding what works. But I want to be clear that what Kira and I are going to lean towards suggesting might surprise you and so there is kind of at least two two schools of thought. I would say probably you could argue for three. So one is that it's really not a good idea to have conflict and in front of your children, and I promise this will lead to my hows. So that's an idea out there that like, it's really not a good idea. It's stressful for children. It's either their parents or any just grown up caretakers have struggles, that there's kind of this insecurity that can breed from that. And it's just not a good idea. So that's one school of thought. Another one is that actually, it's totally fine. And I think in the more boisterous emotionally out there, families where like, We just like wear our emotions on our sleeves, they're probably going to subscribe to this. It's like, yeah, we're gonna struggle when we struggle, and we're gonna celebrate when we celebrate, and you can just see it all. But with that one, there can be kind of the downfall. Like, you could say, I'll let Kira share the downfall with that first school of thought in a moment, the downfall here could be maybe they don't see you fix it. And that can lead to that same concern with insecurity and that lack of feeling of safety. And then there's a third model, and this is the one we're going to talk about probably the most. And that is the model that says, you know, disagreements, I mean, we are always talking about normalizing, right? Disagreements are really normal. And people in relationship with each other will have conflict sometimes. And so there's not really a need to hide that from our children, they can see it. But what we want to also model is looping back around and coming together and resolving it, really teaching them through example, what does good problem solving look like? And of course, there are a lot of ways to do that. And we'll get into the nuts and bolts, but I wanted to kind of lay that

foundation, because there are different ways of thinking about this. And we want to recognize that each family is probably going to be slightly unique in how they approach this, but just to ourselves that we are in general fans of normalizing conflict, as long as there's a healthy resolution on the back end. And I promised this would lead to my hows. So I'm going to be honest, Scott and I were in the third camp, but one of our hows was being okay with using different modalities at different seasons. So here's what I mean by that, in the beginning of our marriage and our new blended family, we actually leaned toward the first one, even though I've already told you that isn't necessarily the one I would promote. But here's why. They had just left situations that were, perhaps, contentious, or perhaps a little scary for them. The youngest in our blend when we all first got together was seven. So these are not super old kids with the ability to really form complex reasoning and analysis of what they're seeing. They're just seeing two people be angry at each other. And that can be scary. So we actually really erred on the side of not having conflict in front of them at first, and that was strategic. It was, hey, we're going to lay this foundation to help you feel safe to help you understand that Scott and Deana is a relationship that isn't going anywhere. And when we felt they were more sure of that, and we had gotten more of a sense of our roles in this new family and all of that, then we did slowly ease into this side where we would have conflict in front of them, but also resolve it in front of them. Does that make sense?

K

Kira Dorrian 13:11

Oh, yeah, I think that makes a lot of sense. And it's very impressive to be sensitive to the different seasons in that situation, because you're absolutely right. How are they going to trust, if they're watching your first fight or your second fight or a third fight even? If all they've ever seen is fights lead to the end of a marriage? How are they going to feel safe watching that if you haven't laid that foundation? I think that's incredibly smart.

D

Deana Thayer 13:36

And you can speak to this. But also discomfort can be created when the end of a marriage comes and you haven't ever seen conflict. So talk about that for a minute.

K

Kira Dorrian 13:46

Yeah, I mean, my parents never fought, like ever. And I was 12 and suddenly they were getting a divorce. And I felt completely sideswiped. I felt like there was a whole other world happening that I wasn't a part of. I felt deceived a little bit like, I don't get it, you guys have a perfect marriage. And I think it made me, in my own relationship, feel like conflict is really important. And that working it out is really important and that my kids

seeing us work out is really important. But I also kind of wonder if, you know, like when you, when you don't show those cracks or those flaws, what happens then when those kids grow up, and their expectation of what a relationship should look like doesn't match their experience, because the reality is, most relationships have conflict. Now do most relationships have like knockdown fights? No. And let's hope that the people listening don't have that either. But conflict is really normal. And so to never show conflict, it's like a kid never having a boundary. They're going to be shocked when they get into the real world and there's a boundary. So I do think that I wish that my parents had just let me in a little bit more. I think I would have understood better what was happening and why it was happening if I had sort of, not seen screaming matches, but just seeing that things weren't perfect, because it really kind of looked perfect on the outside, and clearly it wasn't. So I think that I think you nailed it with the normalizing piece. This is part of how we normalize that relationships aren't perfect, that things don't always get fixed or solved or resolved perfectly, and that we choose to be with someone in spite of their flaws, because of their flaws, that we choose to stick with the relationship because the relationship matters beyond the things that are problematic. I don't know, I don't know if I'm articulating...see, I told you a rabbit trail here I am, doo doo doo is a great view from up here. But do you understand what I'm saying that like, I think we just we can't set our kids up for success in their own relationships if we haven't also modeled conflict resolution with our partner. So the modeling piece is just so important.

D

Deana Thayer 15:53

Oh, I couldn't agree more. I think this goes to another area that you and I talk about frequently. And that is setting our children up for life, really preparing them for the realities of life. And helping them avoid that shock, like you said, of What? All relationships aren't perfect? Why am I having a conflict with this person I love or care about or my even my friend or a co-worker? I mean, if we're not presenting that all relationships will probably at times encounter some conflict, especially close relationships, right, then we aren't preparing them. And that is being Future Focused. This is a life skill to be able to handle conflict well, rather than run from it, or assume it doesn't exist, it's going to happen. So how do you handle it when it does? And you're right, there's a essential piece here for modeling and just being an example. So I think that was a an effective rabbit trail. All those things needed to be said. It was a great, I enjoyed the view.

K

Kira Dorrian 17:00

Well, and I think too, you know, a, I'm going to therapize myself a little bit in this moment, but anybody who knows me knows that's what I do myself all the time. But I think that it also made me poke the bear a lot in my relationship with Dave. And I think I do it to test,

right, because it's like, well, if a perfect relationship is gonna fall apart, then is this gonna fall apart here? Are you going to leave me now? Are you going to leave me now? You know, um, and I think that comes from not seeing that it wasn't perfect. You know, when you're misled to believe that it's perfect and then you find out it's not, it makes you question. Well, what does "perfect" actually look like? And of course, it doesn't exist. But I think there's healthy. And that's what we want to model is healthy. What does a healthy relationship look like? Because even in conflict, like in our home, as an example, and this is one of my hows, is I think you have to first look at how you conflict. Because even when Dave and I have conflict, even when we get actually upset and angry, we never name call, it never gets physical. There's never screaming, you know what I mean? We conflict in a healthy way. So even if the conflict doesn't feel good, it's modeling how you conflict with someone you love, as opposed to making it look like there's contempt. Does that make sense?

D

Deana Thayer 18:27

It really does. And I would say, even go so far as to go to the next level. If you are experiencing those kinds of disagreements, those should be taken out of view of children for sure. They really shouldn't witness things getting physical, or insults being thrown back and forth. That's not healthy. And I would hope that's not the case for all you Future Focused Parents out there. But that if you do see an unhealthy conflict pattern that even you might say, you know, we need to go talk to somebody, you know, Kira and I are huge fans of therapy. So go talk to a couples counselor or get some support because you want to not miss the opportunity to model healthy conflict. But that means first probably cleaning up if you see areas of your conflict that are unhealthy. Like I noticed for Scott and I, one of the reasons...and we have a couples counselor, like on speed dial, just in case. Like we don't use her super often, but it's like, if we hit a speed bump, we need our third party, you know, and for us what one of the things we noticed was we had a similar loop of disagreements where it's like, you know what, this is technically about something else, but it's the same disagreement, if that makes sense.

K

Kira Dorrian 19:38

Oh, yeah.

D

Deana Thayer 19:41

And we go into our same roles, like I want to beat it until I'm sure we're okay. And he needs to walk away and cool down. And, you know, so when we do see things where like, this pattern isn't fantastic, we'd go and talk to somebody. So I would just encourage that

because what Kira is describing is not the kind of conflict you want to have in front of kiddos.

K

Kira Dorrian 19:58

No, and I mean, I think it you know I want to be really transparent and say that like, Dave and I never throw insults, never name call, never get physical. But I yell sometimes. I'm not going to lie. I mean, listeners, you, you know me well enough like, can you imagine being in a fight with me? It's not going to be pretty, you know, I'm a fierce individual, I was on the debate team. But we are, I think, really good at, when we can feel that corner turning into this is not going to feel safe anymore just because they don't like seeing us that angry, we remove ourselves and go somewhere else and say, okay, Mom and Dad are gonna sort this out and when we come back to you, we're gonna be on the same page. And that's the other piece right? is not just the healthy conflict, like what does it look like to disagree and kind of discuss that in a way that feels like conflict and not be conflict averse. But I think there's also this piece of, and we always work it out, we always come back. And we're always okay. And like that is so important that you're showing the full arc of a conflict, right? So if we, you know, do twiddle away into a bedroom to kind of sort things out privately, we always come back and say, like, Hey, we figured it out. This is where we got to, you know, to let them in on how it was resolved, even if we didn't let them watch that part of the resolution.

D

Deana Thayer 21:23

Mm hmm. I think that's never more true than especially when it is about maybe a parenting decision. Or, I mean, the kids need to see that you've come back to being that united front. But it becomes extra important if there's a parenting conflict, because we also don't want to leave residue with the children that somehow they are the reason you got in an argument. So I love that, you're right, the whole arc, what a great phrase, you gotta show the whole arc.

K

Kira Dorrian 21:48

The whole arc, because that's what they're gonna want to be looking for in their relationships is Who can I do this arc with in a healthy way? You're gonna arc with everyone, it's just the way it goes. Right?

D

Deana Thayer 21:59

A lot of arcing!

K

Kira Dorrian 22:02

But it's true. I mean, in any close relationship, sometimes that conflict happens, and you're going to do that arc and the relationships that are strong and that survive, friendships included, by the way, are the ones that complete the arc and get to the other side and get to resolution and finish it out. You don't just abandon it in the middle of its peak and never talk about it again, not complete it. So how do we get to that healthy arc, and then I will share the counselor that we were working with most recently, because we're like you, we have someone on speed dial, and when we hit a bump, we go and she gave us this amazing tool. So this is not mine, I want to be really clear. But she talked about doing a do-over and modeling that in front of the kids. So if something goes sideways, coming back and in front of the kids saying, You know what? I wish that had gone differently. I didn't like how that went, can we do a do-over? Here's what I wish I had said, and give the partner the opportunity to say, you know, I wish I had said... and actually kind of acting out how you would have wanted it to go. Because again, you're not only modeling, this is how it should have gone, but you're also modeling that we're all capable of forgiving, of trying again, of getting another try. And what a beautiful thing to teach your kids: you deserve a second shot at that. Not all of us get it right first time out the gate, Mom and Dad included. And we all give each other a chance to try that again, the way that we wish it had gone. And that's been really powerful in our house for everyone, not just for the kids. And not just for Dave and I but like collectively this feeling of you know, let's try that, again. That didn't go how I wanted it to go.

D

Deana Thayer 23:38

I love that. And a second thing that I love about it, and not just that powerful message of the do-over but also the powerful message of admitting we didn't get it right the first time. I mean, I'm all about we have to be honest with our kids when we fall down. And that is another way that you do that by having this do-over. It's indicating the first time wasn't stellar. So I think that's so important to that, that then when our kids maybe encounter a disagreement where they lose their cool, or they say something they wish they hadn't, they can remember Oh, that's normal. Even my parents sometimes got this wrong. I think that's so powerful for that normalizing piece.

K

Kira Dorrian 24:20

Yeah, absolutely. And I mean, we even have the kids do it between each other as well. Sometimes like, hey, let's try it again. What do you wish you'd said? How do you wish you'd said that? But you do this, you've done this with me. I mean, I have a vivid recollection of a situation where you and I, I can't even remember what the conflict was, I don't even think it was conflict. I feel like you and I don't really have conflict, but we have

like, I don't know, tiny pimples.

D

Deana Thayer 24:44

Not full blown acne! Just a few pimples.

K

Kira Dorrian 24:46

Just this tiny thing...the occasional spot. But I remember you calling me and saying hey, you know what, here's here's what I wish I'd said and I think that's just so powerful because it also speaks to the person reflecting, empathizing. I mean, there's so many beautiful things that come out of just owning your ish and not being afraid to say, Here's what I wish I'd done. Here's what I hope I do next time. I mean, don't we all want that for our kids? And if we can model that, and then it actually improves our own relationship as well, because let's be honest, like, parenting is hard on marriages and relationships. It just is. I mean, I think some people weather it better than others. But on the whole, I think most people feel like it's a very challenging time in their relationship. And sometimes actually just focusing on doing it for the kids, not staying together for the kids, but how are we handling conflict for the sake of our kids, can actually just make the conflict go better too.

D

Deana Thayer 25:42

Yes. Oh, yes. Well said, See? Look at you! Concise, succinct, lovely.

K

Kira Dorrian 25:49

I'm on fire. It's it only took me 100 episodes.

D

Deana Thayer 25:52

We got there eventually. Well, and we've even had to do a podcast episode "Things I Wish I'd Said" not because we got in a fight, but ometimes we come back and we're like, oh, there was more. So things I wish I'd said it's a theme. We're okay with it. We embrace, we embrace the things we wish we'd said. And here we are 100 episodes in and we're finally getting some kind of something going on. Look at us go.

K

Kira Dorrian 26:12

I know. It's wonderful. Well, before we wrap up, did I did I do what I did last time and step

all over your hows again? Did you share what you wanted to?

D

Deana Thayer 26:20

Yes! I told you please stop having this complex over that. All is well, I got to share what was important to me to share in the context of my blended family. But thank you for asking.

K

Kira Dorrian 26:34

You're welcome. You're welcome. So do you want to wrap up, and review what we kind of covered today?

D

Deana Thayer 26:39

Yeah, actually, we talked offline before we even started recording, that intentionally, we were going to do something in lieu of a quote today. And that is just kind of revisit some of these takeaways. Because this is an important one to do your best to get right. We're always we're going to fall down here and there. But we really want to be careful in this area. Conflict is so normal, and it can be so healthy. But especially when those little eyes are watching, we want to do well. So just to review, you are going to have to talk together about in your family how you handle this, if you lean more toward we don't do it super much in front of the kids, or we do it a lot but need to rein it in. But make sure you're getting on the same page about how you do this. And we would really just suggest that you at least think about and chew on this idea of let's have healthy conflict in front of our children and let them also see us problem solve and come to that resolution. Secondly, please, if you are finding that there's unhealthy conflict patterns, that you get those out of sight of children and and don't be afraid to seek help if you need to tweak some things that you're doing. And number three, definitely let your kids see you come back to that same page. If things do get a little bit heated, pay attention, as Kara said to how you have those disagreements, it's not whether or not, we all will likely have these happen. It's how you do it, keeping aware of our tone and our volume and avoiding name calling and letting things get really too spicy, where they're beyond spicy and they're not comfortable. Make sure you're aware of that how. And then if you do need to step away, because it's getting too contentious, that you come back, make sure you close that loop with your children, show them how you've resolved it how you're back on the same page. And let's not forget that final tool that Kira shared that you can have a do-over. What a powerful message to model and be that example. And that's the takeaway too. We're always modeling. And we're always an example whether we like it or not. So let's be careful with our modeling. But keep in mind that do-over, what a great tool, hey, we felt like that got a

little bit out of hand, we'd like to show you what how we wish that had gone and just roleplay that through in front of you kids. Let them see how that would have looked like in a more healthy model. And feel free to have them practice it too. I love that you said that Kira, that you even have, have your children practice that. But it sends two powerful messages. One is we're not afraid to admit that we sometimes get this wrong. But number two, there's always room for forgiveness, second chances and do overs. Those are really powerful messages. And this just normalizes things for your kids. And it's so Future Focused, you're setting them up to understand that conflict in relationships is normal. But it is important to learn how to do it well. Rather than be conflict averse. Another great phrase you dropped today Kira, rather than be conflict averse. Learn how to do it well and come to that resolution. So we hope this has been helpful. And thank you again for being the reason we're still here. 100 episodes later, we just are so beyond grateful.



Kira Dorrian 29:44

Yeah, it's been amazing. So don't forget to take advantage of that special offer the first 100 people who go to bit.ly/FFP100 can get that emotional intelligence program, which is normally \$27 for just 100 pennies, for just \$1, by using the code FFP100 at checkout.



Deana Thayer 30:08

Thank you so much for being with us. Maybe this is your first episode. Maybe you've been with us for all 100 but we're so glad you were here today, and we look forward to bringing you more next week. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer and recorded partially in Kira's laundry room, partially in my office. Editing by Alison Preisinger. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks so much for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 30:35

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