

Episode 119 - Correction vs. Criticism: Correcting the behav...

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SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Future Focused Parenting, Kira Dorrian



Kira Dorrian 00:00

For me, it's two things that I try to say first. So when I open my mouth to correct, I try and have one of these two phrases come out of my mouth first, because I have found that they set me up really well. And they set the situation up really well. So I will either say you don't know this. So I'm just letting you know now for next time. And then I'll kind of say whatever it is. So you know, like, oh, you know what, you don't know this. But next time, I just want you to know that, you know, when we're talking about X, Y, or Z, it's actually really beneficial if you X, Y or Z. And so it for me, it does two things. It actually helps me calm down, because, you know, we talk all the time, vocabulary matters. So when I am forcing myself to say you don't know this, so I'm just letting you know, it reminds me they don't know this. So I really don't have a right to be critical or upset with them about it.



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 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.

D

Deana Thayer 01:25

Welcome Future Focused Parents, hi FFPs. We're glad to be back with you today. Welcome to another episode of Raising Adults. Kira is over there in the laundry room. I'm over here in the coat closet. How are you today, Kira?

K

Kira Dorrian 01:38

I'm doing great. Thank you. How are you?

D

Deana Thayer 01:40

I'm well. I'm looking forward to this topic, not just because I'm a word nerd. And I care about the definitions and our vocabulary. And that we're clear on what we mean, when we're talking about these topics. Correction is a big one, right? We've done episodes on discipline, and who's the boss? And how do you handle this with your children. But I think we can easily leak over into criticism if we're not careful. So creating this distinction today, this is important.

K

Kira Dorrian 02:11

Yeah, I totally agree. This is definitely an area that I have to keep my eyes on all the time and pick my battles and think really carefully and critically about because it is really easy, especially as a Future Focused Parent, you want to make sure that you're instilling those values, you want to make sure that you're helping to shape these adults. But you don't want to be coming across like you're constantly criticizing your kids. And that is a very fine line. So I'm glad we're talking about it.

D

Deana Thayer 02:39

Yeah, what a great word, shaping, I think that's part of the pressure is we feel the weight of this responsibility of shaping a human. And so that's where this can go awry. And I would agree with you. It's something I have to watch, too. And I've said this, I believe, on the show before but part of why I have to watch it is an element of criticism, which I'm sure we'll get into just like what is, what are the nuts and bolts, what are the logistics here, is that also tone matters. And that's sometimes an area that I struggle with. So glad we're discussing it. So do you have a why?

K

Kira Dorrian 03:11

Oh yeah, I mean, I bet we're aligned too this week on our whys, but I, I just really never wanted my kids to feel like I thought they weren't good enough, that there's something wrong with them. I wanted them to understand that they're human, and that my job is to help shape them and teach them things, but that I don't expect them to know everything. And that to me, is it. I mean, you're the word nerd. So you're gonna have to do the definition here, I think. But in my mind, that's the big difference is like, I'm criticizing you, because you should know better, and you made a, you know, dumb choice, or whatever it is, and, and that wasn't okay. And you know, and I don't really love the concept of criticism in general, because it has that shame based piece. And you know how I feel about shame. But to me correction is, hey, part of my job is to teach you and shape you. And so I'm going to let you know how I need that to look different next time as a part of the shaping and the teaching. And I really wanted that to come across, like I don't expect you to know what to do, you're a child. I do expect you though, to listen to my teaching, as I help shape you, always be working to grow. So the why for me is really their experience, their feeling of what's coming at them. Are they feeling like they're a bad person, and they should know better, or are they feeling like they're a beautiful person who's learning and growing? And that's the why is I wanted that for them.

D

Deana Thayer 04:34

We are very aligned on our whys today. You were right. Yeah. And I also have just an extra layer because I have heard feedback from my own family that I can sometimes fall into the ditch on this side of the, the aisle here. And the way it's been expressed to me is not that I've been overly critical or unkind. But that when they say kind of, quote, arrive on something we've maybe been working on, that they were noticing I was like, okay, next. Without saying that, it was like, there's always something to fix. And I don't want my people feeling like that, like, oh, great, I got that sorted out. Now what's mom gonna come up with next that I have to work on? And that just didn't feel good to me at all. Again, this is where I'm once again, so grateful that I can invite feedback, because I might not have heard that if I hadn't asked, right? So while that is helpful, it also stings a little. And it I think, made me change tacks a little bit in terms of how I brought things up, how often I brought things up and the words I was using, just being really careful. And so yeah, my why completely matches yours. And then also, I had some work to do in this area based on feedback from my family. So it kind of made me double down on my efforts to be clear that I was going on the side of correction and not criticism.

K

Kira Dorrian 06:09

It's hard too because I think sometimes that, you know, our intention can be to not be critical. Because I struggle with this, too. I think my tone sometimes comes across as very

critical. Or I notice every little thing. It doesn't mean that I'm actually feeling critical. Does that make sense?

D

Deana Thayer 06:27

Absolutely.

K

Kira Dorrian 06:28

But it is really important that we're thinking about just because I didn't mean it that way doesn't mean it's not landing that way. And we do have to be modeling that for our kids that like, okay, yes, my intention matters. But actually, how it lands on you kind of matters too.

D

Deana Thayer 06:43

Yeah, their experience of our intention matters. So it may end up not matching, right? Our intention might be one thing and the impact on them might be something else. And so that, we've got to look at that. So probably helpful to just kind of start with some definitions. And I think we probably can both talk about how we see this because I know that we often bring kind of different perspectives to the table that are both really helpful. But for me, kind of my working definition, how I work with this in my household is this, is again, pulling apart that behavior and the person. So to me, correction of a behavior is a-okay. I love what you said earlier, we are teaching them so there are going to be those training moments, those learning opportunities, where it's like, hey, you didn't know that this is the right way to do it. I'm going to teach you how. And sometimes correction even needs to be, we need to see certain behavior. And I'm going to teach you what we would do instead. Right? So I think correcting behavior as a Future Focused Parent can be more than appropriate. I think where it can turn into criticism is when we're now unfortunately, I love that you also used the word shame. I think that's a piece of this is now criticism to me is about the person. Correction is you know what, it wasn't kind to say that to your sister. Criticism: YOU'RE unkind. That's very different, and how it lands is very different. So that's kind of how I look at it. You, you may have more to add, or I'd love hearing your perspective on how you've kind of defined these in your house.

K

Kira Dorrian 08:18

No, I completely agree. I think I love that you've put it that way. I think that's exactly right. The criticism evokes feelings of shame, feelings of negative self thinking. And correction is just, you know, I'd like that different next time. Like, it has nothing to do with who you are

as a person. It's just a, you know, like, oh, I prefer my socks folded all the way. You know, whatever that is. But I think what's very, very complicated here. And this is why I struggle with it. And I want to be really clear, as we're talking about this, you know, you and I both struggle with this. So parents, if you're struggling with this, like, that's okay. You're not alone. I don't get this right a lot of the time. So anything I share today is just stuff I'm learning and working on and growing in myself, please don't hear it as like an expert, because I am not an expert at this at all. But I think that what gets really complicated is that when we're talking about things that are interpersonal, and how people treat each other, it's hard not to feel that that's attached to who you are, no matter how it's presented. And so I think that's where it gets really blurry. It's not folded socks, it's really not. And, and, you know, I, even the most wonderful and loving correction for me, I still feel feelings about, right. And so I think, I mean we could, there's a whole episode on that. I mean, where that comes from, but as parents, we, we just have to do our best with this because society has taught us to feel shame, and it has taught us that we're bad people if we make mistakes, and so as parents, we're really just unpacking that all the time. And helping mitigate that all the time and doing our best to kind of let our kids know over and over and over again, this isn't about you or who you are. This is just about behavior and choices.

D

Deana Thayer 10:07

Mm hmm. I couldn't agree more. I think there's a lot of vulnerability tied to hearing any feedback about what you're doing in life. Even when I invite feedback from my husband or my children, even if it's very valid, and it's presented very kindly, I feel, I feel the sting of that. I don't know any other way to say it. Sting feels like the right word. Because even though it may not be an attack on my personhood, I think when we're being corrected, even gently, it does feel personal. So I think you're right. And I think this is extra tricky with children, because they're still developing their sense of worth and identity and belonging, and am I valued even when I make a mistake, right. So it, it is a big deal. So I can share something that is maybe a little bit of a practical tip for some components of correction to make sure it stays as correction. And then I'd love to hear, you know, your hows as well. So, for correction, I really want to make sure it has three components. And one is that I'm observing and acknowledging the behavior I'm seeing in a way that's not attacking. So it's very different to me, when I would catch myself saying, get off the grass, that's not your yard versus something like, oh, I noticed that you're stepping in the grass, I'd like you to come stay on the sidewalk because that grass belongs to the person in that house. You know, that's very different. And your child - this goes back to what you said earlier- your child probably didn't know. They haven't learned that just because the grass is in front of that house, it's their yard. Those are things again, we have to teach them. So when you acknowledge it without an accusation that is very different than, you're being naughty,

you're trespassing, you're being rude by being on that person's lawn, they might have not known it was someone's lawn. So even that teaching of like, oh, you know what? When you see grass in front of someone's house, that's their yard. And we don't step on that without being invited. Right? So that's very different. So that's one thing is, can we, it kind of goes back to that observe, that we talk about all the time, you're observing your children's behavior constantly, and you want to hear, they want to hear you verbally acknowledge it. That's how we can teach them, here's what I'm seeing, then we can talk through how to correct it. So acknowledging what you're seeing. Another one is really coming alongside them as they learn the lesson. So I have olders. So this is a cogent example. But right now it's tax season. And they're a few years into doing taxes, and still not quite doing them themselves. And I would love to hand this off. But I think when we're teaching for it to be correction and not criticism, it's not, why haven't you figured this out by now? This is your third year having a W-2! It's very different to say, okay, what support can I offer you? So we come alongside, even in that sidewalk example, it might be how could I help you stay on the sidewalk? Would you like to hold hands? Would you like to stand on the other side of me? While they're learning the lesson. It might be really tempting, the grass looks really fluffy and green. So how can I support you? That coming alongside piece is really important. And then there's a third element, I think this one's the hardest for me if I'm being honest, and that's kind of like trusting the process that they're not going to get it the first time. They may still see grass and jump on it the next week. But eventually they will learn as we're faithful to train them and gently remind oh, that's someone's yard, let's stay on the sidewalk, then it will work out. Or the same thing with okay, I'm, this year, I'm going to sit by you while you do your taxes, in case you have a question, but I'm not going to be on the computer doing it and just asking you for the information while I input it. Right? So it's like this slow delegation that we talked about. But we have to act on that. I think another thing that parents get nervous about is that they're nervous their correction will be seen as criticism, so then they don't do it at all. And, and as we've said so many times on the show, like a lack of discipline isn't what we're aiming at here. There, there are times where correction is necessary. So you do have to act on that. Oh, my goodness, that actually could, could work as the word ACT. I just figured out that's an acronym. My three steps, Acknowledge what you're seeing, Come alongside to help them, and Trust the process. There you go.

K

Kira Dorrian 14:34

I feel like I just got a window into how you do that. That's hilarious Oh, my goodness.

D

Deana Thayer 14:41

Scott told me the other day if he spent 30 seconds inside my brain, he'd need a nap.



Kira Dorrian 14:48

I totally concur. Oh, my goodness. So you just like the word ACT fell out of your mouth. And then all of a sudden, bing bing bing. It's like you assigned each of them, that's insanity and beautiful and I love you.



Deana Thayer 15:03

Perhaps it is a bit insane. I don't know.



Kira Dorrian 15:05

But like, in the best possible way, it's very impressive.



Deana Thayer 15:08

Well, thank you that my insanity is positive, I feel good.



Kira Dorrian 15:11

I mean, as if you didn't like already you started with like, here are the three components, right? So I mean, just like and now, and oh, and by the way, here's an acronym I made up four seconds ago.



Deana Thayer 15:22

I don't know, my brain is, it's a very, my brain even has systems I guess. It's an organized thing up in there. It is. Wow.



Future Focused Parenting 15:32

Hey, Raising Adults listeners and Future Focused Parents, our valuable FFPs, we just wanted to talk to you for a moment about our membership program. And we love having our listeners join membership and just really join the FFP family. We love having you be a part of this in a more involved way. And so we just want to highlight the three levels of membership. The first is only \$5 a month, literally the cost of a nice cup of coffee. And it's really just your way of kind of giving us a tip like you would tip your barista or your server if the podcast content has been helpful to you. And you would like to just say thank you, it's just \$5 a month, super accessible. And it does get you some things don't worry, you're not just giving us a tip and not getting anything. It makes you eligible for on air coaching calls,

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D

Deana Thayer 17:37

What about you? What are the things you've done?

K

Kira Dorrian 17:39

Well, I love that. First of all, I really, really I love that three component process, because I think they're all super important. And you know, I think, I think I do elements of that. I don't know that they're that organized in my brain. But I mean, I think there's elements of that, I think that the two things that I would want to share that have been helpful to me, and they're actually just two phrases. And you'll appreciate this, because we're all about the vocab here. But for me, it's two things that I try to say first. So when I open my mouth to correct, I try and have one of these two phrases come out of my mouth first, because I have found that they set me up really well. And they set the situation up really well. So I will either say, you don't know this. So I'm just letting you know now for next time. And then I'll kind of say whatever it is. So you know, like, oh, you know what, you don't know this. But next time, I just want you to know that, you know, when we're talking about X, Y or Z, it's actually really beneficial if you X, Y or Z. And so it, for me it does two things. It actually helps me calm down. Because you know, we talk all the time vocabulary matters. So when I am forcing myself to say, you don't know this so I'm just letting you know, it reminds me. They don't know this.

D

Deana Thayer 18:59

Yes.

K

Kira Dorrian 19:00

So I really don't have a right to be critical or upset with them about it. You know what I mean? Yes, I'm uncomfortable because maybe whatever happened was embarrassing, or I felt a little inappropriate, or whatever it is. But they didn't know. So it's okay for me to let them know, right? And then the other phrase is, hey, can I ask you to do something differently next time? And that's helped me too, again, for the exact same reason that it helps me calm down and realize that this isn't about right now this is just about helping them figure out what to do differently next time. The second part of why these two things are helpful is how it lands on them. Because like we said they're going to have feelings about it. Just the nature of being corrected I think stinks for a lot of people. And I think the nature of being corrected by Future Focused Parents who are kind of on the ball a lot and noticing things and really thinking critically about how we raise our kids and trying to shape and all of that. I think a lot of us do kind of lean in, into more noticeable things, than maybe parents that aren't as future focused. And so I think for those kids, this is an area we have to watch. So what happens for them is at least the vocabulary that's coming out can offset whatever feelings might come up for them. Because A: I'm calmer, so I'm more likely to present it in a calm and loving tone. And B: the first thing they're hearing is, this isn't about you, it's not your fault. I'm just letting you know, you know, all of the things I would want to impart. I'm leading with that. And those two things have been really helpful. And then, you know, sometimes they do still have feelings about it. And so then we can also talk through in more depth, what we've been saying, which is, I'll often say, hey, you know what? You didn't know. You're nine. I don't expect you to know that. Like, were you born knowing how to walk? Were you born, you know, and we'll talk through that, like, this is how you learn and grow. I'm only letting you know so that you'll learn and do it differently next time, that's my job. Your job is to listen and to, you know, do your best to try and make that change, but I don't expect it to be perfect, blah, blah, blah. So we'll have those conversations. And then sometimes the conversation needs to be, you know, this isn't about who you are, you're wonderful, you're a wonderful kid, this is just something that is, you know, something that's good to know for next time, or this is just important in how we move through the world, or whatever it is. So helping them pull apart the experience if the big feelings come up, because sometimes honestly, they do. And whether that's society, or the fact that they have a mom that, that doesn't always have the best tone, or they have a mom who you know, is future focused, and is always kind of thinking about these things, any of those things or all of those things could be what causes those feelings. So then my job is to also go okay, I may have also caused those feelings, so I have to be a part of unpacking them. And then the last thing I would just say is pick your battles. I do really try to let stuff go if I can. My first thought is almost

always can I let it go? Because there's so much I feel like I can't because we're Raising Adults. And there's a lot to think about there, that if it's something really small, and I think you know what, I'm going to let that one go. So that the next thing that comes along, it's not going to feel like double whammy, they're more likely to feel less yucky, and be more open to listening because I let this little tiny thing go.

D

Deana Thayer 19:20

Absolutely. I think it does make them more receptive too. So I have a future focused follow up question for you with your second phrase. Can I tell you how I'd like you to do that differently next time? I'm sure I'm paraphrasing and not getting it exactly right. What are your thoughts on, and I'm not saying you will, I know your people, and they're delightful. But I, I'm imagining that for some people there could come an age where the answer is no.

K

Kira Dorrian 22:43

Oh, yeah. Well, then I think you just rephrase it to I'd like to share something. You don't give the option.

D

Deana Thayer 22:50

Yes. All right. Yes. Is this when it shifts to, here's what I need from you going forward?

K

Kira Dorrian 22:53

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And I mean, there are times where I phrase it that way. I'm also trying to be better and more cognizant of when is actually a good time to have that conversation, which has been a real challenge for me, because you and I, I think are both this way. Like I like to fix things right here, right now, in the moment. I want it resolved, I want it done. I want to move on. And part of that is just how crazy busy life is. But part of it is also I don't like feeling uncomfortable. And I don't want to forget, and you know, all these things that swirl for me. But what I have found, is that sometimes saying like, hey, is this a good time for me to ask you about a situation I'd like you to handle differently next time? You know, now that mine are a little bit older, sometimes has saved me a world of pain, because they'll be like, um, no. Actually I'm reading my book. And I'm really into it. And I'll say okay, well, you know, when would be a good time? And they always offer one like, how about bedtime mom, or how about after dinner? And that allows me to really show up for how and when they feel they are in the right headspace to hear that information. Because that's really important too. And again, it takes some of the criticism away. It's not like you did something wrong. And I have to tell you right now, and you have

to fix it right now, it moves into more of a posture of hey, we need to problem solve something. Your feelings about that and your engagement really matters to me. How can we find a time to do that well together? I mean, you're not saying all of that. But that's the message that it sends?

D

Deana Thayer 24:17

Yes, it does. And we use some vocabulary around this idea too, which is the word receive. So different than I'm just hearing it, can I actually receive what's coming toward me? And so we actually will ask each other. Are you in a place where you can receive some feedback right now? And I love that they can say, you know, I, I'm not. I'm not in a place where I can receive that. And then we can try again. So it's, because you're right. I mean, there's more to it than just hearing it. They have to also be at a place where, can they really internalize it, take it in, ask some questions about it, maybe talk about their feelings about it and then be ready to implement those changes going forward. That is a more complete process than just, I heard the feedback but kind of dismissed it. So there's also some...

K

Kira Dorrian 25:02

Yeah.

D

Deana Thayer 25:02

There has to be willingness and buy in from the person hearing the feedback that they're in a place to be ready. So I think that's wonderful. The last thing I want to say is just about criticism, and that I shared this idea at the top of the episode that this is really more about the person. So correction is, hey, you know, I did something that wasn't great. Whereas criticism can really land like, I'm not great. And I, just because and I, I'm really speaking to myself here, too. I want that to be clear, as I admitted at the top, like, this came from feedback that this is an area I have to work on, is one thing that I've learned is that there are elements to criticism even if there isn't overt language, that it's about the person. So even if I don't say to one of my children, you're being selfish, or that was really lazy of you. Even if I'm not saying that, there are other indicators that I can watch for that maybe I'm ramping up in a way where although my words might be correction, I'm actually coming across as criticism. So a few for me are volume, tone, and then nonverbal communication. So am I getting louder? And maybe I didn't even mean to, but my own frustration is starting to kind of leak out and my, my volume is getting louder and louder as the conversation progresses. Or as I share the feedback, is my tone maybe snarky instead of calm and kind? That makes a difference. And what about my face and my

body? Are my arms crossed? Am I scowling? Trying to just take a little bit of a physiological inventory and be aware of those things has been really helpful to me, because I think it's easy for me, especially when I first got this feedback, I was a little defensive, because I was like, I don't say things like that. But how I was saying what I was saying, made that land as though it were critical of their personhood. And that really is a powerful thing to just think about. So I just wanted to share that.

K

Kira Dorrian 27:06

I love that. And actually, that's a beautiful segue to the last thing I wanted to say, because I think we have to talk about when they're really tiny as well. And we can't be like, you know, to a two year old, are you able to receive feedback right now?

D

Deana Thayer 27:17

Right?

K

Kira Dorrian 27:18

Right. And I think what you're saying right there, that is the kicker, because you're setting this tone when they're small for what is correction gonna look like in my home. And we talked about on the you asked, we answer episode about, you know, the, those first couple years, you're learning the language, and you're learning how you're going to do this. And so I think with those levels, what Deana just said, those three things are so important. And again, you don't have to get it perfectly. But if you've got littles, use those early years to practice those three things, to practice your volume, practice your tone, practice your body language, because littles pick up on all that stuff. And they might not even understand your vocabulary. So if you, you could be doing the vocabulary piece perfectly, and that would have no benefit to them whatsoever, because they don't actually understand it, they're going to be picking up on those three things that Deana just mentioned. So I think thinking, you know, chronologically, when they're small, looking at, you know, what's happening vocally for you with volume and tone, what's happening with your body when you're presenting, and then working on that vocab, so that when they get older, now you've set this tone of when I present, you know, correction, I do it in this calm and loving way. My body language is open and warm. And I use these words that as they get older, they're going to understand, and you're gonna then get to a point where you have nine year olds and can say, hey, are you in a place to have this conversation right now? And they're gonna feel that loving, warm tone from you. This is, of course, best case scenario, because Deana and I both, like, we can talk a great game, I do all of these things, but I don't always do them perfectly. So it's, it's really this is about just doing the

best that you can. Because the truth is, we were not all raised this way. The generation before us was not an emotionally intelligent generation or they were not focused on raising emotionally intelligent kids. So not a lot of us had loving correction modeled for us.

D Deana Thayer 29:16

Yeah, we're more parenting into the great unknown. We're doing, we're kind of trailblazing and doing it for the first time. And I don't do this perfectly, or even consistently, every time either. So it's a continual growth process. But we're also humans who are growing and we're going to make mistakes sometimes.

K Kira Dorrian 29:32

Yep. And we have to use that same correction with ourselves when you get it wrong. Like, okay, I got that wrong. That's okay. How can I lovingly remind myself how I'd like to do that differently next time?

D Deana Thayer 29:43

Yeah. That ability to be gentle with ourselves is sometimes the most challenging. Well, FFPs, thanks for tuning in today and joining us with this dialogue about correction versus criticism and how are those two different and how do we ensure that as Future Focused Parents we're landing squarely in the camp of correction. And as much as possible, not leaking over into criticism, such an important thing as we raise our adults. And as Kira just said, it's a foundation you can lay early by how you sound and how you look when you're delivering correction. Even with a real wee one. So that's so important. For those of you who've been faithful listeners, we thank you. If you have not yet subscribed, though, I think you should take the opportunity to do it. It's one simple button, click the button.

K Kira Dorrian 30:29

Now's a good time.

D Deana Thayer 30:30

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Future Focused Parenting 30:59

Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer, and recorded partially in Kira's laundry room, partially in my coat closet. Editing by Allison Presinger. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



31:10

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