

Raising Strong Children Part 1

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:06.7] ANNOUNCER: Next is Dr. Charlene Wrighton to discuss everything early education about your children or students in our new show, Ed. Talks with Dr. Char.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:21.4] CW: Hello. This is Dr. Char Wrighton. Today's topic is called raising strong children. It will be a part one to next weeks' part two. This week's topic is a little hard to hear, than topics in the past, which have been more matter-of-fact coming from a person who has been the field of education for over 46 years.

I think last week, or a couple of weeks ago, we heard about the shooting in Colorado. and it really caused me to think. I really wanted to share my thoughts with you, because we are all in the business of helping. I mean, those who listen to these podcasts more likely are participating in the activity of raising young children, whether you are a parent, or you're a grandparent involved in the rearing of your children's children, or just participating in the family and teachers who teach early childhood.

This is something that really cost me to think. I wanted to share this, because it was definitely on my heart. When a gunman entered a classroom in a school in Colorado, three young men leaped up from their desks and without a word, and fought for their own safety when they spotted the gun. They raced to the gunman and pinned him to the wall. This gunman was a classmate of theirs, so this is somebody they knew.

They slammed him against the wall as I said, struggled with him when the shots rang out. Kendrick Castillo who led the charge slipped to the ground and at that point died. His close friend, Brendan Bialy wrestled the gun away and he called out to Castillo, but there was no sound coming back. Had they not rushed the gunman, more students would have been injured, or killed. Kendrick went out as a hero, his friend Bialy said.

He was a foot away from the shooter and instead of running in the opposite direction, he ran towards it. This really caused me to wonder what would possess someone without thinking, like a lot of times we'll analyze things. We will analyze cost. If I do this, how will this affect me? These three young men didn't have time to think. They didn't have time to set out a game plan. They didn't converse among themselves what should we do. They saw the threat and they acted instantly.

Not only did it touch my heart, the heart of the nation, because when you hear about especially Kendrick who lost his life, it made me wonder and I'm sure, so many people, what it causes somebody to rush towards danger, instead of away from it? Our natural proclivity is to be self-protective and to hide, or to run away.

As a person who's raised children, grandchildren as well, you participated with that, taught in the classroom and now have Safari Learning Academy, our learning center. Being surrounded by children for over 46 years, it has – I can't think know, what kind of a person does this? Then when you think about it, these are teenagers. Teenagers are not known for unselfish behavior, most of them. Forgive the stereotype, but teenager has a tendency to be a very self-centered time of a young person's life as they're trying to navigate the world and figure out who they are in the world. Their needs are their highest concern at the time.

Here are three young people who did not give any thought to themselves, or themselves, but only – I'm not even sure they thought of others. They just saw the threat and did something about it. Then this was the same time as a Memorial Day, and which then led me to think about all those men and women who put their lives and are still putting their lives on the line right now and have since time immemorial, to protect their home, their community, their country as in World War I and World War II. They were protecting basically the freedom over the world.

What makes people take up arms to move against a threat when you know it's dangerous? Then of course, I'm thinking about firefighters and police officers, the sheriff department, anybody who – the CHP person who's in the car dealing with things on the road, a motorcycle police. I'm always baffled by extremely courageous people, because I haven't been pressed into being courageous like that. I have a tendency to be very protective of self and family.

I would say, the brave people obviously really amaze me and do give me pause for thought. As I'm thinking about this whole thing, one thing leading to another I thought, "How do we raise children then to be this person? This person who would rush to danger, or rush to protect a person who cannot protect themselves."

I started thinking about what are the qualities that we want young people to have in order to be the person that could stand up, if not, because of a violent threat, but may even stand up for someone who can't speak for themselves. Somebody who might go against a group, like in say, junior high or high school or elementary school, to stand with someone who's being bullied, to protect that person to stand up for that person. What can we do to raise children who are going to be so strong inside that they can't be bullied? That they can rise above the taunts of others. That they can be so loving and so protective over other people that the thought of self is secondary.

What I'm going to offer are just thoughts. When I offer any kind of a fathering opinion, I do so lightly with no thought that is the end-all be-all. I am not one who sits on a mountaintop and ruminates for a lifetime. These are things out of my own experience and a lot of research. I offer them as ways of perhaps, stimulating you to analyze and think about this. Because as we are raising children, whether we are a parent, a grandparent or an early childhood teacher, or even any teacher, we set standards daily. We're forever reminding children of the behavior that they need to develop into the behavior, or something that takes a long time to formulate, and so whether it's positive or negative.

The suggestions that I give are suggestions that I think are obviously important to grow strong citizens. I want to dig deeper today, because I've talked about behaviors so many different times in the radio shows. This is something I was thinking of – I was still absolutely baffled. I would love to meet the parents of these children, these teenagers and say, "What were they like? What did you do as parents to grow them into this, this person who reacts with such positive movement forward towards danger? What did you do so that I can even do that even more and that I can help you with your family, your classrooms?"

Natural, a normal and acceptable response is to protect oneself and to move away from danger. These men did split-second thinking. They did not, like I said, talk to their buddies and say, "Hey, let's create a game plan to take this guy down." They just reacted. This shows me that

there's something inside that was so automatic. They say that if you do something enough, it becomes so automatic, like driving for instance, so that you can react better. This is why training is so important, regardless of what you do, so that you don't have to think of the processes. You just react and you react positively.

Do these young men instantly become men of courage, or were they raised to have a discipline and inner strength to become men of courage when it was most needed? What makes a fireman go into a burning building? Police officers to move towards dangerous people? Military people. Every day people who'd step in front of a wild animal. I just read that the other day, a man was protecting his daughter from five ravaging dogs, people who will go into the ice to pick out somebody who has fallen into the ice, has so often losing their own mind; other people who will literally respond quickly to save another human being, or to protect them.

The following suggestions are here for you to think about and analyze. Now this is not exhaustive. Hopefully, I will add to it next week, either in the suggestions, or maybe even take things in a little bit more in depth. When we're talking about families, there are so many families out there that are – Oh, God. I hate to use the word typical, because I don't think there is really a typical family. Where you have maybe ease in the home financially and stability. We know that's not always the case and we also know that fine young people come from homes where there is adversity and that adversity has made them stronger.

I want to make sure that when you're listening, you're not – if you're in a situation where you were a single parent, or you're a grandparent raising children because your own children cannot, and you have odds against you, or you're struggling to make ends meet, that you're not saying, “Well, I cannot raise a strong healthy child, because I'm in adverse situations.” Often, we can use that adversity as we talk of our children to help them realize that we can still be successful, regardless. I think that is so important, because I don't think life is easy. In the most easiest of situations, I think life is challenging.

Here are a few. I think I've got 10 here. I just want to take it slowly, giving you some time to think. Of course, we always ask for feedback. Any time you want to call, or e-mail me, please feel free and call Zoo-phonics. You can e-mail me. I'll give you our numbers at the end of the broadcast. I love to hear your thoughts. Please add your own. If you have an experience that you've had where something was significant to you, or something helped you, I'd love to hear it.

First of all is having positive adult role models, whether it is a parent or parents, whether it is an aunt, uncle, grandparents, or a friend, or a teacher. That is in the child's life and actually plant seeds of greatness in there somehow, somehow that lasts a lifetime. These positive role models gives that child something to remember deep in the subconscious. Something that they might not have upfront in the conscious mind where they're thinking about it, but it's so deeply ingrained that it becomes ours.

As we are working with our children and talking with them, we're bringing those qualities up to the surface so they can be more cognitive and remembered. Children learn by what they see and what they hear, by what they experience, for good and for bad. If a child is told that they're worthless, that's what they're going to remember. If a child is told that they're loved and they're worthy and they feel that they're respected and listened to and cared for, then that is going to last a lifetime. Both of these, whether it's negative or positive are what they are going to potentially do with their own children someday.

That is certainly a concern for me, because being in the field of education, I've seen too many hurting children that then grow up and are not able to escape always that childhood. Being a positive role model first of all, it's just action, it's just doing, having the adult do the right thing, and so that children can see adults doing the right thing. Because they are going to have to grow up in a world where there are many, many people who do not do the right thing in their own – in their schools, perhaps of their families, perhaps in the community and certainly in the world. They have to realize that that's not the way they want to grow up to be.

It just makes life so much harder for them and for everybody else around them. That positive role model is a point of action where you're actually showing the child how to behave. Obviously, that is really, really important.

Number two is talking with the child. Because not only do you want them to see you the parent, or you the teacher, or whoever you are, acting with integrity, being a strong individual and a strong person, but by talking to your child, you're literally helping them to analyze and to think. You're bringing it up to their cognitive level. Cognitive always means to me, bringing it up to a conscious level so that they're aware of that behavior.

Now they're seeing people with integrity, but they're also having you sit with them and talk about it, which is really, really important. When we're talking to a toddler, we're using simple words and few words, because too many words are going to baffle them and they don't have the vocabulary. That's where action counts; how you say something, how you do something, something that they watch and as they grow older, it's going to add to their memory banks, to their understanding, to their personal behavior.

Listen more than you talk with the little guys. I feel sometimes, we are and I've said this way too often in my radio shows, because I feel I never want to lived it. Number two, try not to live it and never three, spent a lot of time reminding parents, grandparents and teachers to listen to children. I was a fast-moving mom. I had to remember constantly to slow down, to stop, just to literally stop, to get down in the child's physical level and vocabulary level and to look them in the eyes and just listen, just take that time to listen. Because during that listening time as you're giving eye contact, you're giving them a message that these moments with them are delightful for you and that they're worthy of being listened to, that they were important.

I think, because we are, we do seem to be busier and busier all the time. We've got so much to fill our day. We're working, we're racing to get to work, to childcare, to grocery store, from one place to the other, to dance, to gymnastics, just for us whatever it is, we spend a lot of time racing. Then when you add technology that now further interrupts our social interaction with our family members, all you have to do is go into a restaurant, it is [inaudible 0:17:11.3]. Believe it or not, sometimes I just like that and I have to look at around and see everybody on their iPhones. Then you stop looking in each other's eyes and you stop talking.

I just remind you to get quiet time, even it's just right before bedtime, or during dinner. Dinner time is such a wonderful time to have conversation. Any time, I remember changing my children's diapers and just chattering with them and repeating the sounds of that each child make as they're talking, or making sounds, so that they knew that I was listening. It didn't really matter. I mean, it didn't matter what I could say. They were learning vocabulary words and they were listening to sounds. It was all important and instructive in that deep subconscious way.

It was also me looking at them and talking and smiling. I feel we just need to do that from the time that a baby is born. In fact, I love that holding the belly, that have tummy when the baby is in there, that cradling, that mental, spiritual, emotional connection with that child in the womb,

it's just so special and so magical. It just must not stop. It must continue. I truly feel that if a child is listened to and life slows down enough to be listened to, the child grows up to feel they are worthy of being listened to.

Often, we have children who are completely lost in life, because other children don't like them, or other children taught them, or parents are impatient, or angry with their own lives, and so that they're not getting the being listened to time that is so critical to a person's feeling of self-worth and self-love and checking. It is really important.

We need to give our children consistent guidance. When I say consistent, I mean daily. I want to make sure and I've said this before different radio shows that we can't just be saying, "No, no, no. Stop it. I've already told you this. How many times do I have to tell you?" All that does is tear children down, not build children up. The best way of being consistent with behavior is to tell them what you expect, what you need, what you want and tell them how to get there.

If they're misbehaving, at that point you say, "No, that's not okay. This is what I want." Tell them instead. There has to be an instead, so that they can fully understand what you want. Your job is to protect and guide. It must be consistent. You need to establish rules for the protection, for health, for well-being, you need to set the consequences if misbehaving occurs and you need to follow through, and all of this needs to be done on that, with love and respect. Even if you're frustrated, the child needs to be respected. The calm guidance and you make a promise, you've got to keep it, but you do it out of love and respect. You don't do it out of anger, or frustration. This is really critical.

You need to talk to children and share with them on a consistent basis, not just a one time, or one a year, about heroes, about strong people. It could be your family history, a grandparent, people in family, people that you read about in the newspaper, listen to about the news, bring those up to your children and spend some time talking about what are the qualities that led this person to make this decision, to try to help another person? What was that character or quality inside that person who went above and beyond?

If you talked about qualities like this often, it's easier to establish behavior fantasy in children. This time, and then again listen, let them talk about it and share what they think. Let them analyze. Again, as when they're young, fewer words. As they grow and mature, add to that

dialogue that you two had or three have going, or the whole family. Definitely talk about heroes. I'm talking about everyday heroes. We have heroes and we have hero action figures. I'm talking about the everyday people who so often are not trained to be heroes. They just somehow have it inside of them. That's really our goal is to help children become those kind of people. You must teach children how to respect and not how to, but yes, I guess it is a how to, but how to respect other people. It starts at home. There's a song, let peace on earth and let it begin with me. It has to begin at home. It has to begin in the tight family circle. Then again, it doesn't mean the family circle is a cookie-cutter, perfect, nothing wrong with that family. It means, regardless of the circumstances, we still have a potential to become the best we could be and to be the best we can be.

If we teach children to not be afraid of differences and not be afraid of others, and to respect them regardless of skin color, or belief systems, or clothing, or even a person with a disability, children, especially preschoolers they're so curious. They observe and notice so much and they have a tendency to have really loud voices when they're saying, "Mommy, why is that person like that?" Yeah, it's one of those embarrassing moments that every parent has gone through.

I have a memory of my own, where we were at church and it was this very nice-looking gentleman who had a patch on his eye and he had a prosthetic on his leg. My daughter being very strong one, in a very loud voice asked why he looked like that. I was for quite, because I wanted her to hear from me, "Let's not talk in a loud voice and I will explain about this later." I did say, that he obviously has lost part of his leg. I did try to explain.

What she did and granted, she was not an adult at the time, thank God. She was about two-years-old. She would have been kicked his prosthetic. That wasn't great. We did discuss it later and it was very difficult not to laugh hilariously, but it certainly was a teachable moment. Of course, I had to go to the guy saying, "I am so sorry." He just laughed about it and thought it was hilarious. Thank God.

Anyway, children can either be extremely inquisitive, or they can be fearful and we certainly don't want them to be fearful. This is such a great teachable moment, because you can talk about there are people with disabilities, with whatever it is, whether it's sight, or hearing, or walking in a wheelchair, or missing a limb, or whatever. It is a time to talk about this, but

perhaps not to wait until one sees one, but maybe even ahead of time, so that we can teach children not to be verbal, but to appreciate and to be kind and to be sensitive.

We also need to teach children to be respectful of property. As someone who owns a very large preschool, I watch children, adorable, fabulous children tear pages out of books and write on the walls with crayons. They're just fast-moving. If they have their trash can emptying their food into a trashcan, if it falls on the ground it's like, they don't notice. What we want to do is help children to be respectful of things, as well as people, because it is very, very important.

We need to teach children to pick up their toys when they're done with them. We need to learn to early in life where we have them even pick up their clothes and we might need to teach them how to fold things, to put them in drawers, how to put away their laundry, even as little guys. Empty the trash, clear the dishes, these are all important things to teach strength and character. Being strong means not always getting what you want when you want it. This is such a critical thing to teach early in childhood, because children – our race from the time they're born basically, they have their needs met instantly. I cry, I get a bottle, or I get milk in some form, I get a pacifier, I get held, I get changed. The needs are met instantly, and they should.

As a child grows older, they need to learn how to live by time delays. It also means, I'll get to you in a minute. I can't do it right now. That's a tough one, because children are demanding and they are literally trained to demand and receive on demand. As they get older, that's just a life impossibility. We absolutely do not want to raise our high school child to instantly have what they want. It's just not life, because it's not – that's not what's going to happen in the [inaudible 0:26:47.1].

We need to teach children how to delay their needs, how to respect – perhaps, the fact is you're tired and you can't get to it right now, or there's other children that they have to wait on. Having to delay gratification is extremely important, because it does teach children to be patient. We need to teach children how to be patient.

Well, I've run out of time and I'm going to leave behind just one of my favorite quotes and then I have a lot more to share with you next week. Here's one from A. A. Milne that I learned as I was a little child, because I was a Winnie the Pooh fan. A. A. Milne was the British author who wrote

it and that is, promise me you'll always remember, you're braver than you believe, you're stronger than you see and you're smarter than you think.

Give us a call if you need us, or e-mail us at char@zoophonics.com, char@safarilearning.com, or call the radio station. Bye-bye.

[OUTRO]

[0:27:46.5] ANNOUNCER: That was Ed. Talks with Dr. Char. You've been listening on KAAD-LP Radio, live on 103.5 FM, or streaming online at kaad-lp.org. If you would like to have Dr. Char answer any of your questions, please e-mail your question to dr_char@zoophonics.com. Thanks for listening and stay tuned for what's next on KAAD-LP Radio.

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