

Early Ed Talk with Dr. Char 27 - Raising Strong Children Part 2

[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: Today's topic called Raising Strong Children is the part two from last week's part one. As I stated on the part one, this is a little harder to hear than previous radio shows, just because it's based on some recent history that we've all most of us have heard and I told the story about the three young high school students that ran to a gun man who was literally going to attack other students and pinned him down, got the gun out of the hand and one young man, Kendrick Castillo lost his life over it.

From that, made me wonder, what was inside these three students who didn't have a chance to think about it, they didn't have a chance to make a game plan. I'm not sure they even gave each other eye contact. They saw the threat and they rushed towards it. I was baffled, what causes someone who basically has been on earth for such a short time to react with such heroics?

I also mentioned the fact that it was close to Memorial Day where we are celebrating men and women who literally put their lives on the line so that we could have the freedom in our country and our world. Police officers, sheriff department, fire fighters, CHP, you name it, anybody who is trained to go into harm's way, to face danger, to run towards danger, to me is a baffling behavior because I do believe, I would probably have the chance to be more self-protective and anyway, I'm just so amazed at this behavior.

As an educator and as a mother, as a grandparent, I wanted to think about what qualities in people do we give them and when does it start? Does it start in childhood? Is this a long dialog that maybe these parents have talked to their children and bred in them or was it just done by watching a parent have the strength of character or did some of these children or these teenagers come from adverse situations where maybe they didn't have the role models? I don't know.

[0:02:49.7] CW: I don't have the information. It just caused me to think, what is it that creates great human beings? Everyday people, not super heroes that we read in comic books and we see on the screen. But every day people doing heroic things, putting their lives first. I think of the people who are facing floods right now where they're just other people who are leaving family and home and perhaps their own homes are under water and they're protecting other people.

The fires that we've been fighting here in California and other places. Heroics is an everyday occurrence, a car crash on the freeway and where people run to the fire or run to the accident, whatever to help other people without thought of themselves. It's just a magnificent thing that human nature has and I'm trying to analyze, what can we do to literally raise children to be suave like this.

So that when and if the time ever arises, they don't think but they act. They act in intelligent way so that it's effective. Some of the – again, I gave a few suggestions and I want to do a recap of those, a recapitulation on those, because I want us to think again about them so that I will be very brief because I want to get to the ones that I didn't have time to discuss and so that we can spend some time with that but first of all, having a positive role model in the home or in the school.

We do come sometimes, too many of us have adverse things happen in our lifetime. I would say that in my childhood, I had a perfect home. I had loving parents, happily married, I had two brothers and a sister, we weren't rich, we weren't poor, we were very middle. We had what we needed and even if we didn't, I think we were just so happy.

[0:04:47.7] CW: On the other hand, at 12, my dad died unexpectedly, and it threw my life into adversity and that adversity of course made me stronger because I had to constantly deal and cope with this huge loss that I didn't understand.

On the other hand, it caused me to be fearful for such a long time and I had to overcome that so yes, adversity makes us strong. I think that we again, that's my educational bout that's deep in me that says, we need to prepare children before they have to meet up with adversity because life is full of adversity and whether it's a pet dying or a beloved grandparent dying or a friend getting sick or injured or whatever it is, life happens.

You know, it could be the parent loses the job and now there's not the financial stability that there once was or there's a divorce in the family. There's something that shapes and rocks the child's world. Rather than have things hit children as they're growing up unexpectedly because we haven't discussed these and a lot of times, we don't want to talk about this.

Maybe life moves so fast to us, for us, we're so busy just surviving, just getting through the days that we don't really think in terms of sitting down and talking with our children, but we need to. It's imperative, because we want to raise our children to be prepared and to have those strong qualities that are inside deeply in them that they are able to react to any situation with a calmness and an internal strength and quality that is magnificent because of a young person can learn this early.

[0:06:41.3] CW: Think what this person is going to be like. I was thinking today, this happened, it was so touching. One of our little boys who has been a daily handful. He is just precious and he's wonderful, but he has a daily handful. He turned to a friend, I'm getting choked up just thinking about this because it was such a precious moment.

He turned to – they were lined up ready to go in the playground and he turned to hit the person behind him, he wrapped his arms around her and he said, I'm sorry. This child moved so fast, I was just amazed that he was aware that his friend behind him was hurting in some way. I'm not even sure what happened, maybe he accidentally bumped into her. I don't know.

This child who moves so fast through life and has to be constantly reminded how to behave. Here is this child wrapping his arms around having care for another human being and the child's three years old. It was one of those wonderful moments and had to be recognized, we had to say to that child, what a kind person you are.

That's the early raising of children so that they can be those tender hearted, even though they're fast moving, children that are aware of other people's needs and other people's concerns. Having positive role models, whether it's a parent, both parents, it's a friend and uncle, grandparents or the teacher that works with that child during the day.

It's got to be somebody that can help that child realize that he or she can do great things in life or even if it's on the small level. As a child, my sister Gigi who, my co-partner in the whole zoophonics endeavor, had a saying on her wall, in her classroom, at all times, and I ended up having it on my wall. I should really add that to our safari room because it's so wonderful.

I may not be able to do great things in great ways, what I can do great things in small ways. I think that's more like the everyday people. I think that's a goal that we need to set for our – we don't want to march overhead, the opportunity to do great gigantic things like invent something that the cure for cancer.

[0:09:20.7] CW: Whatever it is, then we want to encourage them. But we also want to raise our children to do everyday things that may go unnoticed, kind things, acts of kindness that again comes from that inner strength. Having children do small things in lovely wonderful caring ways is significant and we need to teach that.

When I talk about strong role models, that's that, where the child watches the everyday behavior of that parent or grandparent or whoever it is. Whether it's just working hard and developing that hard work ethic.

Or, taking time, I remember my dad working in the – paying contractor and he worked in the desert heat and it would get up to 170 degrees and he'd be outside working and for some reason, he'd do that eight, 10 hours a day but for some reason, he has the time and energy to come home and toss a frisbee with me or a baseball or talk, or read, or build a campfire at night time and roast potatoes and corn and make camp coffee.

That's the memory of my dad and I lost him at a young age, I will never forget that. That somehow, no matter how exhausted he was, he had a million excuses to say I'm too tired. But he didn't. It's that kind of everyday quality, that wonderful role model. It's that man of action, that woman of action, a beloved grandparent who could be the strength and the stability of the family where the history of that person's that's gone through, that is shared and family heritage or legacy.

[0:11:12.6] CW: The next one was consistent guidance. We need to establish the rules; we need to be fearless on saying no to our children and I find it sometimes that's the hardest. We love our children so much that we have difficulty saying no.

We also go under the hood which is much easier. However, it is imperative for us to say no calmly, with love and respect, we set the consequences and we follow through with the consequences, don't make promises that you're not going to keep because children learn very quickly that they don't have to stop the inappropriate behavior because you're not going to do anything about it.

If you do that, if you have a child who is three years old or two years old, who is unruly and you don't do anything about it, that child at four years old is going to be the same, and five, and six and junior high and high school and as adults. If a behavior doesn't change and I have that conversation with children and parents for my whole 46 years of teaching.

Also an extra as raising children of my own. We need to listen to children and we need to listen more than we talk, but we do need to talk with our children and we have to make sure that our children understand our words. We often we say too many words and if we're cranky and frustrated and maybe we say them too loudly or too harshly.

[0:12:35.9] CW: But we need to have conversations with children based on their level and their ability that it needs to be consistent and we need to be able to help them to analyze their thoughts so that they can analyze for themselves when they're not with you.

We need to show children examples of others strong people and have conversations about them so again, that they can analyze and that they can add this to their thought processes and memory banks. We need to teach children to respect each other of all ages, cultures, creeds. It's beyond tolerance. We're such a world who discusses tolerance all the time and yet show such intolerance at times and way too often.

I was thinking about the word tolerant or tolerate and I was thinking, gosh, if my husband say I tolerate you, I'd be crushed, I don't want to be tolerated, I want to be loved and appreciated and respected. It isn't just I tolerate you with some annoyance.

I am irritated by your differences, it's appreciation, it's okay for other people to look different, sound different, behave differently. We have to learn not to be afraid of them, we need to teach our children not to be afraid and I have mentioned, this include skin color, different clothing, a disability that is evident to the eye, children are very curious.

[0:14:02.1] CW: We have to teach children just to be patient and kind and appreciative of others. We need to teach children to respect property, children can be very rough with property, they have a tendency to throw things, toss things, tear things, crayons on the wall and we have to teach children that those – it's not okay behavior if we don't stop that behavior, it continues.

It's just something that we need to do at very young that becomes so automatic to children so that they understand. We need to teach children to that being strong means that we have to literally deny or postpone something that we want right now. As I stated last week, children are raised in the womb or let's say the birth to get what they need instantly.

We cry, we get changed, we cry we get fed, we cry, we get picked up, we cry we get bundled with blankets or whatever it is. Or snuggled or held, loved. Hence the child grows older, children do need to learn to wait. Children need to learn to be patient, children cannot have everything they want.

It is our job to say no to children. If it's candy or dessert before dinner. No, you may not stay up all night long, no, you may not be on the iPad or the telephone or cellphone playing games constantly. You do need to go outside and play in the sunshine. We have to say no to children, we have to say when we walk into Walmart or the store, no. You may not have a toy, regardless of any kind of tantruming that goes on.

[0:15:40.9] CW: Because if you develop that early age, they're not going to have that need for immediate gratification as junior high school kids. That is such an important quality to develop. Our children need to be able to say no when parents are not around.

You need to raise children to be able to have that quality where they can say no without worry about peer pressure. We all know that that is one of the greatest things that kids in junior high cope with even in early college and if they are not strong enough to go against what the crowd

says or the best friend says then you have children who are basically following and so often get into trouble and again. And again, part of that is self-gratification.

We have the learn to delay it that is just part of life. And so, as we deal with our children, we can say no to them that without feeling guilty and explain why. It is always important to say why and then also to teach them to be patient leaving that, just give them a minute and I'll be right there. We also need to teach our children not to be victims and this is a tough one because life is challenging, and it is challenging at any age.

And even in the most perfect of circumstances just say no to their child is that first initial, "What? No? What do you mean by no?" has that first adverse moment in a child's life is not to get what they want when they want it. And so again, that is so important, and children have a tendency to pick up on, "That's not fair" a feeling of unfairness. It is always interesting to me because they get this naturally. Literally, I can't remember in adulthood verbalizing very often with "Well, that's not fair."

And meaning that because I think for so long I have known that life isn't fair. It is not something that is going to catch me by surprise. So therefore, if we are not saying that at home, how do our children have that natural understanding and concept of things not being fair, but they do, and they gain it so young. I would say by three years old children have a very strong feeling of what's not fair. If a child has another toy, it's not fair, you know something that they want.

[0:18:10.8] And it is not fair for that moment that child needs to have whatever that other child has and if they don't get it, it's not fair and I feel like parents, grandparents and teachers need to bring up the conversation not just as it happens but before it happens that life, every single day life provides moments that are literally not fair and it happens all the time whether somebody cuts in front of you when you are trying to get a parking space at Walmart or the bigger things in life.

When you have a tremendous disappointment or a tremendous hurt. The news is constantly speaking of life things that are not fair that catch people unawares. The shooting in Colorado and we have far too many for example, the hurricanes, the fires, these just hit people unexpectedly. They didn't expect it and it is not fair to these innocent people, but that is the way

life is. It catches us unexpectedly. You know roofs being ripped off ceilings because of a tornado.

Trees coming down on houses, these are frightening and terrifying moments of fire threatening us. These are all terrifying and we need to teach children early that first of all that parents are there to protect them and that parents will do everything they can to protect them but not all things work out okay and that not all things are perfect in life and that not all things are fair and so often they aren't, but we rise above the adversity and we have to teach this in children out of their young age in little things.

It starts by the little things. But we have to teach this inner strength number one by watching other people have inner strength, by hearing about people with inner strength and by becoming people that have inner strength and it needs to happen young. Being a victim is that "poor me" attitude and we all fall into it. I fall into it when I get cranky and I start complaining, when things frustrate me, I have a tendency to be very verbal and I want to share with the world why I am frustrated.

[0:20:40.3] Not a pleasant person to be around at times. I have to remember also that life isn't fair when things aren't perfect because it certainly would give me a more realistic view of what the world really is like, but we also have to teach children. Children listen from an early age that because again, it is that victimhood "Poor me, I want something different and I want it now" that's just the way things are. So children are going to face things in life that you know what?

I am just thinking about this, a child walks through the house you got the news on, it could be absolutely terrifying to that young child if for some reason that you are a lot of times we think are going over a child's head and very often they don't and it can cause such fear. If a child does hear something, you do need to stop at that moment and discuss it or discuss it later but definitely discuss it soon. On the other hand, I ask you to be very aware of what your children hear you talk about.

Hear on the news, on television, movies that you are watching. I am going to give you an example of something happened in my life that I always wondered because I honestly felt I've got the best parents I could possibly have. They were amazing and yet, I was raised with older

siblings and my parents were older. My mom had me at 43 that means all my brothers and sisters were practically adults or were adults when I was born.

So that means I was surrounded by parents, they didn't protect me from much of anything, which I find interesting. Now you know TV was pretty tame and movies were very tame if you compare them to what we have right now. On the other hand, they let me watch the Blob when I was four or five years old. That burned into my brain for years afterwards. I had nightmares after seeing that movie even though it was so poorly done.

[0:22:41.1] I mean when I look at it now, I felt how in the world would anyone be frightened about that but as a little child, it was so realistic to me and it was all fake. It was all made up but somehow in my brain it became real and it was so frightening to me and I didn't ever have the ability to tell my parents that I was fearful about it, that it frightened me. Children don't always discuss with their parents things that are fearful.

In fact, they're afraid to talk about it because it actually makes it more real and once they could talk about it, they could be so relieved just like getting it off their chest. So make sure you talk with your children. Don't think that they don't need to have that discussion. They need to share their feelings and a lot of times they're reticent or they don't even know how to express their feelings and a lot of times they're not even in touch with their feelings.

And so this is a very important time to discuss this, but you must protect children from what they hear and see because some children are just not old enough already to handle these things and you can't certainly discuss this later when they're mature. Children need to take responsibility for their own behavior. Now this is something that I have discussed with you over and over. It's like a theme of so many of these radio shows because, if a child does not take responsibility for their own behavior when they are young they are not going to later in life.

And they must learn how to say I'm sorry, they must look people in the eye and say "I'm sorry." They must give an apology that is sincere. If you force a child to apologize to a friend or a sibling or a parent too quickly before they're ready you get an insincere apology and so there is no point in that but you do have to wait until a child is ready but children need to take responsibility and they need to own their own behavior.

[0:24:36.1] And I have discussed this before and this is how I discuss it with children because I feel like it might give an object lessons with children. They have to actually see what you are talking about and understand it in their own terms in order for them to understand it. So I talk to children about behavior when I have an out of control child who is just basically in trouble all the time and I bring them into my office and I say to them:

“You remind me of someone driving a car with their foot on the pedal and their hands not on the steering wheel” and I ask them, “Have you ever watched your mom and dad drive? And do you see where their hands are? Do you know what their feet are doing?” I want to make sure that they understand what we’re talking about here, and once I realize that that child understands fully what we mean by their foot on the pedal, the accelerator with no hands on the steering wheel that means we are going to crash.

And that’s what I see children do behaviorally daily is that they got the foot on the pedal but there are no hands on the steering wheel controlling the car. So having them have an object lesson where they can actually understand what you are talking about is really critical and this is again, one of these daily conversations. Don’t wait until it is too late to all of a sudden start talking behavior with children. They need to own their behavior. They need to take responsibility for it.

We need to also, as I have said so many times before, we need to also compliment when you see the child doing the right thing. This is probably one of the most critical things for developing inner courage, inner strength, inner character just by when you give a compliment or you praise and you praise the behavior, you are telling the child what they need to be and you are reminding the child that’s the behavior I am looking for.

[0:26:44.2] It is a constant reminder without making the child feeling less than, what we are not doing is comparing one sibling to another, “Look at your brother or your sister they always do everything so well. They always do the right thing” that is not what I am speaking here. What I am saying, just like the little boy that was in line and turned around and hugged his friend and said, “I am sorry” with the sweetest voice that is what I am talking about.

Now that second, you have to sit down and say, “I like so much how you were kind to your friend.” We need to catch the child in the act of being terrific and that is absolutely my mantra at

school. I encourage the teachers and parents to remember that because if we miss an opportunity to give a compliment, to identify the appropriate behavior that were working on, we just delayed the child's growth. So please remember at home, even when we are tired, to give those reminders of excellent moments.

Excellent behavior even if it is a second's worth to remind them that that is the behavior that you really admire. That is the behavior that you respect because the more the child gets it a cognitive memory of what you want they understand your expectations, the more they are going to move towards that. Remember I said before, it is kind of like having this happy reminder. It's this wonderful sense of wellbeing when a person gets a compliment.

And for that moment it feels good. Well, how do we get that again? We want to replicate that that positive behavior. I want to read something to you that really touched my heart. It was written by Diana Woolmans. I have no idea who this woman is, but it's called, "If I had my child to raise over again." Maybe it's a grandma.

[0:28:44.5] "If I had my child to raise over again, I'd finger paint more and point the finger less. I do less correcting and more connecting. I'd take my eyes off my watch and watch with my eyes. I would care to know less and know to care more. I'd take more hikes and fly more kites. I'd stop playing serious and seriously playing more. I'd run through more fields and I'd gaze at more stars. I'd do more hugging and less tugging. I would be firm less often and affirm much more."

"I'd build self-esteem first and the house later. I'd teach less about the love of power and more about the power of love. It matters not whether my child is big or small from this day forth, I'll cherish them all."

[END OF DISCUSSION]

[0:29:44.4] CW: Give us a call if you have any comments or ideas, we love to hear from you.

[OUTRO]

[0:29:52.4] 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.
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