

Raising Strong Girls 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: Hello, this is Dr. Char Wrighton and I am going to continue where we left off last week. This is called raising strong girls. Certainly something close, near and dear to my heart because I really felt like it is how the girls in our family were raised. My sister and I, certainly our brothers as well but as females, we were raised to seek something a little bit different to not go after the norm and to try to – try all things.

I just love that and certainly have passed that on to our girls in our family. I want to recap a bit because just to give you some reference, and then I'm going to continue because I've done a lot of research on this and certainly a lot of analysis. But number one on my list of conversation was, number one, start early, that is pivotal, don't start when they're in third grade. Children need to hear that they can, or girls, because this is girl's week.

That they can be anything that they want and that to encourage them to reach their dreams, to be passionate, to find their passion in life. We just had kindergarten graduation and we also ask the children as they're taking their diploma, what they want to be in life and so many of the girls, it just cracked me up because it was more this year than I've ever heard before, because we do this every single year.

So many of them want to be either a princess or they want to be a mermaid and I'm thinking, you know, what classes do you take for those? How do you train? Anyway, I thought it was cute but I was hoping that maybe that we're hoping that maybe they'll expand their horizons just a little bit.

But talking to children early to talking to your girls early and exploring and having these conversations, and as I said in part one, to lay your expectations on them about what they are to do or to not to do or their role on life or their roles, plural. But just to throw it out there, let them

explore, let them try different things. I think that this really important because there are so many possibilities and we want to make sure that we're not limiting female's role because she's a female.

And we know that in our past that certainly has happened because we do have societal norms or we have had that were very dry and very black and white and very limiting and we certainly, over the last many decades have broken that because women are just in every single field doing all sorts of things and so, we certainly have opened the doors widely and we definitely encourage our women.

In fact, we have encouraged our women so much that the statistics say that they're more successful, more women are going to college with more men are dropping out. More men are not going to college. That's going to be a conversation for another radio show.

[0:03:16.8] CW: Because that is something it really needs to be addressed. I have talked about it in the past but in more of a minor role. We definitely want to encourage our women, we don't want to oversteer, we don't want to dictate, this is what you're going to play with your owning and playing with dolls when you're a female, when you could be out throwing a ball to the girls.

I think that we do have our girls doing athletic things during gymnastics and their dance and they're doing soccer and they're playing on the baseball teams, et cetera. That's still more of a majority male thing and so I want to make sure that, I would say that for my own personal life, being athletic very young was one of the biggest boons to me and to my confidence level.

I could throw and run and bat as well as any boy in my age group, we all know that their muscle mass is different so I'm certainly giving them that. But coordination, I was raised to be coordinated and I love that concept and I certainly wanted to do that with our daughters. I encourage that.

But we want our children to explore what they enjoy so that is really important and I feel like sometimes, if we are personally is not interested in that particular thing, if it doesn't arouse our interest, but it does our girls', our children in general, we need to be encouraging and as supportive of that.

I really, I encourage that not only are we allowing children to choose what they want to play with but I do encourage putting tools in front of them, showing them how to use tools, how to do sports, how to build with their hands like Legos and Duplo's and all the different type of things that are available on the market for building, putting small things together to make large structures. I really like that.

[0:05:01.0] CW: If they're not interested, they're not interested. But at least, give them that opportunity and actually doing it with them so they can see, a lot of times they just need to know how and it really changes the wiring of the brain, it's amazing and someday I will do a radio show on that.

On the things that we do early in our youth, literally wire our brain in specific ways and that's a real positive. I also discussing, talking about ideals, morals, values, I really believe that we need to teach morals to children really young and morals would be to appreciate other people's differences, not to be afraid of them.

Not to isolate that person for me or you from that person. That has to be taught early. Very young children don't notice differences but as soon as they get to a certain age, they start noticing difference in skin color or they notice a difference in – if a child has a disability and then at that point, it can be very frightening to them. They're very curious and they want to understand why.

Talking with them early and reading books about it, I really love sharing books with children that express values. Integrity is probably the most important thing that we can teach. I am just huge on teaching integrity, honesty. Own up. You make a mistake, own it and then move on.

[0:06:16.9] CW: Learning how to not do something dishonest, don't take something that does not belong to you, don't breach someone else's privacy, don't lie. These are all things that are really critical to child development. Certainly, I just felt like it has to be discussed early, it has to be discussed often.

I'm not saying that you're going to do it as a dictator, I'm just going to say you're going to throw it out there as a guide and there are certain things you want them to grow up with because

these are the kind of adults you want them to be. Compassionate, strong, able to cope. Life is not easy and it's not easy from the time they're in preschool on up.

Because they're going to have to cope with other children who hit, bite, grab, et cetera because that's just the nature of the adorable beasts. They have to learn how to cope and be strong and forgiving. These are all values I felt that need to be taught early and often.

One of my favorites is the golden rule. You know, do unto others as you would have others do unto you. We do not teach that enough and I think it's imperative. We need to help our daughters take risks emotionally and physically.

[0:07:22.3] CW: Often, they might take an emotional risk but they're not going to take a physical risk because they don't have that testosterone in them, it doesn't – unless we lead them and help them to experience athletic events or I mean, athletic activities or you know, a little bit more rough and tumble type play.

Their chances of participating in that are pretty slim. I love the idea of teaching a child how to climb, you know? Girl teaching her how to throw, how to run well, how to be coordinated, how to build, how to use tools, that kind of things. Taking risk is also putting yourself out there and even though it may, you may lose, you may be rejected, if you put yourself out there, some kind of a contest, you might not win.

Failure is okay. Failure seems like it's just such a death null to the spirit. But it isn't, it actually helps people to grow and it's something that I, in my childhood, I hated, I was mortified, I felt like more of a – I didn't want to try again, I just didn't want to try again. I really am sorry about that because I feel like I missed out in a lot of opportunities and I'm so glad my kids have – not have that trait, they're more like their dad, that's a good thing.

We want our children to be able to solve problems and they can do that if we teach them how. We need to do that by talking and listening to them, giving them options. Children need to – from a very young age, I think children should give them three different shirts and three different pairs of shorts or pants and let them put the things together, the pants and the shorts together or the dresses.

Give them three, you know, it's important for them to choose, I had a dear friend who when the children were approaching junior high, she was still picking out their clothes because she wanted them to look good and she was teaching them how to dress nicely and I think that's fantastic.

[0:09:10.0] CW: On the other hand, it was taking their independence away from them and I think it is really imperative that a child be able to make choices. Because that's how, when they're no longer with us, they are making really good choices and that's really important. You want your daughter to come up with ideas, some are going to work, some are not going to work and that alone teaches what to do and what to think next time.

We want – I left off on last week talking about heroes and I think it's really important to read books and talk about heroes all the way through history because, when you go way back in history, they had to cope with things that we didn't have to cope with.

Life is very universal but think about it. Before there was medicine, say before there was antibiotics, what people had to cope with and handle. Before there was technology, before things were easy in life as far as being able to push a button and have something to work. I'm just watching our robo going around the room, anyway, safari learning.

Watching it clean this floor it's like my gosh, now, someone doesn't have to take a broom to do this. Life is definitely a little bit easier for us than it was like in the old west days when we have to do that, chop the wood and bring in the water from outside, go to the bathroom outside and a strange little box in the freezing cold.

[0:10:25.0] CW: Anyway, I love the ideas of looking at heroes both male and females and I feel like your girls need to hear about male heroes. They need to know that men are strong and capable and intelligent and we have to be really careful to keep our politics out of this one and just – so that you're raising your daughter to appreciate strong men and what it makes because it makes to have a strong man because that is how that helps them to deal with relationships and positive relationships.

I'm going to just explain what I mean there so that you fully understand it. If a child grows up without a lot of confidence, they often will go with a man who is more domineering and gives

them less choices and that's not what we want for our daughters. We want them to have a strong, healthy relationship with whomever they choose to have a voice and to be a presence so that they are not dominated.

That is just the opposite of raising strong girls and that is his just not okay to have someone accept the fact that they might be abused or taken advantage of. That's not the daughter, that's not the daughter we want to raise. If they hear about strong people, there are so many incredible women in history that have been absolutely ground breaking and we think that we're just breaking the glass ceiling and we're still complaining about the glass ceiling not being broken.

It has been broken and it's been broken well. All the way through history, there have been these phenomenal women who have done absolutely the unexpected and they have risked their lives doing it. What a joy to be able to read stories like that to your daughters so that they know they can be one of those kind of women.

[0:12:02.3] CW: I like raising children, all children with a can do spirit but we need to raise our daughters that way, we need to – when you're a can do person, that means, I'm going to attempt it, I might fail, I might not do it the best I can do it, but I'm going to learn and I'm going to attempt and I'm going to have that confidence that I can do it.

We want to teach our daughters to be fearless. Fear is really interesting to me because people can fear things and they'll overcome them. You can be fearful of something so I'm going to do it anyway. Really, that's the definition of courage. Certainly I'm not saying, I'm just kind of throwing out the word fearless ass I don't really mean fearless.

You might fear something but you do it anyway. That's the kind of that, can do spirit that I'm talking about, that courage where failure doesn't dictate, we don't want our lives dictated by our fear of failure or our fear of rejection and I have personally have that in my youth. I recommend highly that that just you know, pick yourself up and try again, I love that concept. Another concept which is we're going to be really hard to understand or to even accept is that.

We need not to rush in to try to solve and fix things for our children, especially when they're little. If they fall, let them pick themselves up, children have a tendency to – they don't even

notice. Little guys sometimes, unless they really hurt, they'll fall, a lot of times they're kind of feeling what their body is feeling and only until the parent rushes in do they start crying. I've seen this over and over and over with my own kids, my grandkids and kids at our school.

They don't have that concept of sadness or injury until the mother or one of the teachers races over and so I don't know – I just feel like we have to give a child time to, if they fall get back up, pick yourself up and then start all over again. Start playing again. If a child is hurt that is certainly the time to snuggle and to kiss boo-boos or to pray or to do whatever you need to do for the moment but we also don't want to be so overly fearful as a parent, worried, concerned that we teach the child to be fearful and overly concerned.

I know parents who have literally have taught their children to be frightened and to feel in an exaggerated sense because the parent was so worried or overwrought because the child was hurt. We want our kids to be able to get up, brush it off and move on and certainly, we want to – I am not suggesting anyone saying “buck up” or “Yeah, quit being a baby.” I am not saying that. I don't want that. I never liked that, I would never do that.

But we definitely want to give the child a little bit of time to just feel what they are feeling if it is falling down or if it is something that they've made, break, circuits ruined or whatever and then talk about it rather than rush in and fix. I just feel like sometimes we err on the side of overprotection and over consoling when maybe it is just give the child some time to figure out their own feelings. I think that is really important because otherwise we are constantly creating these emotional states.

These emotional crises that are not really a crisis and so we are teaching children to go into crisis mode when it is not appropriate and it is not necessary and that definitely breaks down, it becomes the “poor me” or “oh you are hurting me” syndrome rather than “strong me I can overcome this.” That is where we are going on this one. I like talking in families, having a family discussion about these concepts so that we get all sides of what everyone thinks about.

[0:15:47.2] Older siblings, younger siblings, both parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, just having a discussion on what it means to be a strong person, what it means to be a strong woman in this world. Again, giving choices to children, the choices of what they want to do, what

they want to wear, what game they want to play, I think giving choices on how to behave. I think giving choices on behavior because we want to lead them to the appropriate and right behavior.

We certainly don't want to be constantly dictating because then they don't have to think for themselves and that is a big concern of mine is that we want those children when we are not with them to be able to make the right choice and a strong choice. A choice that is life affirming rather than risk behavior or any kind of behavior that would be self-destructive. We definitely want them to be strong enough. Overcoming temptation is a hard one.

We know what peer pressure is like and even the strongest children will give in from time to time because again that is just part of experiencing things but we also want them to be able to say no and if somebody mocks them or makes fun of them or treats them poorly because that is a decision they have made, they've got to be strong enough to say, "Okay, well that is how you feel. I have made the right decision" and then move on.

That is really important and again, it has to be taught early. We want to be able to teach a child to be able to commit to something. Children have so many different interest that they might want to play soccer one year and say, "I didn't really like it and I want to try baseball" and then they didn't really like it, "Well I want to ride horses" didn't really like, whatever it is, it's okay because as long as they commit to a certain timeframe.

[0:17:24.5] Let them know that if they start the season, they have to finish the season but they don't have to do it the next time. That's okay. If I start piano lessons, you have to play for a certain duration and then if you choose that this is not your cup of tea and not what you want, okay then but you have to commit to so many weeks or so many months. Too often because something gets really hard we quit. We quit as adults. I was listening to a dear friend and I completely agree with her.

She and I both want to learn Spanish and she said, "I will get to the point where it gets too difficult and then I just don't want to do it anymore" and that's an adult. Of course kids are going to feel that way. So we want to help them over that stage because once you get into the routine of practicing whatever you're doing it actually does get easier and you do become better at it and so then you do get a comfort then we might have that piano player or that violinist or that Spanish speaking person.

So we want to make sure that they have time enough to commit. Commitment means if I make a promise I am going to keep it. I think that is really important. My own self as a teenager and it haunted me a bit in early college, I would make a commitment to do something either to volunteer, I would say that I would do that even going on a date. I would say, "Yes I'll go on a date" and if I wanted to get out of it I would just say, "Oh I can't do it. I am sick."

I just learned later in life that if I was going to make a commitment I was going to stick with it. I don't care what it is. If I made a promise that I am going to be there, I'm going to be there and I feel like we need to raise children to keep commitments, to know what it means to keep a commitment and you start small when they're young but then it grows as the child grows. I think that is really important whether it's I am going to start a project and I am going to finish the project.

[0:19:04.8] We want to raise our children so they are able as they're growing up they can get along or cope with anybody. That is really, really important because we are going to live in a world where we are not going to like everybody. We are not even going to like our boss maybe. Perhaps we are not going to like a teacher but that doesn't mean you can say, "Well I can't be here. I am not going to do this because I don't like that person."

I say no, you are going to learn how to cope with that person. There are a lot of times where you can't get out of something and you are just going to have to learn to make the best of it and I think it is one of the best life lessons. We did that with our daughter. She had a coach that he was volunteering his time and the sport was not his best subject and he was not an expert and yet, he was still trying to help these young girls play and he was the only one who volunteered.

And my daughter was very, very annoyed because she was a really strong athlete and she just felt like he didn't know enough and she felt like he was doing a terrible job and I told her and her dad told her, we agreed and our words were, "Maybe this isn't the year that you are going to learn as much as you could. Maybe this is your year to learn how to cope with somebody that you don't respect and that you need to learn how to honor that person despite your feelings."

And I feel like it ended up being a good year. She did learn, she did grow in the sport but what she really learned was how to be tolerant and caring for that person despite of the situation and

I felt like that was probably a far more important lesson for her to learn than learn how to play basketball because that's the kind of lesson that she had to carry with her and still having to cope with because life, there are people that we work with that we just don't get along with.

[0:20:53.6] And we just learn how to cope and how to deal with that person. It is imperative. It does make us stronger people and it makes us more capable people. Girls need to learn how to get along with boys. There's a lot of studies on whether girls should be in, let's just say boy free zones in school where they girls go to school in their own classes, boys go to school in their own classes. They have done a lot of research on it. There is a lot of positive things.

Boys don't have to compete with girls. Girls don't have to get off track and become flirty with boys, which was one of the things that was stated is that girls definitely act differently as they get older with boys than if they are just with girls and so again, they were saying, "Well they can concentrate better. They can learn more." My personal opinion, I prefer people to learn how to cope with each other and so the only way to do that is to be in the same class with them.

So that is my own personal opinion. I certainly don't have any strong issues on either one. I just feel like if you don't experience having to deal with other people, you just don't learn how and so that is all that I need to say on that one. We need to obviously teach children how to cooperate with people that they are uncomfortable with or for the moment, you can be best friends and then worst enemies and then best friends again.

So that is a coping mechanism that we really need to teach them how to navigate those waters. We want to teach our children how to do with all temperaments because people have different temperaments that we want them to be able to understand them and so talking to your children early about how people navigate life, cope with life, some people do it in different ways. Some people are very quiet and introspective and others are more on the extrovert side of it.

[0:22:32.9] Some people are hot tempered and have flash tempers that get angry really quickly and others are very patient. So we want to learn how to deal with all people. Some people are fast movers and get lots done. Other people are more of the smell the roses type people and we learn how to cope with them because again, once we are in the work field, we are going to be dealing with everybody. We want to have these skills learned early.

So that getting along with people is imperative. We want to be able to teach our girls how to give eye contact, you know chin up, a strong handshake, a smile, a greeting “nice to meet you” from the time they’re little. I absolutely love the idea when an adult walks into the room, I think that child should stand. That is what it used to be and I think we’ve lost it. We have a lot of behaviors that we have that were instilled in us say in the 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s and by the time the 60s hit.

And we become a far more permissive society, we lost manners and I feel that children really need to learn how to respect elders and respect adults but I also want them to have the confidence to be able to talk. Children get very shy and we don’t want to ever force them into greeting them. We want to understand that I mean children go through xenophobic stages but we want them to grow out of that and we want them to be able to look them in eye and say, “Nice to meet you” and extend that hand.

I feel like it is just critical. We want to be able to allow a child to cry to express their feelings. We want to teach our girls not to use crying as a manipulative behavior so that they can get their way and so, it would be better to talk about it. I told my children, “You can say anything you want to me but don’t sass me, don’t yell at me and don’t disrespect me. Don’t do that to your father. So can say what you need to say. We are a democratic family here. We are going to listen but you must be respectful.”

[0:24:33.3] So I think that is really critical but we cannot use crying as a manipulative tool. That’s not strength. I had the perspective as a mother and as a strong willed mom, I would give them the perspective that this will pass. This hurt whether it is a girl friend who hurt their feelings, a boyfriend hurt her feelings. They fall down, pain is transient it doesn’t last forever but you will overcome this. This will get better and sometimes I did this a little bit too much with my daughters.

Because they sometimes felt like I didn’t, I wasn’t as compassionate but I wanted them to know that the perspective I wanted to show them is that there are people living in war torn countries. There are people who do not have food. They do not have medicine. They don’t have a roof over their head. That is something to cry about and so I was less one who – I didn’t stop the crying but I did give them perspective that this will pass.

But there are also tougher things in life and so trying to find a balance in that and that is not always easy but we also want our girls to be strong and to be able to cope with all things as they become an adult. There is so much that they do need to have that inner strength with. So we certainly want to recognize their pain and love them and hug them and pray with them and let them know that they are strong enough to withstand the forces of nature.

I am thinking of anything that happens in life, fires, floods and hurricanes, a man who walks out on you, a friend who betrays you, there are so many things in life. You let go of a job you loved, a door slammed in your face for some reason that a door is going to open and that you are strong enough to cope. I think it is a gift and a blessing and a legacy that we can give our daughters so that they can pass it onto theirs.

[END OF DISCUSSION]

[0:26:15.4] CW: Don't forget you can email us and you can call. We love to hear your questions, your comments. Bye-bye.

[OUTRO]

[0:26:25.0] 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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