

Raising Strong Resilient Males Part 3

[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: Hi, this is Dr. Char Wrighton and I am here to present part three of how to raise strong and resilient males. I'm going to start off with a hilarious, well, it wasn't really funny at the time but it's hilarious to me because I got to participate in having a discussion with children on that one should not have scissor fights in the class room and there's a point to me bringing this up too. Here are these two absolutely adorable young men.

Five, may I say. They had a project where they had to cut out things for their art project and so one of the boys says to the other boy, you want to have a scissor fight? The other boy says, sure. And so they did. They were going at it and the teacher immediately went over and stopped them and because of the seriousness of them, immediately sent them to me to deal with.

I took them in and I would like to ask a lot of questions. I am a strong believer in the Socratic method of handling discipline with children. I would rather ask questions rather than tell children what they did wrong. I feel that you always need to start there. I have discussed this very clearly and one whole segment when I was talking about the get up and walk around education. I also mentioned, included in that is the Socratic method because that's how he taught.

They actually wondered around talking and the reason for that was because at the time, he didn't own any property. Therefore, he didn't have a school that he could actually go sit down, they had wondered around a lot with the students. Be that as it may, not the point here. I've got these two cute kids sitting in front of me and they're wide eyed and they're just – I pointed to each one, I said, now, I'm going to ask you questions and I want you to answer honestly and I don't want you to tell me what the other boy said, I want you to just answer what you think, what you feel.

I asked one boy, was this a good idea? He said no and I asked the other boy, was it a good idea and he said no of course. I said now, make sure that you tell me the truth, I want to know if you think it was a great idea, tell me, I thought it was a great idea. He ends up saying, no, he did not think it was a good idea, but he goes, but I've done this before. He's so wide eyed like it was a great thing. I asked him, why if it's not a good idea, why?

He goes, I don't know. How long ago was that? He goes, it was a long time ago. Well, when you're five, who knows what long time means? The point being, I had to get to the point of them acknowledging the fact that it was just not a good idea to do scissor fights and I really wanted them to come up with the reasons why. I said, well, why do you think scissor fights are frowned upon inside or outside of the classroom?

Whether it's home or whether it's in Walmart or whether it's in class? Why do you think it's not a good idea? Of course, they both answered, because you could get hurt. Then we had a discussion on eyes don't heal very easily and it may be that you would lose your sight forever. Then of course, we had to find out that somebody's cat was blind and so it always goes down avenues that are interesting.

The point being is that here are two little boys who spontaneously, in the classroom, during an art project thought that having a scissor fight was a good idea. You know, you have to wonder about that but it's the point as you have to – why would they find this as interesting? Because they're males, because they have to conquer, because the clinking of metal is fascinating to them.

They're really big on cause and effect. Anyway, I was just reminded as I am preparing to do part three on raising strong and resilient males is that part of this is understanding the personality of a male. Again, I am not one to generalize for sure because not all males are the same but I think that we can generalize pretty closely just by watching. The funniest thing I think that to me is hilarious.

I do workshops for Zoo-phonics and train teachers how to use our program and all I have to do is mention little boys, wriggly little boys and every eye or both eyes in every head rolls because they all know what wriggly little boys are. I think we can generalize on behavior. Knowing that there are some males out there who are not like this.

The point that I want to make again is to say that part of raising boys' understanding them and appreciating them at the same time, the difficulty is that females don't always respond like I don't know how many females out there who have enjoyed a scissor fight, you know? How many female teachers or little girls that have even initiated a scissor fight? There may be but it's low in numbers, it's not one of the things that would be fast on somebody's mind.

This is a male thing and again, I asked them do you guys like each other and they go, "Sure". I said, were you angry? "No", and they were shocked at me for even asking the question. I wouldn't have a scissor fight with anybody unless I was kind of cranky and had to defined myself or whatever. They said, well scissors were like swords and so they wanted a sword fight.

I mentioned that if you're really interested and you could always take up fencing and have fencing lessons because I did this with my grandson and it was great fun. However, you have head protection, eye protection, chest protection. You wear a lot of protective clothing because it's not particularly safe. You would never fence without face protection.

It's kind of getting little boys to understand that there's a danger lurking behind their choices. Anyway. I thought that was a great way to start our part three. I wanted to do a really quick recap because I always figure it's – who knows if you even listened last week or if you did listen, how much was remembered. Just a quick thing is just to understand that boys have more testosterone than girls do. This is why they are more physical.

It's why they're more aggressive. It's why they're more impulsive, it's also why that the choices they maker are sometimes interesting and it's also why dads, you need to remember that you were like this when you were little. I think that's really important. Being mentally strong, being a male, you know, raising male children doesn't mean to be overpowering or demanding or harmful in any way. We want our males, our young males to go up to be wonderful dads and fathers and sons.

To be considerate of others, to be other oriented. It certainly doesn't mean that we're going to be strong, that we have to be tough. And I'm going to use a tough, in a way that's harmful. It's that toxic masculinity that has been discussed recently. Being strong internally inside the mind and the heart and

the spirit is somebody, a strong person can cry, a strong male can cry, a strong male can have empathy, a strong male can buy somebody else a gift or sign kind words in a card.

A strong male can run into a burning building or into a dangerous issue or incident with guns. Can go to war if need be. Who can run to a burning car in the freeway, having no relationship whatsoever to the people in the car but responding because they know it's the right thing to do. That's what strength is. Strength is saying you're sorry.

It takes a lot of confidence and inner strength to be able to apologize for something that they did wrong. That's the kind of inner strength that we want to help our young males to grow into. It isn't certainly just physical strength, I'm all about physicality, I love exercise, we make sure that our children exercise a lot at school because we know that when we exercise and work out that it actually helps the brain to secrete brain derived neurotrophic factor, among other things.

There are other wonderful things that had also does but it's meaningless to anyone who hasn't done that particular research. Just know that there is something called BDNF and Veg F and other things that actually secrete on the neurons, growing new neurons and strengthening the old ones, making stronger connections. When neurons meet neurons, they make a connection and of course, then we do dendrites and synapses and all that kind of stuff which is the spark in the firing and that's when we think we can remember something, we can say something quickly.

We can respond quickly without having to think. Those are all those dendrites firing and we need a lot of physicality in order to get that brain healthy. I'm all for that. But there's also other sides to strength and moral character. That's the main thing that we're talking about here. Recap on the male brain and the female brain.

The amygdala in both females and males is the gatekeeper and it's also the flight or fight syndrome so that if something scares us, we respond quickly, one way or the other. Fight or flight, I'm either going to fight it or I'm going to flee and save myself. If you hear a loud noise and you jump, that is your amygdala instantly responding to a loud noise.

Males, their amygdala and executive function does not fully mature or develop until they are 25 or older. Some younger. But the average age is about 25 and so picture those men in college or doing strange things on like say for instance, a car, tugging somebody on a skateboard down a very steep hill. You know, those are the kinds of examples, thinking that it's okay to dive of the roof into a shallow pool. Anyway.

The point being that males are definitely the brains are different and so we have to really understand that and again, I remind males, dads. Remember your childhood when dealing with your own son on these things. They have a tendency to move extremely fast and arms and legs are going at all times.

They forget their behavior instantly so it's like you ask them a question, was that okay? They'll look at you and they'll go, I don't know. Or they'll shrug, they don't know, they can't remember. Or they know and they just can't express it. There's all sorts of things going on in there. It is also very difficult for them to verbalize their feelings or even know what they're feeling.

This is where often boys act out because they do have emotions in there and they're just not quite sure how to express those feelings since so often, they will act improperly because it's just the fast way – it's just the quickest thing to do. You know, kind of keep in mind that boys love cause and effect, they like to pound, they like to tear, they like to rip and it's all so much in their imaginations.

They can turn a stapler into a dinosaur or a jet or a rocket and so, a lot of things – they always involve a lot of crashing. Sometimes pretend blood and we have the ambulance called down on the playground and pretend because this is the kind of things that they play, they just use that imagination all the time.

In very strong and aggressive type play. They need a lot more rough housing and I've actually talked about rough play or rowdy play. I think that this is absolutely something that females don't understand because they're not one for that rowdy physical play and my first born was a male so living with two males, first married, the first 10 years or so. Trying to understand, moving fast on a hot wheel, a bicycle, climbing trees 70 feet up, those are kind of things that it was challenging for me to understand.

My first response is somebody's going to get hurt, it's always the small one or if you guys get hurt, you guys have done this to yourselves, every type of mother like – I don't want something broken. We have

a tendency to stop the play, however, rowdy play, even for females is really important, it's how you learn to actually protect, it's how you learn to conquer if necessary, to deal with it, to protect one's self or to protect someone else, watch bear cubs or lion cubs, any kind of animal tussle with each other.

That's part of that rowdy play that will be used if necessary later in life. It's just part of life and we want to make sure that we're allowing and encouraging some of that. Certainly with limitations or with protection. It's okay for children to cry, that was another thing that was discussed is that we want to make sure that we are not telling our boys to be so manly that they don't express feelings, they don't show feelings, they don't cry, because sometimes, especially little boys, they do need to cry.

They do need and in time, we all learn to cope, even females don't burst into tears over every single thing because we've learned to cope. That is a mechanism that is certainly used more often than a male. But we have to make sure that it is okay to express feelings but we want to teach them how to express feelings well. Verbalizing is always the best but it's also not the little boys' strongest suit. Again, it's really important to understand that we live in a world, tragically, where suicide is just all too common.

One is because of the drug related issues but a lot of them is because of bullying. Loneliness, being separated from others. Isolation, feelings of isolations, feelings of not being accepted by the crowd. People are just mean, children, teenagers are mean at times.

They do this for various reasons but we need our boys and girls to be so strong that they can survive this. That they don't see suicide as the best way out. Making strong children is imperative in this. Boys grow up watching their dads, they relate to their dads and so having a strong dad, they need to see compassion as well as strength, they need to see empathy as well as strength.

They need to see thoughtfulness. These are all things that we want to make sure that males have to be very careful if they are tough guys themselves, not to continue the pattern of kind of knocking the feeling out of our boys. I've seen it, I've heard it and read about it, researched it, balance is imperative and we have to make sure that we're not harsh and demeaning, this is really important because that child's self-image is basically in your hands.

Again, my audience is always a parent, grandparent or a teacher. No matter who it is, we have to make sure that we are being balanced in our approach. That our voices are being balanced and not harsh or a pitch too high, showing the child that we're out of control and not to discipline while we are angry because then the discipline often is too harsh, we need to all take a break and then come back and talk about this reasonably.

Remember, ask questions, don't just tell, ask questions. Why did you, what happened, let them respond because this is part and parcel of them taking responsibility for their own behavior

We want to show our children how to do things the right way and a part of this is actually participating with the child. I know that we are so busy in our daily lives. We work very, very hard and when we come home, we are exhausted and a very bouncy child is not always the easiest thing to cope with at the time especially if the child is two years and it's still in the tantruming stage or I don't know how to speak my feelings so therefore I am going to demonstrate it physically.

It is very difficult sometimes when we are exhausted for instance. So we have to find ways with coping with that and again, take a breather just dinner didn't have to be cooked at that moment, laundry does not have to be done at that moment. The best thing that you can do especially when you have just seen your child for the first time that day after a long day, it just take the time even if you sit quietly, take a walk. Sit down and you ask how the day went.

This is your coming together as a family and should be peaceful and harmonious and I think that it dissipates frustration. It helps eradicate frustration before it happens. I think it is a calming effect on the family so that now we can cook dinner and sit down and eat together. We can do the laundry together. I am a big on children participating on cooking, big on participating in folding laundry. I really don't know a child who cannot fold a hand towel or even their own small clothing.

We want to teach them and teach them how to do it right and it does not have to be perfect because they're just learning how to be coordinated but allowing them to participate like if you were working on a car or the motorcycle or the lawnmower or you are cooking a meal or all of the different things that we do in households and in the yards and in the garage, these are things that we can have our children participate.

Too often parents will think you are too young and you are too young to learn or I need to get this done. Don't slow me down. I was raised with a fabulous mother and father but my mother was meticulous in the way she did things and I was not meticulous and so she would say, "Forget it. You're too fast. I'll do it, go study or go read a book" and so I did not learn to be a good cook because of that because it was just shoot me out of the kitchen because I was annoying and she was a fabulous mom.

It was just that she was a tired mom and I was making too much of a mess and so therefore. So anyway, what she should have said was, "Any mess you make you are going to be cleaning it up" that would be much more helpful and I would still get to participate in the kitchen with her and we would have had fun. So again, nothing bad on my mom. She was wonderful but me being a fast moving child, I was not as careful, the same with sewing. So I didn't learn how to sew.

However, I did learn how to throw a ball. The point being is that we need to include our children in these kind of activities and talk with them and teach them. Teach them about tools. Tell the names that's vocabulary development. Building eye-hand coordination, help them screw something in or out, help them hammer a nail or help them take a saw. You can keep their hands on it. You can help them out but again, it's helping them learn things.

So again, this is building inner strength. If your child can do things they have a tremendous amount of confidence and so you want to teach them early how to clear off their dishes and not just toss things in the sink to that the cups break or whatever so that they can scrape their plates, they can toss their napkins in the trashcan. They can feed the dog that can give the dog water or the cat. They can do things and so again, great gaining skills is one of the most important things that you can do for a child because it develops skills.

It develops vocabulary but it is also a wonderful bonding time for you and your child and so please don't leave them out of the mix. A lot of times we feel like our children are just too young and so you are going to do it for them but that robs them of the ability of participating and also robs them of time with you and so whether you are frustrated or whether you just don't believe that children can do things as young as two years old or one-year-old well they can.

And it doesn't have to be done well but you need to have that time to think about those things and plan things that they can do. My dad used to write when he couldn't paint houses if the weather was bad, the economy is bad so he would have sent me out with a piece of wood, a hammer, a small hammer and a bunch of nails and when the hammering stopped, he would go and check on me. If he could hear me hammering, he knew things all is well. I learned how to hammer.

So just keep those kind of things in mind really, really important and I do believe that children need to have chores. Next week, I am going to talk about allowances being paid for chores, being paid for helping around the house and the reason why we did and don't do it and so that is going to be my topic for next week, I am a big believer in children doing chores and helping because they are part of the family. You are not their maid, you are not their slave.

They need to be part of the family and pull their own weight. You will have much stronger children and more able and confident children if you do. You need to teach your boys to have a sense of humor and people have different types of sense of humor. So even in the same family, siblings will have different sense of humors. Mother and father may have different sense of humors. So what are your family structure is, grandparents, whatever.

But having a sense of humor is so important in life, we need to learn to laugh things off. Life gets so hard and so tough for us at times especially as adults when we are working as hard as we're working, we have to learn how to laugh and we have to teach our children young that some things are just not as serious as it feels like for the moment. If a child can see the funny side of things even during serious times their chances of overcoming is so much greater.

Their chances of being able to be resilient and see that there is still life on the other side of the situation is really, really important especially for teenagers the crises are so huge for them. Everything is so black and white and so when you are young, the world seems like it's over. On the other hand, for anyone who's lived past 30 you realize that no, we live to another day to cope with this and it wasn't as bad as we thought it was. Usually things aren't as bad as we thought it was the next day or in a couple of days.

So you know children need to learn this but watching funny, I would say clean. Please watch what your children watch. Please be very careful. So many things are absolutely not appropriate for children and

we let it slide because we believe that they won't get it but they do or if they don't get it they repeat it anyway and we will sometimes hear in pre-school in our classes. So keep that in mind parents. There are so many funny things that you can –

Like I had mentioned Laurel and Hardy. They're hilarious they're very slapstick, very old fashioned because they were done in the 30s and 40s but they are funny and brilliant, brilliantly done. So there are so many things that you can show children where you guys can laugh. I think that is so much fun. There is nothing like it. I was thinking of Alf. There are things that we literally can find in the internet that are funny and still clean at the same time and appropriate for different age groups.

That is why playing board games, play a different type of games together at nighttime around the weekends is important. You know if you fall down, yeah it hurts for a minute but then we can later talk about it and we can laugh over how silly it was but you know the children grow up realizing that all is not tragic and I think that is important because we become resilient that way. We learn that we can cope, we're strong, we are able to handle that one we can handle what is coming up next.

Facing fears is really critical. I have never seen a child who doesn't have a fear at one point in their life. Children usually go through a fear of separation. Separation from parents so that is very frightening. It causes great anxiety. How we see it at the pre-school interestingly enough they do become acclimated really quickly because they are having so much fun with their friends and their teachers and all the activities and the playground and all of that kind of things.

So that they have a memory of this was really fun yesterday. I can't wait to go back but remember that separation from mom or dad that early in the morning is tough especially on Mondays if they've had mom and dad there for the weekend. Separation is hard, thunder, lightning, things that they don't understand. Bugs, spiders, snakes, a lot of times, the parent fear becomes the child's fear and so if someone is afraid of spiders or snakes or whatever and squashes a bug rather than enjoy the magnificence of a bug, I am big on bugs by the way.

I love science, so if we teach children a fear of water, fear of strangers is another one, we have to teach children to be wise but not fearful of people but be wise. I think that is really critical and that could be another really a show one day. We certainly can deal with that but we want children – if we are going to

be strong, we can't bring them up to be fearful and I think that's our way of protecting, "Don't go near the water" and we teach fear of strangers you know, "Don't trust strangers."

Well everyone is a stranger so how do you trust people? So you have to learn to trust people but you also have to learn how to read people and you have to learn how to be wise and that is just part of growing up but we often teach children to be fearful and if we don't do the teaching it is just an automatic response. If it is something that's unknown when they are little, like I said loud noises, thunder and lightning they don't understand that they can be safe and that they are safe.

And that's your job is to make them feel very, very safe and so helping children to overcome fears is very important and that is why doing things while they are really young is actually the best way and I am starting a child in water when they are brand new babies. Just that lovely warm water and then taking them into the pool when they get a little older, getting their feet wet in the ocean or lake or stream. So obviously we have to be careful.

We have to teach safety. We have to teach wisdom but we want to be able to teach children about nature and enjoyable sports really, you know anybody who learns how to ski or water ski or do anything like that young and something very good at it later and so definitely want to help build those skills. We want to make sure that we are not rushing in to rescue too early. When a child is working on putting together a railroad track or Legos or even dressing a doll.

Whatever it is, if we rush in too early when they are frustrated or they are crying or they're hurt, see if you recognize this. A child has fallen, picks him or herself up, there is no tears in the eyes and then all of a sudden sees mom and bursts into tears. The child for that moment is coping with the fall and probably didn't even notice it that much but as soon as he saw mom's face it triggers this immediate response and children start to cry and there is nothing wrong in that.

I just think it's interesting behavior because they will then cry and then they get all the hugs and the soothing and of course that is wonderful. If you rush in too quickly, we sometimes stimulate those tears because we're worried, we're frightened, we're fearful and sometimes, we will cause that. So we have to be very, very careful that we are not rushing in before the child has the time to cope. We don't want to rush in while they're doing something.

Before the child has a chance to even sit, figure it out or problem solve. We really do need to let them struggle a little bit, we don't want to take it out of their hands and then sell it for them, they'll never learn. Allow them to struggle, allow them to feel a little bit of pain, allow them to feel a little bit of frustration and then you can go in and then talk. Talk to them, talk it out.

Teach them how to do it better if it's – I've climbed, I've fell off, I hurt my head, teach them how to climb safely rather than don't do that, you're going to hurt yourself. Here's an interesting thing that I not only have said myself of course and I've tried not to but I have heard over and over again.

Mothers have a tendency to predict, you're going to fall and hurt yourself. Well, don't predict that for the child, it may not happen. Teach them to climb properly so that they don't fall, because climbing is a very wonderful thing to do it really involves all your muscles in your body.

It's exhilarating, it builds strength, it builds muscle, it's overcoming, it's fantastic. Again, let's not predict that a child is going to hurt themselves. Anyway, believe it or not, I haven't done 16, 17 or 18 and I'm going to throw in this really quickly. Teach children how to be grateful. Having a grateful heart and I would suggest having a gratitude jar at the table and fill it out, just talk about it at the dinner table, what was great today?

What are you grateful for? Because it counteracts the – it's all about me, this is what I need, this is what I want. It counteracts that. Listen to your children, enjoy your time together, give them that wonderful eye contact and those snuggles. Bye-bye, don't forget, you can call, 800-622-8104, you can email, char@zoo-phonics.com or char@safarilearning.com.

[OUTRO]

[0:29:46.5] 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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