Primary PART 1 Managing challenging behaviour & boundaries

[00:00:00] **Marcelina:** So, yeah, so my name is Marcelina Watkinson. I'm one of the clinical psychologists at Everlief. Some of you might have seen me in, um, these presentations before. I've, I've done a fair few in the beginning, and then I think we've had a bit of a mix and match of different presenters. So for those of you who are a little bit, um, new to, to the Everlief Parent Club

[00:00:22] I'm basically one of the psychologists. And I think another thing that, that I find important about these presentations is that I'm also coming to this platform as, as a mom, uh, as well as a psychologist. And I think, I hope that some of the things that we're talking about, and a lot of the things that we're talking about and the questions that parents ask are, are, are familiar to us as parents, as well as professionals.

[00:00:49] So, um. Yeah, and we've got

[00:00:53] **Hayley:** Hayley with us today. Hello. So, yeah, just picking up on, on Marceline's point there, just to, to concur with her really. Um, I'm also a, a parent, I'm a counsellor but, um, a parent of, of two adult children and a teenager. Um. Still, still doing the teenage years. We've obviously been through the primary years.

[00:01:13] Um, I'm counsellor. I work in private practice, but I also work at e believe child psychology. Um, working with the children age 11 upwards. Typically at ever Everlief. And um, I also work with bereavement. Uh, I also work with cruise bereavement care as well, um, which is one of my particular interests. Um, and that really sort of transcends over lots of stories, you know, not necessarily that, that children come for bereavement uh, support, but often it's in the families.

[00:01:48] So, you know that's what I do. Okay.

[00:01:52] **Marcelina:** No, that's, that's really great. And so the, so the way this is gonna work, we're going to do, um, I'm going to start with the presentation in a moment, and I've got some things prepared, but there is no, no pressure that we need to go through all of it. And if, if conversation takes us elsewhere, and Hayley, if you have a comment, of course that, or, or an observation, very happy to pause and, and shift things around. So there's no, nothing is set in

stone, but, but I hope that for those of you who are joining us today and, and or listening back, um.

[00:02:29] **Speaker 3:** Yeah, go on, go on. People are,

[00:02:30] **Hayley:** would, are happy if they don't want to, to speak out loud there, there's the chat box, obviously, and I'll keep an eye on that.

[00:02:37] So, you know, a couple of methods that you can highlight a, a question or a comment.

[00:02:43] **Marcelina:** No, that, that's a really good point. Exactly. So sometimes people raise their hand, sometimes people just speak straight, especially when we're such a small group as today or the chat. So what I'm going to do, I'm going to share.

[00:02:54] Share the screen and then we can start the presentation. Let's see. Hayley, is everybody is it, are you seeing a, a the, the kind of,

[00:03:06] **Hayley:** it says that you've started screen sharing it. Sometimes it takes sort of 20 seconds. Oh, how interesting. Yeah. Let's have a look. Let's have a look. Not seeing any content at the moment.

[00:03:17] It says that you've started sharing. Can anybody else confirm whether they can see the a, a slide ahead? A slide? No, nothing yet here. Okay.

[00:03:31] **Marcelina:** Oh, I, I might have been thrown out and put push back in. Can people see the presentation now?

[00:03:38] **Hayley:** No, we can just see the normal screen.

[00:03:40] **Speaker 3:** Hmm. Okay. Thanks for.

[00:03:46] I might have to share again. Oh, technical stuff. Let's try again. Let's see. What about now?

[00:03:58] **Hayley:** It's still blank. Black screen. Here we go. That's up for me.

[00:04:04] **Marcelina:** Yeah,

[00:04:05] **Hayley:** that's it.

[00:04:05] **Marcelina:** Yeah.

[00:04:06] **Hayley:** That's great.

[00:04:07] **Marcelina:** Let me know if. For whatever reason, we, we get disconnected. So I hope that the topic you're expecting today is challenging behaviour and boundaries, and that's obviously a huge topic, just a squeeze.

[00:04:41] **Hayley:** So we've got Marcelina on a freeze here. Is that what everybody else is experiencing? We had that too. Oh dear. So we've now got the screen, but we haven't got Marcelina She'll, she'll bring herself back in. Lemme see if I can move the slide on. She's got control, so I can't do that.

[00:05:04] Okay. Just while Marcel's, um, I guess she's signing back in, but she'll be good. Oh, I admit. There she comes. So, yes, Marcelina was saying this is a wide topic and I imagine that, um, as parents, we've all experienced something of Amy I met, got some else, this, which is great. Marcelina.

[00:05:30] **Marcelina:** Yeah.

[00:05:30] Hi. I don’t know what, why, um, being thrown out typical, but anyway, let's, let's start again.

[00:05:36] **Speaker 3:** Okay.

[00:05:37] **Marcelina:** Let's see if

[00:05:39] **Speaker 3:** he wants to cooperate today.

[00:05:44] Can anybody see anything? If I put video on, maybe that would be a good start.

[00:05:51] **Hayley:** We have the screen, we've got all your, you know, it's, it's not the, oh, there we go. Presentation. Fantastic.

[00:05:56] **Marcelina:** Okay. Yeah.

[00:05:57] **Hayley:** Good to go.

[00:05:58] **Marcelina:** Did I interrupt it at something you were saying there, Hayley? No, no,

[00:06:01] **Hayley:** no. I was just going to, uh, sort of fill a gap,

[00:06:04] **Marcelina:** but No, go on.

[00:06:06] Carry on. So I'll start, I'll start then, and then we'll, we'll see where, where it takes us. So today we're going to be talking about challenging behaviour and boundaries. And I hope, I suppose I, I hope to, uh, I want to talk about some of the things that, that people experience. We're very welcome and we're very, really interested in what you have to say as parents and kind of letting us know what sort of things.

[00:06:31] Pop up for you and Jennifer, your question I think will hopefully be answered throughout the presentation, but we will also revisit it specifically at the end, as well as other questions that might pop up for you during this this presentation. And I think for me, this is one of my favourite topics. I I love this topic because there's something about behaviour and boundaries that has been so misunderstood in parenting and there's so many different experts and.

[00:06:59] Ideas and kind of advice we're given that is not always aligning with how our children's brains actually develop and what they need. So I, what I'm hoping today really is that we can leave behind this idea of behaviour being good or bad, or acceptable. Or unacceptable and, and kind of see beyond what it is that our children are doing.

[00:07:23] Thinking about what is beneath, because of course a lot of the time when we're exasperated, we just want the behaviour to stop. We want to have a really great strategy that's suddenly going to make our children's behaviour kind of change or improve. But I think what's really important is that every single interaction we have with our kids, and particularly when we set boundaries, is actually shaping.

[00:07:46] Their brain. And I really want to think about the long-term goal of raising a child with a brain that can regulate better, that can be empathic towards others that can trust their own feelings and instincts. And that can kind of coexist with other people. And I think. So we really need to think long-term.

[00:08:06] Uh, but that doesn't mean that we can't think about ways in which we can alleviate some of those everyday stressors, uh, in, in family life as well. So I suppose I was curious about some of the things that you experienced at home. Maybe just in the chat or or, or maybe if you want to speak out loud, some of the kind of.

[00:08:27] Single words or short sentences, what sort of stuff do you experience, uh, with your kids? That's challenging.

[00:08:40] I have a long list if nobody volunteers as well.

[00:08:47] **Hayley:** I mean, I, I'll just throw something in there to perhaps get things started off. Yeah. Um, for even now, even with older children. But certainly when, um, they were younger, one of the most difficult things was them trying to communicate. So the emotional regulation or the emotional uh, intelligence perhaps didn't match.

[00:09:09] And so there was a conflict there quite often, and so what needed to happen was really, really. Empath listening, and that's not always possible in the throes of, you know, family life and dinners ready and all those different things. It's really, really tricky. But that was probably one of the, the main things that came up for us was the, the, the agenda that the child had against, you know, how we as parents were able to respond in the moment, in, in completely, you know, throes of regular life.

[00:09:39] **Marcelina:** Yeah. And Jennifer, you're, you're offering some brilliant kind of common examples here. Hitting, shouting at us, talking really badly to us, or, and this one is really hard when we are parents of more than one child. When our baby, or when, when our other child is being attacked by one of our children because.

[00:10:00] We want to, we get that parent instinct to protect and it, but really in reality, it's, of course both of them are hurting. It's just that they're showing it differently. So, so what, what, what Jennifer's kind of examples here are kind of highlighting is this idea of, it, it really raw. Kind of feelings that we have about being a protector, or like we said before about what's kind of acceptable in the framework of the society in which we live.

[00:10:31] Uh, what do we expect children to say and do? And if we did or said this when we were kids, to our parents or to our teachers, then that would've potentially been quite. Significant consequences or we wouldn't even maybe think to do that. So there's so much just in some of the examples here that, that you're bringing up Jennifer.

[00:10:52] So thank you for sharing. So let's have a little bit of a think then about what's going on. because I get this question a lot. What's happened? Why is it so that when we grew up we just got on with things and we did what was asked of us and now we're raising.

[00:11:13] Sorry guys. I don’t know what's going on. That we're raising this generation of children that have a lot more to say about everything. And, and sometimes it feels therefore that we can't put in boundaries or things that perhaps we would've responded to aren't aren't. Kind of aren't effective.

[00:11:30] So I suppose we really need to think back to why these difficulties emerge in all of our families and perhaps also think about are we perhaps, or are. The environments around our kids doing things that are inadvertently maintaining some of these difficulties. So first of all, we know that a child's brain is incredibly immature.

[00:11:52] So for those of you who have worked with me, we often draw out this timeline of 25 years during which time that the, the thinking brain and grows and develops. And it takes a long, a long, long time for that part of the brain to become. Mature and able to do a lot of the things that we are asking our kids to do.

[00:12:12] For example, emotion engage in emotion regulation, plan ahead, reason, understand, cause and effect withhold impulses, which of course is one of the key reasons why kids might lash out verbally or physically, and of course the way that might. Manifest is that there might be a difficulty managing transitions, trying to leave the house in the morning or go to bed at night or move from one activity to another.

[00:12:44] And often we see that those are the times in family life that that are the hardest because we're asking them to do something that perhaps they aren't able to do. And in many ways as well. Kids are scientists. Their job is to explore. And we see this in play all the time. They, they're that they're doing it in relationships as well.

[00:13:07] They're checking, well, where is the boundary of what I can and can't do? And is it the same in this setting as it is in that setting? And is it is same when, I don't know mom is on her own or when dad and grandma are around. So they're testing this kind of, this the strength of the relationship, but they're also testing.

[00:13:27] What can I do? And it's not so much that they're checking, what can I get away with? Although, of course, kids, and we all have moments like that and situations like that when we're checking, well, what can I get away with here? But this goes, this is more about making sense of the environment and learning about, how far can I push and beyond what limit am I not safe anymore?

[00:13:51] And I think sometimes. We are all guilty of this, that we might maybe give our kids mixed messages because maybe when we're tired, we respond differently than when we are common regulated and, rested. And so sometimes, particularly for children who are, we know that we have a fair a fair few families joining us as well.

[00:14:14] Whose children are differently wired in, for example, with autism or ADHD, we know that for those children that might be even more kind of stressful, when they don't know when they can't, when different passages are given. Which doesn't mean that we always have to be consistent all the time because it's not possible but we can sometimes do things inadvertently that maintain some of these things that our kids.

[00:14:41] That we don't like. Now sometimes we have sensitive kids that feel really deeply sometimes. Some of you might have come across this term or child. I sometimes use that in, in, in explaining to parents. I also sometimes talk about a little sailboat that's sensitive to the waves of the ocean.

[00:15:00] And sometimes we have children who are. Particularly sensitive and maybe their older sister or brother or maybe the friend down the, down the road wasn't, isn't like that and can take much more. But actually we might have children that are much more, much less tolerant to stressors and changes around them.

[00:15:19] And that might also dysregulate them. And when children are dysregulated and overwhelmed, they really can't access this part of the brain that's just only begun to grow and develop. And I suppose in that sense, there are times when we might be asking too much either cognitively and, and from an executive function sort of perspective in terms of them planning and reasoning and, and organizing themselves.

[00:15:44] But we might also be asking too much in terms of their ability to withhold that impulse when their brother or sister has really, really annoyed them. Or find a, a way of forming a, a need or a request because they simply can't do it even when they're eight. And even if they could do it yesterday.

[00:16:05] And I think that's the thing that can throw us sometimes that, well, you could do this yesterday. I know you can use your words, but then something else happens and suddenly that ability is temporarily suspended. I think sometimes we also, again with asking too much, and perhaps too often if I don't even want to do this, but when I think about if I were to write down the amount of times I ask my kids to do something that they don't want to do in the course

of the day, I think we ask an awful lot and it, and there is this nice concept of thinking about the relationship.

[00:16:43] Kind of bank balance where you've got, you know, where, where when we ask our kids to do something that they don't want to do, we're kind of taking out of their account, if you like. And, and I think if we were to look, like I said, in a, in, on a normal day when everybody's stressed and needs to get out to wherever they need to be, and maybe somebody doesn't want to do what they're asked.

[00:17:06] It's very easy to kind of take a lot out of their bank balance. We might hurry them along, we might, uh, stress, stress them by, I don't know, by putting pressure on them, by asking things that they don't want to do. And I think we sometimes forget that we also need to put in that, that kind of, we need to put in money or put in currency so that we can take when needed.

[00:17:31] And that's another way in which we can inadvertently find ourselves nagging and lecturing and asking and maybe threatening to, for them to do things. Um. I written here, introduced strings. For those of you who have seen my kind of who've seen me before, I often talk about strings. And I, I use, um, I ask you to imagine, so imagine a, a really thick thread or maybe a, a piece of yarn.

[00:17:59] And, and I think most of us can imagine that if we were to pull that's quite sturdy. And there is a little bit of, of kind of. There is strength in that. And that's really how we want our relationship with our kids to be. Particularly during those times when we're asking them to do things they don't want to do or that are hard for them.

[00:18:17] Now what happens is that often during the everyday stresses of our, of our kind of lives, we in that string out and it becomes thin, more like a sewing thread. And of course there are days or weeks or months. When our relationships with our kids are stronger and sometimes they're weaker or depending on where we are at and where they're at, but overall, to think about this idea of, of really strengthening that string between you and your children so that, because ultimately, and we'll get to this in a moment, that is going to be the main vehicle for any change that we want to see in our kids.

[00:18:59] I think kind of linked to that a little bit is that when we get stressed, when we are asking again, or when we are having the same conversations with our kids again, or when our child has hit or stolen or lied or or resisted

something that we're asking them to do again and again. It's hard to stay regulated and calm ourselves.

[00:19:23] Now, unfortunately, that can then keep. That can erode that, that thick string, that thick relationship, that strong relationship that we want to have with our kids. And actually it makes us less effective as parents. But I'll get to that in a moment. And I think it's really, really difficult because I think there's so many different trends in, in, in parenting that have happened over the last 50 years and of course that there's been the move from.

[00:19:54] Physically hitting our kids to, to verbally attacking them to doing things like Super Nanny did in the nineties and and introduced this idea of putting kids on the step and removing privileges and working on it with a much more behavioural sort of method. But we also know that sometimes.

[00:20:14] Particularly children are very sensitive. Some of those methods particularly delivered when we're angry and upset ourselves can erode that relationship as well. And things that worked when kids were two, three, or four, and they were motivated to have that star on their chart, or we could just pick them up and put them in their car seat, whether they wanted to go to nursery or not.

[00:20:35] That doesn't work when kids grow older, even in primary school. Um. So I suppose I really want to think about, you know, so what can we do in these situations? So we're dealing with a really complex picture. We're dealing with a generation of children that are growing with much more much more choice, much more freedom.

[00:20:57] We want to acknowledge their thoughts and feelings and experiences. We're also living in a in a world where people get, you know, there's a lot of. Talking about being respectful and we don't want to offend anyone. And sometimes we can sometimes confuse this idea of setting boundaries with offending.

[00:21:16] And I think a lot of the time we probably don't set as many boundaries as we should in a way that is effective. But I will get to that in a moment. So I think regardless of what's going on in terms of, regardless of all the kind of complexities and different generational trends in parenting, what we know.

[00:21:36] On a brain-based level, we really need to be regulated first when we engage with our kids, and this is a little bit like when you're, obviously, when

you're flying on an on an airplane, the message is to in, in, in case oxygen is needed, that the mouse comes down and you help yourself first, and then you can help your child.

[00:21:59] And I like this idea because. That goes for any turbulence that we experience with our kids as well. But we need to be in our thinking brain. We can't be down in our reactive downstairs brain because then we only join their chaos rather than helping them solve whatever is going on for them. So again, coming back to this idea, we need to invest in the relationship so that when things are really hard, we can rely on that.

[00:22:30] So a lot of the time, I think gentle or connection based or an attachment based parenting styles have been seen as really permissive and really passive and letting kids do whatever they want. So I really want to highlight that in this presentation that I'm not suggesting for this strong relationship to, to be kind of number one thing because I want to be nice or because.

[00:22:56] I was actually once told a parent that I was a a, a a hippie sandal wearer, which I don't even wear a sandal, but that was her picture of me when I was talking about about putting the relationship first. But the reason why I am always advocating for that is because it makes us more effective. As parents, it makes our lives easier in the long run if we know that we can rely on the fact that our kids will want to do well for us because they have been considered, we've heard them, we put their kind of thoughts and feelings.

[00:23:31] We keep them in mind when we make decisions and ways practically in which we can do that. We can spend time together with them. And again I'm. So pragmatic for these, in these sort of situations, use existing opportunities. It doesn't mean that you have to take half a day out and go into London and go to the theater.

[00:23:51] It's great if that's lovely, but that's not necessarily what every day kind of. Topping up the bank balance looks like it's those moments that you have to do anyway. You might have a dog and you need to walk them, or there might be an activity that you're taking them to and you're watching them dance or do gymnastics or swim, or even a car journey to school, which takes five or 10 minutes.

[00:24:15] It's using those situations to to check in, to, to have some sort of conversations that maybe aren't possible in the hustle and bustle of, of, of other parts of your day. For younger kids, if you feel playful, there are all sorts of different ways in which you can playfully kind of fill their cup if you like.

[00:24:35] And there might be so this exercise I've taken from from, um, from a book that's called good In, good Inside, which is really good. Which we, we can link to it later on as well, but it's simply. Hugging your child and checking how far up has their cup been filled. I know that for a lot of kids later in primary school, that might not be that might not work for them, and it might feel a bit awkward, but I think really being playful where you can find playfulness. I know we don't always feel playful. In fact, maybe a lot of the time we don't feel playful, but it's finding those lighthearted moments and all families have their own little ways in which you kind of hug or kiss or sniff your kids in, you know, in, in a way that kind of make, gives them that sense of.

[00:25:24] You see me and you're taking a moment out of your afternoon or day to, to do this for me. And I think the other thing that I think sometimes as parents, we, we really, really want to educate them. We want to give them skills and knowledge that we wish we had or that we know might make their lives easier in the long run.

[00:25:48] And sometimes. The way we speak to our kids might actually shut conversation down rather than keep it going. So I suppose what I'm telling myself as, as well as you guys, it's we need to watch out for, for things that we say and do that shut conversations down rather than keep them going. So sometimes our kids come with a problem and we might not be in the place where we can help them with that, or we think it's.

[00:26:15] Perhaps not a big deal. And we might say that it's in our language even we say, oh, don't worry. It's fine. You know, you'll be okay. Or our kids, and come and they say that they want. I don’t know, another snack and you've just, they've just had a big dinner or whatever and we say, oh my God, you can't be hungry or You must be cold, so please wear a coat, or whatever it is.

[00:26:36] Little everyday things that we sometimes do that kind of invalidates their own choice about their bodies and about their needs, and sometimes there will be hidden bids behind some of these questions that they come with. So it's really looking out for some of those things, ways that they're asking for you to be with them.

[00:26:55] W without asking for you to be with them.

[00:26:59] **Hayley:** Some, something to add in there. Marcelina. Um, from, from my experience as well you know, sometimes, you know, the kids would come with a sense of urgency about something, which, you obviously listen

when there's an urgency, but clearly wasn't urgent. And sometimes there were interruptions and it wasn't appropriate to be interrupted, but.

[00:27:19] What we learned to do was to always acknowledge that, one of the girls was saying, I need you. I need you. I need you. But I, you know, we might not have been available at that very, very moment, but to acknowledge it and to say, I really want to hear about this. I really want to hear about this, but I am on a phone call or I am just finishing a presentation or whatever it might be.

[00:27:47] This is really important and you are really important too. Can we check in in five minutes? Yeah. And that often actually was, you know, multi, multi helpful because it would mean that their sense of urgency, they had to, they had to use their. Developing regulation, emotional regulation skills, uh, to think, okay, I've gotta sit with this for a moment.

[00:28:11] Mommy's going to talk to me, uh, in a couple of minutes. And it was really great that worked really well rather than. Me dropping everything and being absolutely present. Clearly there are emergencies and very important things that one would do that in, but it, it actually taught a really great lesson to the girls to respect what the adult was doing and that that was important and equally what, what they were doing or what they needed.

[00:28:38] Was important. Yeah. That's not, not every time they wanted something obviously, but, in some situations that was really, really helpful.

[00:28:46] **Marcelina:** Absolutely. No, that's a great, great example of, of setting a boundary while still preserving the relationship.

[00:28:53] **Speaker 3:** Yeah.

[00:28:54] **Marcelina:** And, and making them feel heard and, and seen.

[00:28:57] And it can be, I don’t know, everyday things. And that we might inadvertently kind of shut them down or, or stop. Them wanting to come to us, and often it is stuff that might be raw for us. So I'm, I'm thinking back to your example, Jennifer, you know, about hitting and hurting other people or somehow indicating something that, that kind of is, is difficult for us to watch or hear about.

[00:29:24] And we might, rather than getting curious about. They might come home and say, well, I hate so and so, and I don't know, I punch them in the face or they, I didn't let them play. I think that sort of comment might get a lot of us

to be like, no, no, but you can't do that and that's not okay. And, think about their feelings and, and go on, you know, into a bit of a lecture.

[00:29:45] And because, because it's, it's really scary to think that we would have a child that excludes other kids or that can't. That, that, that is so reactive or whatever it is that they've brought. So I think that is one of the ways in which sometimes we want to hurry them along in their development.

[00:30:02] We just, it's a bit uncomfortable sometimes to hear what it is that they did or why they did that. But if we can be curious about that, which doesn't mean that we're that we're condoning the behaviour that we're saying it's okay. But what we're saying is that, I want to hear about this, I want to hear your process.

[00:30:21] I'm curious about what's going on in your head. And so curiosity, uh, is a really good way, again, to build that foundation that they know that when they come to us, that they will be heard and we will want to know what's going on inside of their heads. And I think the other thing, sometimes we have this idea of quality time being all those nice things, doing the nice things, having a snuggle in bed or going, I don't know, on holiday together or being out in the sunshine in the garden. But actually we need to reevaluate what quality time really looks like, because like I said previously, a lot of the times. We build our brain where we build our kids' brains all the time in every single interaction we have with them.

[00:31:08] So we can use conflict as an opportunity to make that connection. We can make those really difficult moments that we really would like to be without. We wouldn't want them to hit or hurt their younger siblings or be unkind to their friends or to withhold the truth from us. But actually, those are our opportunities to say, Hey, when you are.

[00:31:31] Struggling at your absolutely most, I'm still willing to be with you and I'm still willing to think about this with you. And I think as much as possible, and, and this is so hard for us, like I said earlier, when we get triggered by our children's behaviours or the way they deal with something, that we want to lecture them, we want to hurry, like I said, hurry that development along.

[00:31:54] We want to make sure that they really know what's expected. Reality is that kids know very early on what's expected. Very young kids pick up cues from people in their environment. And and we can and we can kind of miss the point a little bit by focusing on what they should or shouldn't be doing, rather

than thinking about what's underneath, like I said earlier, we might also invalidate by denying how they're thinking and feeling.

[00:32:22] We might. We might, in our exasperation, punish our kids in one way or another. Even, you know, um, by either offering some sort of punishment or removal of privileges or sometimes punishing with our relationship. I think that is, is very widespread happens in a lot of families. But what we know is again, that over time erodes that connection if we don't repair it and that connection is what we need.

[00:32:49] So that they can do what we're asking so that we can get along. And I think sometimes people ask, well, what about rewards then? And I think I, I think where I stand on this, and this is absolutely a, a preference for each family to make for themselves, but I think what I know about people when we get dysregulated, even positive things can turn negative.

[00:33:15] So in that moment when our child doesn't put their shoes on, even if we asked five times or more, that reward can quickly turn into a threat. Oh, you remember that magazine you really wanted? You know that what we try to do is to kind of perhaps kind of encourage and remember that there is this nice carrot dangling in front of you.

[00:33:38] But actually what can happen then is, is that. We might use it as a threat instead. And I think the most important thing that rewards can do is that they take away that intrinsic motivation. That means that in, in motivation, that a child has to do what we're asking for the sake of doing it. So to zip up their coat or to learn to tie their shoelaces or to practice an instrument or practice a sport or.

[00:34:04] Unload the dishwasher because they want to contribute. And I, I know most kids don't want to unload the dishwasher, but those little things that, that, the value of those things gets bumped down because it's taken over by whatever thing they can have. Now there, there is a, a bit of an exception for children.

[00:34:27] Sometimes when I work with families with ADHD kids that there might need to be some sort of reinforcer sooner because it's so difficult for the ADHD brain to stay on track. But that, that's for a bit of a, I'm just throwing that in as a, as a bit of a bracket. But I think overall we can sometimes do more damage than good in the long run when we rely on rewards.

[00:34:52] Alone, particularly as our kids grow older and they turn into tween and teens, and actually a star on your chart isn't enough. And, and we can, like I said, we can miss the point sometimes of really what it is that we're trying to achieve. But anyway, let's have a think about that. So I think when things when things happen, when our kids are doing this behaviour that we don't like, there will be.

[00:35:14] A number of different ways in which we can respond. And I think there is I usually divide it into this idea of before, during, and after. So before these typical flashpoints, which are often the same ones in each family, it's the same thing that often gets us revved up as parents. It's the same thing that our kids do over and over, either because they are stuck in that behaviour or because they are in a developmental phase, that, that, that behaviour happens more frequently.

[00:35:43] When my son was younger, it was toothbrushing it, it never took the two minutes that I rigidly thought that it should take because it should take two minutes, but it was 20 minutes and it was, it was endless and it was endless. And of course ended up with everybody being late and there being a lot of emotion flying around that didn't need to.

[00:36:01] But that was just one of many. But I think there's something about. Those situations that we can prepare for, we can prepare ourselves and we can prepare our kids. And there's this lovely term that I came across recently that it's, that's called emotional vaccination. And essentially the person who coined this term, she was talking about this idea of preparing them for what it is that might happen.

[00:36:28] So I don't know, it might be a typical. Scenario that, you know, or you can, you can imagine what's going to happen to your child, how they're going to behave, how you're going to behave and, and all of that. And, and actually prime their brain a little bit and say, Hey sweetie, you know, tomorrow we've got that really stressful Wednesday morning, or whatever it is.

[00:36:50] And, you know, usually daddy has to go and I have to go and, and you, we've got all these things. So sometimes you might feel really, really tense inside and sometimes you might feel like you just shut down and you don't want to put your shoes on. And it might feel really, really difficult to do all of the things that we're asking.

[00:37:07] It's kind of preparing them for what's going to happen, but it's also preparing them for how they might feel. And I think that goes for bigger events,

like going to the dentist, it can go for when things change at school or when ch things change because it's been school and then it's been, it's a holiday and or it's been the holidays and it's the school.

[00:37:27] So it's thinking about, okay, what might be going on? How might they react to it and help them. Prepare for that. And of course, modeling with our own behaviour. This is where where we can show in the way that we deal with problems, how they might be able to resolve problems in the future.

[00:37:48] It's very, very difficult to ask our kids to do things that we're not doing ourselves. And I think sometimes this might be for, for example, screen time. This is something that we that I think we might have certain expectations of how our kids should or should not get off screen times, uh, where when they're on their screen that we might, for example, use screens a lot ourselves, because of course our lives revolve around screens for work and for leisure and for practical things like, like shopping and banking.

[00:38:17] So just keeping an eye on some of those times when actually we're telling them to do something that we're not doing ourselves. And I think all of us can find a number of different things that, that we do in that way. And the other thing is setting agreements when we're calm and not under duress, when we're not stressed, you know, when we're not triggered by our children's behaviour.

[00:38:37] And setting realistic expectations. So for example, I don't know, having a 4-year-old and a baby. Or even older children, we might not be able to leave them together for a period of time. We might not be able to leave them together in a room unsupervised. I don’t know, after school when everybody's tired or when there are other things going on that are stressful.

[00:39:00] So it's thinking about actually, what am I asking my child to do here? And is this realistic based on where they're at in their brain development? And again, coming back to, we're thinking about primary school kids here. They are incredibly immature and incredibly impulsive, even without any additional labels added on top.

[00:39:19] I think the other thing, of course, is thinking about these flashpoint moments, making things habitual so that they know that this is the order we always do things in. And so it takes away that pressure on the, on the on, on their lower brains to have to deal with yet another request that's out of the norm, if that makes sense.

[00:39:40] Now during these moments that our kids scream or hit or do whatever behaviour that is really triggering us and is really seen as unacceptable in society's eyes, we really have to, and this, this might my, this, for those of you who see me regularly, I always come back to this and we have to check our own emotional responses first.

[00:40:08] Because even if we say the right words that we've read somewhere or that seem reasonable and our bodies aren't regulated because we're irritated by our child's behaviour, we will never be convincing in our arguments because our bodies. Tell a completely different story. So we really need to regulate ourselves.

[00:40:29] We need to learn to tolerate that they will have feelings about things and that their agenda, just like you said, Hayley, might be completely different from the one that we have. So I remember when my son was four and we were just leaving for school five minutes to go, and I said we're leaving.

[00:40:46] And he is but mom, I haven't done my obstacle course yet. So in his head, he was going to build an obstacle course in the playroom and I was leaving for school. So it's just, this is a silly example, but I think we do this with a lot of things. They want to finish, I don't know, building something or they are not ready because they not gotten dressed or they're reading a book and they want to finish the chapter or whatever it is.

[00:41:12] So I think it's, it's thinking about what are we, um. I've lost my thought mind, my thread but it's really against, about, it was about gender, wasn't

[00:41:21] **Hayley:** it? It was about agenda.

[00:41:22] **Marcelina:** You know, what,

[00:41:23] **Hayley:** What pages is your son on and what page are you on? Completely. And you have a commitment. You have a commitment to get him to school, so you know it.

[00:41:30] The, there are other things, as you say at play. There are other factors

[00:41:33] **Marcelina:** completely. Yeah, and I think we, for that reason, we really need to shift lens. We need to watch our own narratives in those moments because as we've asked five or six times, uh, and probably should have asked once or twice and then taken an action.

[00:41:46] But I think a lot of us, we want to give them that benefit of the doubt we want to call again. And sometimes it's easier to call, call again up the stairs rather than walking up the stairs and actually telling it to them. I think we're all guilty of this in some way or another. And I think. What's really important is that we need to, it's easy to be to, to be swayed by our own minds into a narrative of, oh, there, this is always happening, or she's always doing this to me, or, you know, she's so irresponsible or perhaps narratives of fear for the future.

[00:42:19] Or fear of how this is going to make us look as parents. If we have a child that's melting down in a restaurant or speaking really rudely to us or is late because we were completely incapable of getting them out the house on time. So watch that, that your own narrative inside and also the language that comes out.

[00:42:39] And I think this is really important as well, coming back to this idea of boundaries. We can. Set and hold a limit and they are allowed to be upset about it. I think sometimes we have this idea that we, we set a limit. We say screen time is over or I don’t know, it's time to leave. Or you, I won't let you hit your sister.

[00:43:02] And that we would want them to just simply stop that behaviour and say, oh, okay. I'm sorry, I forgot. The very fact that they're doing that means that they. Can't, and that's why we have to set the limit. But they can also disagree with your limit. They can be really furious that you're putting your hand in between big sister and little sister.

[00:43:22] They can be furious about the fact that actually the TV's going off now or that they can't have that cookie that they really wanted. So I think these two things can be true at once. And I think sometimes we forget that we are we are very clear about we need to set limits. We're not always willing to hear.

[00:43:42] They're upset about it, their complaint about it, and we can kind of hold firm and kind of unruffled in those moments. And it's really difficult because when our kids have complaints, we take it personally so very easily. But actually our kids are not going to validate our limits. We have to set their limits because they can't.

[00:44:02] Control their behaviour in those moments. So I think sometimes we fall under the trap that we want them to be okay immediately with us setting a certain limit. And actually their job is to be upset about it and our job is to set the limit and they can coexist.