

[00:00:00.160] - Lisa Qualls

This week, we're bringing you a recording from a recent workshop that took place in the Village.

[00:00:05.590] - Melissa Corkum

In case you haven't heard about it, the Village is our membership community where you can find support and training to meet your needs. For more information, head to the [Adoption Connection.com/Village](https://AdoptionConnection.com/Village).

[00:00:16.470] - Lisa Qualls

We hope you enjoy the workshop.

[00:00:22.240] - Melissa Corkum

Welcome to this month's workshop on Raising Worry-Free kids. I am just curious if you are here live with us and you want to just pop into the chat, maybe some of the worries that you hear your kids talking about. That's just curiosity for me. While you guys are doing that, David, will you just give us a quick introduction to who you are, a little bit of the work that you do, before we get rolling?

[00:00:51.370] - David Thomas

I'd be honored to. First off, I am so grateful to all of you for carving out time and space to be a part of this time. I'm a big fan of Melissa's and the work they do and just honored to get to be a part of this morning. And I am actually a therapist. I practice at an amazing place in Nashville, Tennessee, called Daystar Counseling. I'm actually here in my counseling office right now, and we do the work a little different in that we're in a house rather than an office building. That was a very intentional decision for us. For any of you who've taken kids, you love the counseling or you've gone before yourselves, you know, it can be an overwhelming experience, particularly that first time. So we try to do as much as we can to help folks families feel really safe and disarmed in the front of their journey and coming. We actually currently have five therapy dogs on staff. In fact, you all may see one napping or wandering over my shoulder. He may want to join our session at some point throughout the time. And that, too, was a very strategic decision for us to have dogs on staff, because they do, as I think probably all of us know who have animals, an amazing job, I think, of just helping us settle, so they are a huge part of the work we do.

[00:02:05.530] - David Thomas

I've been a part of this practice for the last 25 years. Work with not just an amazing team of canines, but an amazing team of humans as well. And just grateful. Our whole focus is work with the pediatric population so that's all we do is see kids, adolescents and families and just have been grateful for the opportunity to do this work for this long, to sit front row and really just learn from kids and families in all these years of work. And then out of that work, I've had the opportunity to write some books and travel around and teach some classes on different aspects of parenting. So honored that I get to be a part of time with you all today.

[00:02:42.450] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And by some books you mean like ten?

[00:02:46.990] - David Thomas

A few.

[00:02:48.410] - Melissa Corkum

Okay. So David, what do you think probably what have been your favorite books to work on so far? And then maybe secondly, if it's different, what do you think have been the books that parents have told you have been the most important for them?

[00:03:05.060] - David Thomas

It's a great question. I would say years ago, back in 2009, I released a book called *Wild Things: the Art of Nurturing Boys*, and was a book tracking boy development from birth all the way through adolescence, which I talk a lot in that book about how every developmental theorist would agree that boys are much later to finish adolescence. And so they agree it's somewhere between 22 and 25

when boys are finished, where it's 19 to 20 for girls. And so that's what one example of why I felt really strongly about writing that book, that we could have a more accurate understanding of a boy's development, the way he's wired, the way he operates, the way he sees the world. And in response to that, how we could better parent him, better teach to him, better instruct him all the different ways I think we engage him. And so I have, over the years, just had a lot of parents who gave me some great feedback from having read that book and just thought, oh, my goodness. Particularly, I've had a lot of moms, I've laughed with a lot of moms over the years who maybe only grow up with sisters and said, this seems so abnormal to me.

[00:04:11.850] - David Thomas

And then I read the book, and I was like, that's really normal. It's just I didn't grow up that way. I didn't grow up around boys. And so there's a lot about their development that seems confusing. And so I've been really grateful for the feedback from that book. And then a couple of years ago, I co authored a book called *Are My Kids on Track?* with two of my colleagues here, where we track four emotional, four social, and four spiritual milestones that we want to see the kids we love progressing toward and just defining some of what those milestones are. And then, more importantly, talking about what are some of the nuts and bolts of helping kids develop these emotional muscles, these social muscles. And so I've been really thankful for that book's impact as I've intersected with parents in different parts of the country who have felt like it was helpful to have a little more clarity around what those things look like as we think about traveling the journey of helping our kids develop in those spaces yeah.

[00:05:07.540] - Melissa Corkum

When it comes to development and those milestones. And I promise we're going to get to the worry piece in a minute here, but a lot of almost every parent either attending the workshop today or listening later, is parenting a child who probably has some form of complex trauma or early adversity. And so we know that a lot of times that changes the rate of development. And we see a lot of delayed... A lot of times we tell our parents, kind of think of your kids, like, half their social and emotional ages just as, like a rule of thumb. So when we're reading books that are written for the general population that track those milestones, do you have tips for like, are they still going to go through the same milestones but just maybe at different times? Like, how do we read a book like that and kind of take into account that early trauma?

[00:06:06.370] - David Thomas

It's a great question, and I would say we always want to be taking into account that trauma. So I love even the way Melissa, you asked that question. And we talk a lot throughout the book about what it looks like to modify the timeline based on our kids unique stories and unique needs, and knowing that we talk in the introduction of that book how every kid is going to progress at their own individual pace, just as they're all going to move through physical development at their own individual pace. The same is going to be true with the emotional thread of their development, the social development, all those different parts and pieces unique. And I think to the degree that we're really leaning in and studying who they are and the uniqueness of their stories and using incredible resources like the one I'm getting to be a part of this morning, that it enhances that understanding. It allows me to define that timeline more clearly, more appropriately, because I'm operating with that understanding as a backdrop at all times.

[00:07:05.440] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so thinking about all of those things and then now bring in worry. So I think all kids worry a little bit. I remember as a kid, I was, I think, probably a pretty adventurous, independent kid, but I did have like this I have a couple really clear memories of random things I would worry about or recurring nightmares. There seemed to be like this same bear or whatever that always showed up. So what are some ways that we can identify? I mean, some of our kids will just tell us what they're afraid of, but then sometimes it doesn't always maybe look like worry. So what are some of the other things that kids are telling us, either with their behaviors or their emotions? Or what are some of the other ways worry might show up for kids?

[00:07:58.540] - David Thomas

I think it is of such importance to lean into the wisdom you just spoke to that quite honestly, a lot of times worry won't present in its classic understanding. As we even think about, I talk a lot in my newest book about how anxiety and depression, both with boys, tend to present really differently. And I think it's some of how we miss it. And so I've found over the years that a lot of anxious boys, a high percentage of anxious boys in a classroom setting, for example, look restless, fidgety, under-focused, inattentive, which tend to be the things we would first think about with ADHD. And I've seen countless boys who have been misdiagnosed with ADHD or even mis-medicated for ADHD, when it's an undercurrent of anxiety underneath. And so for any one of us, when our brain gets hijacked by worry, it's going to be harder to bring attention and focus to the equation. And so it makes sense where if already boys have a lot of energy, and sitting still and maintaining focus in the classroom could be hard on a good day under the best of circumstances, all the more when worry creeps in and where those boys oftentimes are not going to present with classic fear, classic worry.

[00:09:08.290] - David Thomas

But that's the undercurrent that's driving a lot of behaviors. And we will always say that all behavior is communication of some kind. And our job as parents and educators is really to lean into the behavior to see, okay, what's in play? What can I learn? What do I need to pay attention to that could inform my response differently if I'm really absorbing all of what this behavior might mean as opposed to just addressing the non compliance or addressing the disobedience, and really missing something foundational in the equation. So with depression, for example, a lot of boys present as really angry. And so when we think about depression, the first thing we think about is sad, lethargic folks who are often unmotivated have a hard time getting out of bed. And quite honestly, I don't tend to see a lot of boys who present in that classic way. It certainly can. I want to be clear in saying that. But a lot of times it shows up more as anger irritability. I had a mom years ago say it's like my son just wakes up with a chronic low grade irritability every day. And it was a depression that was driving that response more than anything.

[00:10:12.970] - David Thomas

So it's where, I love the way you ask that question, we want to pay really close attention to its presentation. We talk a lot about two particular presentations that we see with a high percentage of kids. That's not to say all kids are going to meet this presentation, but one is what we call the classic imploder. And I might argue that I think a higher percentage of girls meet the imploder presentation. And they're kids who feel worried and become more pleasing, more perfectionistic, or more performing. Which is honestly why I think we miss it with a lot of girls in the classroom because they look like a teacher's dream a lot of times. They're working ten times harder to do, they're not just doing what's required of them, they're going above and beyond. And so turning the anxiety inward. And the opposite presentation would be classic exploders. Those are kids where it's coming out again, a lot of times in behaviors and where it's easy to miss.

[00:11:07.020] - David Thomas

And certainly kids can swing between both presentations. They're kids who are imploders during the academic day and more exploders at night. In fact, we sit with a lot of parents who would say year after year, I conference with their teachers and get the greatest reports, particularly parents of first born girls, you know, her teacher can't say enough great things about her. She is like a dream model student. And then that's not at all who she is at night. I had a dad a few weeks ago said I was listening to my daughter's teacher go on and on and on about her, and all I could think was if I had videoed her last night at 7 pm, you'd have no idea you're talking about right now. And that's that swing from imploded during the day, exploder at night. And so one of the interesting things there are a lot of interesting things as we study anxiety with the pediatric population. But one of the things we've learned is that though girls are twice as likely to struggle, more boys get taken in for help. And my suspicion around that is that I think it's because a lot more boys are presenting as classic exploders. So it's behaviors we can't look away from. They're becoming problematic more oftentimes in that setting in ways that we can't help but lean in. Whereas for those girls who are imploders, they're just working overtime to contain it throughout the day. So I think that's some of why that's my suspicion around why that particular statistic is true.

[00:12:33.820] - Melissa Corkum

Okay, so I have so many questions, but you hit on one thing that I think is so true for so many of our families, maybe for different reasons. But you mentioned, like, a presentation that's different perhaps in public or in a classroom, and then we call it restraint collapse when kids get home. And maybe all that implosion kind of turns into explosion. And I think what I hear from a lot of the families that we talk to is that what happens is then either the therapist or the teacher or whoever is the person that gets to interact with our children during their kind of less explosive presentation. So they see this, like, maybe classic overachiever or someone who is always flying under the radar to follow the rules. And then we have these behaviors at home is that they maybe don't qualify for an IEP, or if someone tells them they don't qualify for a 504 or IEP because their behavior looks okay in school. Or people are like, maybe they don't believe them. They're like, not that kid, like you said, I wish I had a video to show because it was like a different kid. And so what would you say to parents who are kind of fighting this kind of, like, seemingly uphill battle of advocating for our kids? Because we know we see the anxiety, and maybe they're only comfortable enough to show it behind closed doors. Like, how do we get help when they don't present like that to all the people that are evaluating them?

[00:14:08.920] - David Thomas

Yes. Well, I would first want to say two things to those parents. One, I'm so grateful you could hear us having this conversation in this way to normalize that. I don't think we can talk enough about that because I found when we don't, what inevitably happens in some way, whether parents say it out loud or not, they're operating under this idea of, I'm doing something wrong. They're asking the question whether they're aware they're asking it or not. What are all these other adults in their life doing well or doing right, that I'm doing wrong? Because he or she seems to be performing well at school in sports and extracurricular experiences. And I love that you use the word safety. It's often that you're not doing something wrong and other people are doing it right. It's just that they feel the safest. And so I love that language of restraint collapse. It's just a sense of I'm going to regulate throughout the day. I'm going to empty out my regulation tank throughout the day with all these folks that I don't feel as safe with. And then when I get with my safe people, it's okay if the tank is empty.

[00:15:08.010] - David Thomas

And so I would first and foremost want to say that's incredibly normal. It's why I can't talk enough about it when I intersect with parents so that you aren't wrongly circling around that question, what am I doing wrong? What am I doing wrong? What am I doing wrong? Because I just don't think that's helpful. And particularly when we highlight this tendency. I would say nextly, I think this may sound a little strange, but stay with me, one of the practices we talk about in *Are My Kids on Track?* is one that we call game day footage. And I think a lot of student athletes understand this. I often will ask kids that question, like, why do you think your coach would ever have you come back and watch footage of a game that's already completed? Like, you can't change the outcome. It's not going to affect the score. And most every student athlete would say it's because we've got something to learn. Like, there's something to learn from watching the footage. And I might see something from a different perspective that I didn't see when I was on the field or on the court. So it's a film or game day footage is a very common practice with a lot of coaches, and let's learn from something we might not have seen when we were in the game.

[00:16:16.560] - David Thomas

And we encourage parents to do that with kids at times in a way that can be helpful, not in a shaming way, not in a surprising way. Like, I'm going to whip out my phone when you're in a dysregulated moment, but we're going to talk in a calm moment about the benefit of this practice. And parents even saying, I want to learn what I could do differently and I want to help you learn something differently. And then even saying this may be something helpful for us to bring to your counselor at points as well. Because we have countless parents who come through the doors of our office who will be like, my fear is they're going to do everything you ask them to do in session, and then they're going to go home and do nothing. And that's super common. And so we found that to be a helpful practice. But again, it's done something that's talked about in a calm moment where all parties are in agreement of its purpose and then we bring that in for the purpose of learning. And so parents oftentimes will find when we kind of watch some of that film, okay, I could see where I matched their intensity in that moment. I could see where I wasn't bringing one of the definitions of co-regulation is sharing my calm. I didn't have any calm to share because I hadn't done enough regulation work

myself to have some calm to share. And so I think that can be useful in those moments, particularly for those kids who may report to teachers or report to their therapists, like, I'm practicing everything you told me to. And often we'll have parents and say, well, they are practicing for maybe about 30 to 60 seconds and then they abandon ship and kind of default to old patterns. And that's super common for a lot of kids. So I think that could be one practice that's useful to kind of bring everybody onto the same page.

[00:17:52.460] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love that. A lot of our families already may even have kind of cameras running that we could pull footage from already, so it's not that kind of invasive. Like, here's my camera, I'm watching you thing. And we had this practice with our kids years ago where we used to do this Glow-Grow thing at the end of the day. And I'm thinking, I think that would have worked really well with our kids is to, again, not have like a whole session about this, but to maybe watch it together. And then the kids would get to give the parents like one glow, like one thing we did right and one grow, one thing we could do better. And then that we could maybe do one of those in return to not again, over elaborate. And we find that our kids need few words. They have a lot of language processing, but probably like one glow-grow for each of us. We could probably all handle that. And so I think that's a really great idea. And I love the sports analogy to kind of, again, take some of the shame out of that and make it something that kind of is normalized to something that they may have already experienced before.

[00:18:57.900] - David Thomas

I had a student athlete years ago that I was working with. He was an amazing student, incredible tennis player. But he would, to his parents reporting, really get in his head and it would start to affect his performance on the court in ways he didn't want. But he wasn't recognizing the signs and signals his body was giving him when some anxiety was registering. And so his parents recommended that practice and I had him bring it into session. So we're watching footage from the tennis court, not from home. And it was so neat to see him build a lot of awareness around when it was happening and how he was kind of bypassing some of the signs and signals. One of the things I talk about in my new book is what I call the three Rs: Recognize, Regulate and Repair. And Recognize is, I talked to kids about how it's kind of like the dashboard of a car. That our car will signal us when the wiper fluid is lower, when the tire is low and needs some air, when the tank is heading toward empty. And as long as we're paying attention to those signs and signals and attending to them, the car keeps running.

[00:19:55.290] - David Thomas

Sometimes we get bigger signals, like the check engine light. If I ignore those signs and signals, I could do some real damage to the vehicle. The same is true for us. If I ignore the signs and signals my body is giving me at different points along the way, I can't do the important work of regulation, which is a skill set every one of us, not just kids and adolescents, but us as adults are using every single day. And so that practice of film or game day footage really does create an opportunity, I think, for kids to build more of that first R, and start to see evidence of where they might be bypassing those signs and signals. You know, I had a kid one time watch it with his pants and he was like, oh, I didn't even notice I was clenching my fist. Or I didn't realize I was yelling so loud in that moment. I'm like, absolutely. Because if, you know, on a one to ten scale, if we jump straight into the eight to ten space, a lot of times we aren't operating from a place of awareness at that point. Our nervous system is in that heightened state of arousal and we're not paying attention to that first R. So I think that practice really has layers and layers of great benefit for kids and for parents.

[00:20:58.010] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, we're doing your workbook, *Raising Emotionally Strong Boys* workbook with one of our kids right now, and we just did the page where they kind of color and shade in, where they feel is it stress or worry or whatever in their bodies. And I was so surprised at some of the things that our son told us. We're watching him, right? So I thought I knew where some of this would show up, but I was surprised at how much more insight he had and some of the things that he colored. And then I had him, in addition to the color, and kind of write out why he colored what he did and all these things. And it was such a good conversation starter for me to say the next time he kind of stomped his way through the kitchen, I was, like, thinking, Where did the color? I'm like, okay, well, how does your chest feel right now? And so what can we do about that? So already, I think we're, like twelve pages in, it's been such

a huge gift. And he's outside the chronological age, I think, that the book is recommended for, but where he talks about kind of the delay for some of our kids. So he's chronologically 15. We're working through the book, and it's still, like, spot on for us.

[00:22:09.340] - David Thomas

So thankful to hear you say that. Thank you for that encouragement. Well, can I laugh with you on something else? I had a mom approach me at the book table yesterday. I was speaking at an event in Texas, and she said, David, I bought your workbook for my seven year old son, but quite honestly, I'm using it the most with my 37 year old husband. And I said, well, fantastic. I didn't have him in mind when I wrote it, but I'm grateful. It's useful for any individual.

[00:22:35.970] - Melissa Corkum

Maybe the second printing, you could just take the ages off the people, feel free to get used it for anyone.

[00:22:42.260] - David Thomas

Well, one of the things I say in the front of that book and we talk about this in *Are My Kids on Track?* is that, we can only take the kids we love as far as we've found ourselves. So I've loved hearing parents say, as I'm reading this book, or as I'm working through the workbook, I'm feeling challenged myself, I'm reminded myself, and I just think, what a great thing for kids to hear their parents talk about. Like, I'm still practicing these things. I still struggle sometimes with regulation. I'm not offering enough calm to the situation. And so I am deeply encouraged to hear that kind of feedback over and over. And it's one of my great hopes that continues to happen.

[00:23:21.520] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, I love it. So what are some other really practical things? What are your favorite tips to give to parents when they're parenting kids with worry? I mean, I think the thing is, is in this day and age, like, you're almost not you can't be you're not parenting a kid without worry. We could just, I think, safely assume if you're parenting, you are parenting a child with worry and anxiety. What are the really practical, tangible things now that we know that we've established that, how do we move forward?

[00:23:56.140] - David Thomas

One of the things I would say first is there is a working definition we use in our practice that I love, that anxiety is an overestimation of the problem and an underestimation of myself. So the problem or the situation feels too big, I feel too small. And if we are holding on to that definition as parents, I think knowing that's true, knowing that's the case, I think that can inform our steps forward differently. So what the anxiety research tells us time and time again is the two biggest parenting traps are escape and avoidance. We see kids struggle in a situation, we want to just extract them from that. As opposed to moving toward what we call support and challenge. And support is offering empathy. Support is meeting our kids in hard places. Support is acknowledging their struggle. There are so many layers to what support looks like, but also offering challenge so that they aren't locking into that definition of yes, the problem, the situation is way too big and I'm too small.

[00:24:57.990] - David Thomas

And when we extract kids from hard things, we're confirming that definition like, you're right, school is way too scary. Let's just pull you out of school. Playing baseball triggers way too much fear for you. Let's just quit baseball. And so what does it look like, thirdly, to baby step our way toward the hard things. And that's key. One of the benchmarks of cognitive behavioral therapy, CBT, which is the gold standard of supporting and treating anxiety, is what we call exposures and ladders. And it's just baby stepping our way towards the scary thing. How could we create some very small goals as we work towards the scary thing, which is part of that challenge piece. But I would often encourage parents to think about first where you naturally lean. Because in my experience, having done this work for this long, I think as parents we instinctively lean more toward one or the other. We're just more naturally supportive or we are more naturally people who are great at challenge. And what kids need is equal parts from both parents. If both parents are present in the household. And if it is a single parenting situation, what does it look like for me to bring both parts, equal parts to both? And knowing that means I'm going to have to work more in a place where I'm not as strong.

[00:26:13.540] - David Thomas

So I would say those are a couple of ideas of things that I would say foundationally. I want to really encourage parents to think about and then even setting some small goals. What are some small goals I want to set around those baby steps we're going to take. And then also the anxiety research tells us that it's really beneficial. I love telling parents this who have not stumbled across this. It's really beneficial to create incentives. I sit with a lot of parents who are like, I'm embarrassed to tell you we've been bribing her. And then they describe what they've been doing. And I'm like, you're not bribing, you're incentivizing. And there's a lot of great research around the benefits of that. In fact, it's the exact same research we know is helpful for folks if they're training to run a long race, for example. If you've never run a half marathon or a marathon, like, you need to set an incentive for yourself when you hit the five mile mark, when you hit the ten mile mark, when you get to 15 miles. We know that's a great benefit in terms of developing a healthy mindset around tackling a significant goal like that. And the same is true when we're battling anxiety. If I set some incentives along the way when I'm practicing these hard things, it's of great benefit.

[00:27:17.160] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. What is the balance between incentivizing kind of ourselves to maybe stretch our window of tolerance into that, like, challenge space. And then what we find is a lot of kids that have attachment challenges want to transactionalize relationship, right? And so we talk a lot about using relationship kind of as the safety net that kind of hopefully, but not always shifts and changes behavior kind of from that, like the base and not kind of this behavior modification, like, you know, act this way so that you can get the good thing. But then when my back is turned. So what's the difference between kind of like that incentivizing to get out, maybe overcome a challenge and then using incentive systems to just behavior modify how our kids are acting in a world?

[00:28:16.950] - David Thomas

That's a great question. I'd say two thoughts there. I'd say one, I think we really can fold the relational piece into the incentives. You know that when we're working for the hard thing. However you might want to frame that. You and I are going to stay up five minutes later and get to read an extra book. You and I are going to get to stay up five minutes later and build on that Lego project you're so excited that you're working on. Whatever that may be, that involves time together. I would also say as we're thinking of traveling that journey. And I know parents know this just a great reminder for all of us that we always want to be rewarding the work and not the outcome. And so acknowledging consistently throughout, I can tell you're working hard. Let's work with a baseball example. I could tell when you got out of the car that you stopped and paused and you felt really scared about taking steps forward toward the field at that point. And you did. I thought it was amazing that you identified a friend you wanted to walk onto the field with today.

[00:29:13.390] - David Thomas

So we're always drawing attention to the hard work they're doing of baby stepping their way toward this difficult thing. So I know, parents know that. I just want you to hear me say that again. We want to keep praising the hard work that they're doing and the acknowledgement that for anxious kids the work ten times harder because the brain is constantly tricking them into thinking the problem is too big, the situation is too big, and you're too small.

[00:29:37.620] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. What are some of those things that we can do to kind of grow that self confidence in themselves? You know, maybe the problem I mean, our perspective on the problem can certainly change. Maybe the problem isn't going anywhere. What our fifth grade teacher asks us to do is kind of, you know, what fifth grade teachers ask people to do. Like, how do we grow our kids underestimation of themselves so they can understand, feel empowered, that they can kind of overcome some of these tricky things?

[00:30:06.520] - David Thomas

I think one thing to remember is that all kids crave independence. And I think it's easy to lose sight of that with anxious kids because they can look needy, clingy, dependent, and as if there is not a desire

for independence in the mix. And all kids desire that independence. It's just that anxiety will hijack the brain and block that desire at times. But I think going back to that over and over and over in our minds, even when kids can't get there on their own, is the starting point, I would say 100% of the time. And then I mentioned goal setting a few minutes ago. I think it's really great when we brainstorm with kids around the goal setting as opposed to setting goals for them, which is another mistake I think we can make. And sometimes their trajectory or timeline is going to look very different than what we might have imagined or even hoped.

[00:30:57.030] - David Thomas

But working within their ideas, I think is foundational in taking that journey. Otherwise, even getting their input on the incentives otherwise, that's not saying we're going to land on their idea, but working with their ideas. Otherwise, I think it just de-incentivizes kids if they feel the sense of these rules, these goals are imposed on me. These incentives were handed over to me as opposed to I had more ownership in that process. And if it's difficult to do that with your kids, that may be where it's helpful to pull in a third party, whether it is a school counselor or an outpatient therapist or some other trusted adult that you think, okay, we could probably have a more thoughtful conversation if this person is present. We probably set some different goals if we had outside input in the mix. Otherwise, I love Brooks and Goldstein wrote a great book years ago called *Raising Resilient Kids*. And I love when they talk about a parent with a resilient mindset, recognizes that if something's not working for a period of time, I need to try something different. I need to develop a new script. And we know that, but I think we forget that it's like that age old definition of insanity, doing the same thing over and over, expecting a different outcome. If we keep getting roadblocked in those places, let's pull an outside voice into the mix. It's amazing how that can change the equation.

[00:32:10.610] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, well, we're huge fans. We say often kind of like our good friend Suzanne Stabile says, like, everyone should have a spiritual director and a therapist. And I think good with our kids and, you know, because we're in the parenting space. And you say and the parent coach. And that's a lot of people on your team, and that's a lot of time and perhaps a lot of financial resources. So that's kind of like the platinum standard, if you will. But for families who maybe do have a therapist on call or maybe don't, like, when are the times that this is like the absolute? You know, it doesn't matter whether you have a therapist or you don't like, if your child or if your family is experiencing this type or level of stress or impact because of worry, then you don't collect your \$200 or whatever, like, go straight and find some that third party outside help for your family. So what would those signs be?

[00:33:12.640] - David Thomas

I would say if you were to find you're stuck in any place, I think it's worth assessing that. Even in ways that we wouldn't consider of significance. But just let's just say in daily discipline, I think it's an incredible gift to pull in an outside voice. And to your great question, it may not be an option for that to be a professional, but it could be another trusted voice. I'm working with a single mom right now, and her sister lives in town, and she calls her both my sister and the coach is her other name. And she's like we call on the coach a lot because it's amazing how differently my kids operate when she's in the mix. And they really trust her voice, I really trust her voice. And just bringing her into the equation at times will begin to create a different outcome for every one of us, not just for my kids, but for me as well. And so I think that trusted voice could look like a lot of different things. But certainly if we're seeing strong evidence of regression in some significant areas, kids who've successfully slept through the night, who are all of a sudden experiencing consistent, chronic disruptive sleep. I'm not talking about a few nights that are off at that point, but particularly in peak points of development when we know kids just can't compromise sleep.

[00:34:29.100] - David Thomas

They need it for brain growth, they need it for regulation. They need it for all the important things. And so if we were to see in a significant category some ongoing evidence of regression, I would look at pulling in an outside resource to just say, help us think through what we need to do. Go in for a well visit with your pediatrician and just say, help us think through what we need to do different at this point because we're seeing evidence of where we're really stuck or we're seeing evidence of some significant regression.

[00:34:55.290] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I'll tell you, I had a lot of families that whose kids transitioned to kindergarten coming out of COVID, that was like a killer.

[00:35:07.160] - David Thomas

I know, I saw the same thing. As if that weren't a big enough transition on a good day under the best of circumstances, all the more when you didn't have the opportunity for consistent practice in those years running up. Absolutely. And still seeing evidence with kids all throughout development, the residual of COVID. And I'm so glad you brought that up because I would want to highlight that as well to any parent listening. If you're not seeing some evidence of where there are hiccups within development, then good for you. But I'm kind of shocked because I think the majority of kids really are and some kids even more. We've talked a lot culturally about how we're going to be playing catchup academically for some time with what was missed in that space. But I don't think we've talked near enough about where we're going to be playing catch up emotionally and socially with kids. And I think about I had a parent tell me that I did a consultation with a parent in California and their state home orders went for a longer period than it did in other states. Their lockdown experience looked different than it did in a lot of places.

[00:36:11.740] - David Thomas

And this mom said, David, I remember the first time I took him to a park that was open and a child took his toy. Just that normal interaction that we know is going to happen. We have kids at a park and he lost his mind. And I felt so alarmed initially, like, oh my goodness, he has no way. He doesn't know what to do. And then all of a sudden I was like, of course he doesn't know what to do. He hasn't had practice, so of course he loses his mind. And I think about her telling that story and I think about all the different ways that kids have experienced that loss of opportunity for some period of time. Just even if you didn't have an opportunity to go have a spend the night at your grandparents house, you haven't had as much practice. I did several trainings with camp staffs following the world opening up. And I just said, you are going to see more homesickness than you have ever seen. These kids have not had practice, an opportunity to go their grandparents to spend the night at your friend's house, to

[00:37:04.200] - Melissa Corkum

Just leave for like 3 hours and come back.

[00:37:09.260] - David Thomas

Exactly. And so we're just going to see evidence of that for some time. We're all playing catch up in some places.

[00:37:16.480] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And I think as parents, like, our nervous systems are kind of just a shot. Like we're just operating with a little less margin and a little less white space.

[00:37:23.710] - David Thomas

Agreed.

[00:37:26.520] - Melissa Corkum

Well, David, we could talk forever, I'm sure, about all of these things. So where can people find you? Find the books that you've written? Because you have graciously put all of a lot of the work that you've done into books, which I think are such an accessible way for parents to get a hold of some really great information. And it's no small feat. We're in the middle of writing a book and I'm like ten books? I'm like one book and I'm never doing this again. So I appreciate just the work and dedication that takes to make that available to the world in a bigger way. Because I wish we could all have one giant sleepover at your little yellow house and you could just pour all the wisdom onto us. So where can people find you? Continue to follow your work.

[00:38:13.590] - David Thomas

Thank you. You could find all of My Work raisingboysandgirls.com is our website, and it will take you

to our podcast. We are currently in our fifth season, which we're calling Raising Emotionally Strong and Worry Free Kids. And so it will take you to our podcast, it will take you to our books. We've got some on demand resources. It will take you to our Instagram account we are putting out, every week we're pushing out as much free content to parents as possible. So we do short videos with kind of here's three things to consider, three things to think about and we run through development. We'll focus on toddlers, focus on teenagers, everything in between. And so that website houses all of our content. It would even let you know if we happen to be traveling to your city and there's a church or school hosting us. Would love to get an opportunity to meet you if we're in your direction. So thank you for asking that.

[00:39:14.960] - Melissa Corkum

We are so thankful for the amazing guests who share their wisdom and expertise in The Village. Adoptive parenting gives us both the challenge and the opportunity to keep learning new tools and perspectives.

[00:39:27.040] - Lisa Qualls

Each workshop in The Village is followed by a live Q&A with our guest. If you're not already a member of The Village, we invite you to join us for regular gatherings and workshops where you will find the tools you need for exactly where you are.

[00:39:41.760] - Melissa Corkum

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