



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** The Kindness Challenge: 30 Days to Improve Any Relationship – Part 2

**Guest:** Shaunti Feldhahn

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- Dr. Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.
- Roger Marsh: Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. And today we are bringing you the second half of Dr. Tim Clinton's recent conversation with author Shaunti Feldhahn. Tim and Shaunti will continue their breakdown of Shaunti's book called *The Kindness Challenge: Thirty Days to Improve Any Relationship*. Shaunti Feldhahn is a best-selling author, Christian speaker, and respected social researcher. She earned her graduate degree from Harvard University and previously worked on Capitol Hill and Wall Street. Shaunti's books have sold more than three million copies worldwide and have been translated into 25 different languages. Some of her most notable works include, *For Women Only*, *For Men Only* and *Thriving in Love and Money*. Shaunti and her husband, Jeff, have two children and they make their home in the Atlanta area. Well with no further ado, here is Dr. Tim Clinton to reintroduce his guest on today's edition of Family Talk.
- Dr. Clinton: Shaunti, so great to have you back on Family Talk. Thank you again for joining us.
- Shaunti Feldhahn: Absolutely. Thanks so much for having me.
- Dr. Clinton: Shaunti, 89% of those that you studied, showed improvement in their relationships when they took the Kindness Challenge.
- Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes.
- Dr. Clinton: It's stunning to think about for a moment, but I guess in this kind of, we talked about it yesterday, people are starved just for some type of gentleness.
- Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah, one of the things that we said yesterday was that we just don't realize how badly all of us need this too, and how much all of us want to be people of kindness. And we don't realize that we're not always as kind as we think we are. And so this really acts like a bootcamp to help us be that Christ-like kind person.

Dr. Clinton: Shaunti I love yesterday how you talked about kindness being a superpower. You can actually use this in a way to "impact the other person and change the temperature of the room" if you will, just by coming in without that edge and saying, no, no, we're not going to go down- we're going down this road. This is what we're going to do. And by the way, I've made a decision in my own heart, that that's how I'm going to respond in this situation.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah, that's a beautiful way of putting it. The key is all of us, I think, want to be that person. We all want to be able to change the temperature of the room. We all want to be the ones to steer things in a different direction. It's being used as a light. It's not hiding our light under a bushel. And yet one of the things that I realized for me as I was doing this study, it became very personal for me in the middle of this research is that, wow, I need to practice this. I'm somewhat blind to the ways that I'm not being that person.

Dr. Clinton: Shaunti, I wanted to ask you before we jump into these three simple acts and get really practical about how to do them - and we want to do that. That's what this whole initiative's about. But what are some of the ways that we might be unkind without even realizing it?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, that's one of the things that we actually identified as part of this research project. We identified seven patterns of unkindness and negativity that we tend to miss. And all of us have at least one of these seven. Some of us might have more than one, hypothetically. The person who's talking had more than one. And let me give you a couple of examples of the ways that we can do this. I, for example, was very blind to one of the seven patterns, which is for me, irritation and exasperation. And I had no idea that when it came to, with my kids, for example, I get exasperated all the time. And I was doing the 30 Day Kindness Challenge for my teenage daughter and my preteen son. And I had no idea that when, for example, my son would work on a science project that he and Jeff worked on for three hours. And then he'd forget to turn it in. And it just drove me absolutely nuts. And I would say, buddy, come on, you worked on that and my voice is rising. I have that exasperated tone.

And I don't realize that what I'm saying to him is basically: "You're an idiot." Would I ever use those actual words with my sweet sensitive son? Of course not. I would never say those words out loud. And yet by that exasperation, by that irritation, by that pointing out of mistakes in the way that I was, that is actually what he was hearing. That's an example of the ways that, oh my goodness, we have to rewind and see which of these seven patterns might apply to us.

Dr. Clinton: Shaunti, I guess you don't just, like with your kids, you don't just show up in the life of your 12 year old, drop in on them and think that everything's going to change. We've got probably some skill development here and some things we need to attend to first of all, don't we?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes, of course. There's certainly skills development that's helpful, but honestly, I think if we don't know that we need it to begin with, we're not going to develop the skill. And so there's a chicken and the egg thing. I know that my kids know that I love them. They know that, but man, sometimes it did not feel like that. And it was hard and convicting the first few days that we were doing the 30 Day Kindness Challenge, because the first element, and we talked about this yesterday, but the first thing that you do every day for 30 days is you don't say anything negative or unkind about this person you're doing it for.

And so for me, with my kids, I couldn't be exasperated. I had to withhold all exasperation for 30 days. And it wasn't until I did that, had to try to do that, that I realized whoa, I'm exasperated all the time. And the reality, Tim, one of the things that people will find once they actually start doing these three things is it opens our eyes to the ways, "Oh, wow, it's not just with this one person that I do this. This is my thing that I have to work on."

Dr. Clinton: Shaunti, take us in a little bit deeper here, because again, we're talking about... And by the way, here at JDFI we want to do an invitation to each of you as our listener. We want you to join us, Dr. Dobson's helping lead the way. Shaunti Feldhahn our special in studio guest, author of *The Kindness Challenge: Thirty Days to Improve Any Relationship*. We're taking this journey together in this day of insanity. This day of rage that we're living in and saying, let's get kind to each other. Let's figure this out. And we're selecting one person.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes.

Dr. Clinton: We're picking out one person, Shaunti, and we're saying... We're going to do these three simple acts and we're going to keep getting deeper into those and see what God just might do in all of our relationships. By the way, if you want to join us, you can simply go up on the website, [drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge](http://drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge) and jump in, be a part of this. We want to do this together. Shaunti, tell us what you think is going to happen by the way?

Shaunti Feldhahn: So what's going to happen initially when you start is your, like I said, you're going to have your eyes opened to, "whoa, I had no idea that I was being unkind or negative in these ways to this person," whether that's your spouse or your kids or the colleague at work that drives you nuts. You're going to have your eyes opened and you're going to go, whoa, okay, I need to work on this a little more than I thought I did. That's going to be the first few days. And then for about two weeks, what it is, is really skills building, those things that you didn't realize, wow... One of the things that we found is that people... One of the elements is that you have to say words of praise to this person every day. And we found statistically, most people think, "Oh, I'm saying words of praise about two to three times a day. That's what I do."

And then you have to actually do it once a day and you go, "Oh my goodness, it stays in my head. It never makes it out of my mouth." And that it's actually two

to three times a week. And so you're going to work really hard and build these skills for about two weeks and they become more natural. And then the next two weeks are building it into a habit and then it becomes habitual. And then it becomes something you don't have to think about all the time. And it's something that becomes instinctive. And by the end of the 30 days, the beautiful thing is that most people don't even notice when day 30 arrives. It just has become part of their life and you can keep that going and truly make a difference in this world.

Dr. Clinton: 30 days to a habit, right Shaunti?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yep.

Dr. Clinton: That's what we're trying to get done. Shaunti, people are probably wondering, do I have to remember everything you're talking about on the broadcast or as a part of this challenge are you sending me stuff?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes, we will be sending you stuff. So you're going to sign up, if you want to sign up, you'll sign up for 30 days of reminder emails and the first one will come with instructions. And then they're little coaching emails, like: "What do you do if you want to kill your husband instead?" "What is it that I do to overcome some of this?" And so each of these days is just going to give you a little bit of coaching and that will then help you build it into your own self. And honestly, I encourage you to sign up, not just to sign up right now, but to actually pass this along to others in your family and others that you know, because this really is a transformational initiative.

Dr. Clinton: To sign up, again, and join us in this effort together: [drjamesdobson.org forward slash kindness challenge](http://drjamesdobson.org/forward-slash-kindness-challenge/); kindness challenge.

Shaunti, let's go back to those three simple acts. And then you're going to tell us about the eight types of kindness too, but make sure we get this cemented in our brain.

Shaunti Feldhahn: So the three things you do, well first like we said, you have to pick one person to do this for, and let me emphasize that again, because there is a temptation to try to do this for multiple people. The first time you do it, in order for it to open your eyes, it does need to be really concentrated and targeted. And I would recommend that you do it for someone you see or talk to fairly often. It's not going to work as well as a bootcamp, if you're doing it for your brother who lives across the country, who you just don't see. Pick somebody who's in immediate relationship with you right now. And then the three things you do every day for 30 days are first, you don't say anything negative about that person, either to them or about them to somebody else.

And listen, that first one, that is often where we sabotage ourselves and we don't realize it because let's say I'm doing this for Jeff, my husband, I can be

polite to him and not say anything negative to him. But if I go to my girlfriends at work and I'm like, you would not believe what he did. I don't realize it, but I'm sabotaging how I feel about him. And by the way, I am training myself to be an unkind person. I don't think about it that way, but that's exactly what I'm doing. So that first thing that we do is to not say anything negative about that person, to them or about them.

The second thing that you do every day for 30 days is you find something that you can praise, sincerely, that you can praise about this person. And you tell them that and you tell somebody else. So for example, I'm not saying anything negative to Jeff or about Jeff, but I'm looking for things to praise. And I notice he actually stopped work early so he could get the kids set up with virtual school or whatever it is and allowed me to do a big meeting that I had. And I tell him, "thank you so much for that. That was so sweet of you." And then I go to my girlfriends at work and instead of complaining about him, I say, "you know what he did yesterday? He took off of work, he canceled a couple meetings so that he could get the kids all set up." And what I'm doing is I am... And this is what Philippians four calls thinking on whatever is lovely.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah, you're programming your brain is what you're doing.

Shaunti Feldhahn: I'm programming my brain. I am creating new neural pathways. Philippians four, the apostle Paul has this amazing section in the letter that he wrote to the ancient city to the church in Philippi. And he's talking about a difficult relationship. If you read that, he's talking about these two women who are pillars of the church who didn't get along, who have a personality conflict. And when we're talking about what is the prescription for how you deal with, to create good relationships, one of the things that he says is, you need to learn to think on whatever is lovely and excellent and worthy of praise rather than what's worthy of driving you crazy because that tends to be where our brain goes.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah, I think of ruts. We get ourselves into patterns, negative patterns. And rutting in the brain, by the way, is really something a lot of people are studying and talking about now. You actually can "create those patterns so strong that it's tough to break out of them."

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes. That is essentially what you've just said is what this challenge is designed to do. It's designed to wake you up, which is one reason why we say don't do this for three people the first time you do it, do it for one because you... I will tell you, you will notice it.

Dr. Clinton: So, find something to praise. Yep. Tell them and tell others. Got it.

Shaunti Feldhahn: By the way, an example of another type of rut we talked earlier about, what are some of the patterns of negativity? We've found that there were seven of these patterns and many of us tend to have one or more. Another big pattern that

creates a rut in a lot of people, believe it or not, is sarcasm. That it turns out that sarcasm is actually... Can be a pattern of negativity that we have no idea is negatively hurting the relationship.

Dr. Clinton: My mother called it smart mouth.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Smart. That's a great way. Well, it's hilarious because I do a lot of sermon interviews where a pastor brings me in and interviews me on stage as a sermon time, because I don't preach but this allows... This is the pastor's sermon and I'm just a subject matter expert. And I had one very prominent pastor. He said, "Take us through these negative things. You know, what are the patterns?" And I got to sarcasm and he was like, "but sarcasm is my spiritual gift!" And the thing we don't realize is that everybody loves joking around. There is nothing wrong with that. However, some of us have gotten into that rut, right?

Dr. Clinton: Yeah.

Shaunti Feldhahn: You were talking about the programming of the brain.

Dr. Clinton: And it bites. It can bite.

Shaunti Feldhahn: It can bite. Well, here's what we found. If everybody listening to you, if you're a sarcastic person and everybody listening to you, the person that you're being sarcastic to, anybody who's in earshot knows that there is 100% love and goodwill, unconditional love towards this person, then it's just funny. But if there's any doubt that there's 100% love, unconditional love towards this person and appreciation, then the person might be laughing like ha ha ha, that's so funny, but inside they're going, "does he mean that?"

And so that concept is an example of where, wow, maybe this is a thing that I need to look at, maybe I've created a rut. And maybe what I need to do is to spend 30 days, not doing any sarcasm towards this person, none, zero and realize, wow, that really is a rut. And now I'm looking for things to praise instead, which is element number two and realizing just how much I did the negative before. Now I'm doing the positive and it's very eye-opening and you start to see very, very transformational.

And so then that leads into the third thing. The third element that we need to do every day, which is to do an action. A small action of kindness or generosity towards this person. And it can be things like, one of your producers was talking about he's making his wife a cup of coffee.

Dr. Clinton: He got a Superman t-shirt for doing that.

Shaunti Feldhahn: He totally did that. Absolutely. And that's an act of service. Now, one of the things that we need to actually be aware of, which is helpful, is that an act of kindness or generosity, it doesn't have to be an act of service. For example, an

action of generosity for my teenage daughter, when I did this for her, like she would come running into the office where I was working on my computer on a deadline and she'd be like, mom, watch this little TikTok video with me. And I would be initially like, "In an hour, honey, once I'm done with this deadline."

And I didn't realize an action of generosity is taking my attention and putting it on her when she's excited to show me this thing, not an hour later. And all it does is take a few minutes, but it says something really powerful to her, which is what it says when you bring your wife a cup of coffee, or when you do any of these other acts of kindness or generosity, is what you're saying is you matter. And you're not just telling that person, you matter, you're telling yourself that person matters. All of this works together to really, really transform a relationship.

Dr. Clinton:

Yeah, it's interesting Shaunti. I've found through the years that relationships never rise above the level of fear or anger between people, the intimacy piece just doesn't happen. So if it's there, if you're missing that, you're disconnected, Shaunti, it's so easy then to just look on the negative side. And by the way, only receive the negative, you don't even hear the positive. You can get so lost in this journey and what it does, it destroys the very thing that we want. Here's the persistent heart cry in every counseling session I've heard, Shaunti: "All I've ever wanted is for someone to love me."

Shaunti Feldhahn:

Yeah, we don't realize just how much we want to be the people who love others. That's a value for us. And we don't realize, "wow, if I'm blind about some ways that I'm actually being unkind, like being exasperated or being sarcastic or one of the other patterns. If I don't realize that I am sabotaging that love, I'm not actually showing that person who wants love that." And once we switch it, it's like all of the stuff that God has poured into us can come pouring out without being blocked by this sabotage that we've been doing, by having some of these unkind traits. I literally...

I was at an event, I was speaking, Jeff and I were doing a marriage conference a couple months ago. And a woman came up to us as we were walking back to the retreat center where we were staying and she said, I have to tell you, I did the 30 Day Kindness Challenge, not long ago for this person in my office who I have wanted to be Christ-like towards, but it was a very difficult person. And yet I had to work with them every single day. And they were so challenging to work with. So I hated it. I have to say, I hated working with them.

She said she did the 30 Day Kindness Challenge for this very, very challenging coworker and she said within about two weeks, her feelings towards this person radically changed. She started realizing, oh my gosh, I've been focusing all these negative things, which is the problem. We start focusing on the things that are really worthy of driving you crazy, not focusing on the things that are worthy of praise. Once you do that, there's a neuroscientific principle that says, what you focus on is what you will see.

So she started seeing more and more of these good things. And she said, today... This was about six months later. She said, "she's my best friend at work. I love going into work every day." I literally am like, "okay, can you stop?" I'm going to get my phone and videotape you saying that so I can send that to my team because they don't get to hear these in person stories the same way I do, because I wanted to encourage them. And it's the same way I want to encourage you, is that these are simple, simple things. It's just helping us create a habit that God wants us to have that we didn't realize was missing before.

Dr. Clinton: Shaunti in closing, would you remind us again what the research showed? How many percent of people who took this changed?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah, it's amazing. If you will do these three things every day for 30 days, 89% of relationships improved. 89%, which is amazing. But if you think about it, what you're primarily doing is changing you. And so it makes perfect sense that 89% of relationships would change because you're the common denominator in all of this. And this is truly a transformation for you as well.

Dr. Clinton: Shaunti, I've been promoting our 30 day challenge. Join us here at JDFI, at the James Dobson Family Institute. Dr. Dobson, you... Tell them again what this looks like, and then I'll tell them how they can enroll.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah, this is a 30 Day Kindness Challenge that will help you improve your relationship with one person. And by doing so, build a habit that will impact everybody.

Dr. Clinton: And when you go and enroll in this program, we're going to do it together at [drjamesdobson.org/kindness](http://drjamesdobson.org/kindness) challenge. Every day, you're going to receive an email with encouragement and helpful tips and insights and skills on how to make this the best 30 days that you can, to see the change that you want in that relationship. And also jump up on our Facebook page as we're going through this kindness challenge together for updates. And we'd love to hear your stories. A lot of what Shaunti has been sharing, how it's working out in your life and in your relationships.

Shaunti, always a delight. Say hey to Jeff. And on behalf of Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley, the entire team at JDFI, we salute you. Appreciate your continued great work for such a time as this.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Thanks so much, Tim.

Roger Marsh: This is Family Talk and you've been listening to the conclusion of Dr. Tim. Clinton's two part conversation with author Shaunti Feldhahn on the topic of the kindness challenge. As Tim and Shaunti said during the program, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is hosting a 30 Day Kindness Challenge exclusively for our listeners. When you sign up for the challenge, you'll receive instructions for showing intentional kindness to one person in your life for 30

days. Then every day for those 30 days, you will receive a tip, an encouragement or some advice via email to help you keep going. To sign up, visit [drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge](http://drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge).

This challenge was designed by Shaunti Feldhahn and her team to show us areas of our lives where we are lacking kindness or where we are blatantly unkind, and don't even realize it. Then it also helps us to be intentionally kind to one specific person in our lives. Whoever you choose to show a little extra effort and grace for this challenge, you are certain to see an improvement in that relationship. Not necessarily because the other person is going to change as a result of your kindness, but because you will begin to change from the inside out.

So I strongly encourage you to visit [drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge](http://drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge) to sign up for the 30 Day Kindness Challenge today. And if you missed any part of Dr. Tim Clinton's two day conversation with Shaunti Feldhahn, remember you can listen again by going to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Or if you'd like, give us a call at 877-732-6825 and request a CD copy of the program. As always, thank you for joining us and please listen again next time for more encouragement and biblical advice for you and your family right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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