



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Raising Resilient Kids – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Kathy Koch

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Dr. James 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. Hope you had a great Mother's Day and celebrated all the special moms in your life. And if you are the mom who was to be celebrated, hope you were celebrated properly as well. Now in addition to being the month for Mother's Day, did you know that May is also Mental Health Awareness Month? We don't always consider mental health as an issue that is affecting our children, and this multifaceted problem is growing into a bigger and bigger issue here in America. Before the pandemic, some experts said we had a mental health crisis, but now coming out of the shutdown and the quarantines, clinicians say it's a mental health disaster with record numbers of teen and preteen depression being reported. Apathy, disconnection, kids saying that no one understands and that they aren't being heard. Well, we as adults really need to address those issues and more so that we all have a better future.

And of course, our kids are our future. One important key for setting our kids up for success is to build into them resilience. Dr. Dobson has said it before, parenting isn't for cowards. And life is tough. Kids need to understand that things will not always be easy and they will need to embrace the obstacles and challenges that God wants each of us to face. Well, today's guest here on Family Talk will be discussing that with our own Dr. Tim Clinton, how we can pour into our kids with our own positive behavior, biblical truth, and honesty, to help them on their path to better mental health and resiliency. Our guest is Dr. Kathy Koch. Let's learn more about Dr. Koch right now, right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Here with me to discuss the topic of resiliency in our kids is an expert on children, teens, educational psychology, but also matters of the heart that reside in the intersection of children, parents, and people. Her name, Dr. Kathy Koch. She's the founder and president of Celebrate Kids based in Fort Worth, Texas. She's also co-founder of Ignite the Family. She's influenced thousands of parents, teachers, and children in 30 countries through keynote messages, seminars, chapels, and other events. Kathy's the author of six books, including *Screens and Teens*, *8 Great Smarts*, and the latest release, *Resilient Kids*, which

we're going to talk a lot about today on the broadcast. Kathy earned her Ph.D. in reading and educational psychology from Purdue University. She was also a tenured associate professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, a teacher of second-graders, a middle school coach, and a school board member before becoming a full-time conference and keynote speaker in 1991. She's loved Jesus for years and her faith and her desire to serve and glorify God is at the foundation of her ministry. Kathy, what a delight to have you, welcome back to Family Talk. Dr. Dobson and his wife Shirley send their regards.

- Dr. Kathy Koch: It's delightful to be back here with you and I appreciate the Dobsons so much. I'd love you to greet them for me.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: I will certainly do that. Kathy, I guess a good way to get started today is let's just reacquaint the audience with you and your ministry, what's happening in and through Celebrate Kids and Ignite the Family. What's at the heart of all of it?
- Dr. Kathy Koch: Yeah, thanks for that. The heart is that we would help people discover why they are the who they are. We love helping parents and teachers and anybody out there just realize that they were created on purpose with purpose for purpose, and they need to walk into that reality holding their head up high. We love to help parents find out who their kids are and why are their kids the way they are, how are they smart and how are they motivated and how has technology affected them both in a positive and negative way. So we're passionate to help parents love their kids well, like their kids well. Kids tell me all the time, my mommy has to love me, she doesn't have a choice. I wish she liked me. So we love to connect parents with their kids and just be a practical influence. And it's just such an honor, right? It's just such an honor anybody would listen to me. I don't take it lightly. It's so much fun that God would call us to this. I'm so privileged and it's a privilege to be here with you today.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, you don't shy away from some of the tough issues. Mental health is one of those. You come right up to the table and say, hey, listen, let's have conversations about depression and anxiety and other challenges that kids are facing. Tell us what really pulled you in that direction and why it's so significant. I think everybody knows last couple of years have been really tough, but really difficult and challenging for our children.
- Dr. Kathy Koch: My ministry's called Celebrate Kids because I was a celebrated kid. My brother and I were raised by good people. Not Christians. My parents came to faith in Christ really late in life and I at the age of 19. But anyway, I just wish all kids knew who they were and delighted in that. And culture's in the way and dysfunction's in the way, and depression and anxiety are easy because the liar is loud. When I was a kid, the truth was the truth. Even people who didn't go to church knew what was right and wrong and good and evil. There was a kind of a unanimous understanding in our culture. And now there are just confusing messages from education, from politics, government, even the church, which

angers me, and even within our families where we have moms and dads who disagree right in front of their kids.

And so kids don't have any security. And if you don't have security, you don't know who you are and the rest of life becomes really, really hard. One of the reasons I wrote this book, I started writing this during the COVID crisis when I realized that children were defining themselves by what they did not have. They were defining themselves by loss and that ought not be the way that we live. I wanted to help parents understand that they could help their kids get over it. And not lightly, because it is a big deal, but we can't stay in the valley. We've got to walk through it. I wanted people to believe that God is there with them and would empower them to do that. And again, been a real delight because resilient kids, as you know Tim, if we're resilient, we don't stay in the depressed state. We don't tend to define ourselves as anxious, even if we have some anxiety. So resiliency, being able to recover readily, it's a huge blessing to people.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, mom, dad, if you're sensing that your children are struggling with high levels of anxiety, maybe depression, stress over schoolwork, pressure to be high achievers and everything, it becomes really consuming and it can take them to some dark places. Kathy, you're on the front line every day. You are probably well aware of the CDC report on girls that came out. They studied and looked at girls in 2021. It was shocking. 57% of girls struggle with hopelessness and there's some 30% of them struggle with suicide ideation. We're talking about our daughters. We can't turn a blind eye to this. And then you look at what's happening with our boys. It's scary. Kathy, your background in educational psychology, tell us about what you're seeing in girls and what you're seeing in boys.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Exactly. I'm so glad you brought that up. The amount of sadness in girls that then if not dealt with, can lead to depression and true anxiety, it's very concerning to me. And for boys who don't feel equipped and able, competition is killing us. This idea, and I call it the Pinterest effect, it's such a lie. I love to tell moms and dads that there's no house that looks like a Pinterest house. They Photoshop that. I can fake my house. If you give me enough time, I can hide all the clutter and make my house just as beautiful as anything, but as soon as the photographer leaves, the stuff comes back out. And why is that relevant? We're not inviting people over for lunch after church anymore because we're not sure that our house is right or our roast will be good enough. And so we as the adults are carrying the burden of being good enough and of course then our kids pick up on that.

And this is just one simple example, Tim. Child comes home from school or from a homeschool co-op and a mom and a dad care enough to look at a school paper, praise God they're involved enough to do that. And they look at their child's grade and they say, how do the other kids do? Who cares? Who cares? Your kid comes home with a 92 or an 87 or a 97 or a 84. As soon as you say,

“How did the other kids do?” You're putting your child in this competition bowl where now their 97 isn't good because somebody got 100. And I think the parent means well, but it's not about being better than somebody else. It's being who you were created to be. And I tell people all the time, and I think this is huge for depression and anxiety, you can't be anyone except who God created you to be. If you try to become who you were not created to be, you will never be satisfied and you will be discontent. And then that leads to so many of the mental health crisis that we're aware of.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know, Kathy, a lot of people get concerned about what's happening in this "post-pandemic world" where we really went online to a whole nother level. And *Screens and Teens*, you and Dr. Dobson did a broadcast before on it. But what has your attention, when it comes to that for a moment... I'm really trying to set us up for this battle that we've got to give our attention to on building resiliency in our children.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Right. Well, technology pretty much kills that, right Tim? Because technology has taught us that everything should be easy. You can click the mouse, the reboot button. And I love to tell kids, like I love teenagers, and I tell them all the time, if I was your age, I would be like you. And Tim, that's why they listen to me. And it's arrogant to think we wouldn't be because our brain and our heart would've been manipulated by and raised by the tools that's raising their spirit. But I love to tell kids you don't come with a reboot button and you can't create this virtual world. No, you live in the world. But the speed of technology, the easiness, everything is about me. I only have things on my phone that I want in my phone, and I can win any game I play because I “X” out of the games I might lose. I even ask adults that question, how many of you have “X'ed” out of a game you might lose? A lot of hands go up. We're weak, and then we wonder why we're dropping out of church and we wonder why we're giving up on God. We're treating God in our prayer like He's Amazon Prime.

God doesn't work like Amazon Prime, nor should He. There's a benefit of waiting and a benefit of the no, but you only know that if you walk long enough with the Scriptures' teaching. So technology is a huge culprit for the reasons that I've stated, there's more I could say there. We want to be happy all the time. When we're bored, we can't handle it, so we pick up our phone. No, boredom's a fact of life. And if kids think that they can entertain themselves out of a bored state, they're in trouble. Relationships bore them, school bores them, the first job bores them. Their boss makes them mad and they give up. It's terrible. And I get it. I get it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, I wrote an article recently about kids' life and mental health, and I opened up this way. I wrote, growing up should be about belly laughs, bikes, best friends, sports, being loved, maybe some ice cream. Then I went on to say this, it shouldn't be about watching mom and dad fight, divorce, experiencing abuse, or battling depression and/or anxiety. The truth is, youth and mental health issues shouldn't be discussed even in the same sentence, but that's not

reality. The bottom line is our kids are hurting. They're in a spin. They're experiencing a world like we've never seen before and something has to be done about it. And Kathy, in the midst of that, I came across your book, *Resilient Kids: Raising Them to Embrace Life with Confidence*. I want to talk about what is resiliency so we can understand it well, but you contrast resiliency versus fragility. In other words, our kids are pretty fragile. You know that when I grew up as a boy, you are out on the field. It was like, "Hey, suck it up buttercup. You know what I mean? Put some dirt on that thing and hey, rub a little of this spit on it and let's get going." It's different today, Kathy. Things have changed a lot.

Dr. Kathy Koch: They have, and I would say I wrote the book partly because parents have gotten weak. And again, I don't say this to shame or blame anybody. You don't know what you don't know. So look forward with hope. But too many parents today are judging themselves based on their children's character, behavior, and performances. And so if a kid falls down and cries, the mom feels badly that she's got a wimpy kid, and just because the kid falls down and cries doesn't make him wimpy. But the parent has got to get over that and go, look, it's not about me showing that I'm a good mom, it's about my kids. I know some parents who bubble wrap their children and protect them from potential failure because they don't want a kid who fails for fear that they'll feel like a failure. But if we don't let our kids fall down and learn how to come back up, there'll be a day coming when you're not there and they're going to fall down and they're going to stay down because you weren't there to help them figure out how the world works. It's very dangerous.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, you write that resiliency is a mindset process of adapting well when facing significant sources of stress. I like that a lot. In other words, they rise up. These kids have this ability to rise above, to press through. They see setbacks as setups. They don't deny what's happening, you wrote, they are not controlled, however, by it. I love that, Kathy, because I think that's what we all look for with our children. They're going to meet challenges. They're not going to make the team or they're going to get knocked out of the lineup. They're going to get frustrated at school. They're not going to have the grade they're looking for. They're going to forget an assignment. They've got to figure this piece out, or they're going to get crushed by it.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Absolutely. Yeah, I agree with you. We don't want to necessarily set up opportunities for them to fail and be hurt. I tell parents, if your kid is going to run into the road, yell, stop. Don't stand there and think, now, what would Dr. Kathy want me to say? No, you yell, stop. But at other times when they come home, is it their fault they earned a C? And they didn't get a C, they earned a C. Is it their fault they got cut from the team because they didn't practice dribbling the soccer ball in the backyard like the coach recommended? We got to help our kids own their responsibility. Moms and dads have to own their responsibility. Did you not remind them to practice the piano? They're six. They need to be reminded. That's the job of the parent. So moms and dads need to take responsibility for their part of success and failure appropriately. So do kids.

And we walk with them and teach them and train them how to overcome. Just like when a child falls down when they're learning how to walk, you don't let them stay down. You pick them back up, you get the camera, you hold your arms out, you say, come to mama, and that kid learns to walk. Why? Because you're so encouraging and you want them to succeed and they know that. And of course they have to succeed and they know that too. It makes all the difference in the world, your whole attitude.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Kathy, when my daughter Megan was learning how to ride her bike, we were in the backyard of our house and we had a disaster happen. Yeah, she was getting confident and she decided to come down the hill and make the curve around the house. Well, she froze as she came down the hill and didn't turn around the curve. Went straight into the briars. I mean, she crashed. We're talking briars, and I had to pick her up out of there. She was just devastated and crying, and I felt awful because I didn't anticipate that. You hear what I'm saying? But I cleaned her off. I said, "Honey, oh, you almost made it. All you had to do was make that last turn. Here's what we're going to do. If you're okay with it, let's get back up there. Let's get back on the bike because I know this time you're going to make it and I'm going to be right there on that curve, so I'll help make sure that this won't happen, I promise you. You get around that and this is going to be awesome."

Kathy, she made it back up the hill, got on the bike, she was scared to death, but started pedaling. Here she comes down around the curve and she turned and made the curve. Oh, she was so happy. She couldn't believe that she got it done. Kathy, what I love about resiliency and what you're teaching in this book is you say that building resilient kids is a choice. It's a learned ability that can be a part of their character. Now, Kathy, explain that because I don't think people understand what that really means. In other words, what you're saying is you do this the right way, they can become resilient. So they can bounce back. They can learn that ability, that gift.

Dr. Kathy Koch:

Yes, and it's so important. I want it to become a part of their character. If you overprotect them, then they won't learn how to come back or bounce forward past the fear and the grief and the shame or whatever. They won't learn it, it won't become a part of their character, and you'll always have to be there. They'll be 17 years old and you're going to take their school lunch to them because they forgot it. No, no, no, no, no. When they're younger, as young as possible, but it's never too late. If you're listening and you have a 23-year-old, it's never too late, have hope that you can still be influential. But yeah, it's a choice. Do I stand back up or not? Do I try out for the team or not? Do I try the harder piano piece or not? And this is why we have to teach kids discernment and personal responsibility.

Who do I trust? Do I trust my coach? Do I trust my mom? When my dad, Tim Clinton, said that I would be at the curve and I've got your back this time, your daughter had to decide, hey, my dad's trustworthy. I'm going to try this again,

and he's going to protect me and it's going to be okay. It's a choice, it becomes a learned ability, which means we have to be patient. It's not going to happen overnight. It's a process. But oh, that it's a part of our character. Which is why I write in the book, when your kids are resilient, claim it. Shout it out from the rooftops. When your child does well, don't just say, oh, good job. Say, "Oh, Jonathan, you were resilient." "What's that mean, daddy?" "You tried again and you didn't give up on yourself or me. I'm so proud of you for being resilient." "Tell me again, daddy, what is that? It means that you recovered and you're not going to be a kid who's fearful. I'm so excited for you." The only way you can learn something new is to risk losing. You have to become resilient.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You address in the book that as parents, we need to be attuned to maybe five areas, the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual. I love that, Kathy. Can you give us an example of what you're meaning here and how you break it down and why it's important that we and how we respond to our children going through those tasks is at the heart of building resiliency?

Dr. Kathy Koch: Excellent. These are the five identities that we teach at the ministry. We have a physical self; who am I physically? We have an intellectual self; how do I do at school? We have a social self; how are we at relationships? Are we good and loyal friends? How are we with emotions? Are we vulnerable and transparent with people who have earned our heart, like can we be safe with them? And then there's spiritual resiliency; do we bounce back well when we feel that the church or a Christian or God has let us down? As an example of physical, if your child is an athlete, you're going to really need to want to teach them the resiliency in the athletic realm, if you will. Again, the role of practice and perfect practice might make you perfect. No, it'll probably just make you better. But the fact that there are refs who are unfair and there are teams who are mean, and there are things that happen. You got to teach your kids how the world works.

The intellectual self, you might not earn the grade even though you studied as well as you knew how to do. The emotional self, you might laugh at a joke that nobody else laughed at, and then people stare at you and you feel awkward. How do you handle that? What does it mean? So yeah, these are important areas. Social, to be loyal, to be responsible, to be honest, to not gossip, to be trustworthy. The character attributes that are necessary for each of these five things. And spiritual resiliency, last chapter of the book, maybe in my opinion the most important chapter, how do we teach our kids that God did not let us down? It might feel like He did, but that's not the character of God. And so how do we help them try again when they haven't understood how prayer works? It's not Amazon Prime. How do we help them when a youth pastor forgets their name and they feel lost, lonely, and invisible in that situation? How do we help them give that youth pastor another chance? Important conversations.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And that they can always come to God with a spirit of expectation.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Ooh, I love that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That He loves them. That he's there for them.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes, sir.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, we're fighting time here for a moment, but resiliency, and I love this, on page 19 of your book, you say resiliency leads to growth and prevents perfectionism. It leads to hope and prevents a victim mentality. It leads to learning and prevents plateauing and mediocrity. It leads to creative problem solving. It prevents children from giving up. There's so many nuggets here, it's beautiful. But right after this, and there's an entire list, and I want to camp here as we close, you say what makes resiliency possible? And mom and dad, turn up the radio here for a moment and listen to this. You make resiliency possible in your kids. Kathy, we're going to talk a lot about that tomorrow and continue this journey about what does it mean to help build resilient kids, raising them to embrace life with confidence. But can you close us with a thought and challenge us as parents, as grandparents, and more about how significant we are? Dr. Dobson has always said this, parenting isn't for cowards. In other words, we've got to step up to the plate, mom and dad, and do this thing and do it well.

Dr. Kathy Koch: We do, and maybe what I'll say is that we must make sure we're resilient. We can't expect our children to try again when they've been disappointed or when despair enters their situation if they watch us throw a pity party and give up and throw our hands in the air when we feel like our boss has treated us unfairly. Do they see us experience heartache and overcome? Do they hear us pray to God for a resilient spirit? We are a huge reality here for the kids. I think that's huge. Can we do that? And again, it's never too late for us to learn how to try again if we've truly been disappointed, if we're feeling like we're despairing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What an incredible conversation today about *Resilient Kids: Raising Them to Embrace Life with Confidence*. And tomorrow on the broadcast, we're going to talk a lot more about how we get that done, what are some of the challenges or roadblocks, but most importantly, what are the benefits here and how can we make this a reality in our kids. I know, mom, dad, there isn't anything more dear to your heart than your kids. And boy, it's tough to watch your kids go through tough times, but if we can get some of this right, it may be one of the greatest gifts in all the world to them. Raising resilient kids, helping them embrace life with confidence, Kathy, what a delight to have you, can't wait for the broadcast tomorrow. Hey, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here at Family Talk, we appreciate the good work God's doing in and through you and pray that it'll continue to strengthen your voice for such a time as this. Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Thank You.

Roger Marsh: Embrace who God created you to be, indeed. That was Dr. Kathy Koch today here on Family Talk, speaking with our own Dr. Tim Clinton about kids and their mental health as it relates to the grit and fortitude that they need to thrive. Be

sure to join us again tomorrow here on Family Talk for part two of this conversation featuring Dr. Kathy Koch and Dr. Tim Clinton to learn how parents can help shape their kids to become both mentally and spiritually resilient in order to handle the challenges of today's world. Together they'll provide some real world examples and practical steps you can take to teach your children resilience along the way. It's an especially great quality to see in our teenagers as they start to enter the real world and flourish. We appreciate you joining us today here on Family Talk.

Please remember that we are a listener supported Christian broadcast outreach. It's because of you, your prayers, and your faithful financial support that we are able to bring quality content to you each and every day. Audio programs, books by Dr. Dobson, downloadable PDFs, and instructional videos of encouragement and much, much more. To find out more about how to support the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, or to order a resource, go online to drjamesdobson.org, and while you're there, find out about how we can support you as well. We would love to connect with you and to pray with and for you if that's what you need. Again, that's drjamesdobson.org, or to reach us by phone call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh, thanks so much for making us a part of your day here on Family Talk. May God richly bless you and your family as you continue to grow stronger and deeper in your relationship with Him.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.