



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Raising Resilient Kids – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Kathy Koch

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome, everyone, to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Friends, welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Now, you may know that May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, and according to the National Alliance of Mental Health, 50% of all chronic mental illness begins before the age of 14. Well, as you probably know, our own Dr. Dobson has been called America's preeminent child psychologist. His love of children and his concern for the health of the family has guided his career and influenced millions of people to improve their lives as God has designed.

Today, Dr. Dobson presents two esteemed colleagues to discuss our kids' mental health and fortitude. Our guest is children's mental health advocate Dr. Kathy Koch, and our co-host for the program, Dr. Tim Clinton. Today is part two of their conversation. And by the way, if you missed any part of the previous conversation that we aired on yesterday's program, remember you can access the entire interview on our broadcast page or on our app.

On today's broadcast, Dr. Koch will explain how parents can be proactive to guide their kids' journey and foster resiliency within them. If you are not familiar with Dr. Kathy Koch, let me share a little bit about her. She is the Founder and President of Celebrate Kids Incorporated, and the co-founder of the organization called Ignite the Family. Dr. Koch is a renowned international speaker, and is the author of six books, including *Screens and Teens*, *Eight Great Smarts*, and her latest book, *Resilient Kids*.

Dr. Koch earned her PhD in Reading and Educational Psychology from Purdue University. Her career in education spanned from the University of Wisconsin Green Bay, to teaching second graders, coaching at a middle school, and she was also a school board member. Then in 1991, Kathy Koch became a full-time conference and keynote speaker. Let's join Dr. Tim Clinton and Dr. Kathy Cook right here, right now, on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, it's National Mental Health Awareness Month here in the month of May, and rejoining us on the broadcast today is Dr. Kathy Koch. Kathy, what a fun

conversation yesterday about your new book, *Resilient Kids: Raising Them to Embrace Life with Confidence*. As we ended the broadcast yesterday, Kathy, we just talked about what makes resiliency possible in the lives of our children, and you put down one word, emphasis on this. "It's you, Mom. It's you, Dad. You're everything to your kids."

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yeah. No pressure or anything, right? And we do want our kids to have mentors, and grandparents, and teachers, and coaches who also speak life into them, certainly, but there is reality. They become like who we are. And so many people read my books, or come to my seminars, and they tell me they come in the room as a parent, and they start listening as the little girl inside, or the little boy inside, where they were not themselves parented this way, and they realize that they have maybe done some damage. And again, what we say at the ministry is, there's no shame or blame for yesterday, but hope for tomorrow. I would hope that you care enough about yourself that you would want to overcome whatever's holding you back, because you're worth it. And then if on top of that, you're a parent, you're doubly worth it, because God has chosen you to raise these children, and he would want you to do it as best you can. So praise God you listened to this radio show, because we're here to efficiently help you. What a joy, what an honor.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, it's tough out there in this big old world, and we know our kids are going to hit the wall. Storms are going to show up in their lives. They're going to experience some difficulty. They're going to experience failure, and that gift of being able to press through, to bounce back, whatever it is, to rise above, that's what we're talking about. And I love, Kathy, how you said, "Resiliency leads to growth and prevents perfectionism. It leads to hope and prevents a victim mentality." Let me do another one down here that I loved. "It causes openness and connection, and prevents long-lasting depression and anxiety. It leads to healthy dependence and independence, and prevents apathy and isolation." Boy, those are the very things that we care about most showing up in the lives of our children. That's what we want, Kathy, and that's what we need to focus our energy and our heart on.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yeah. And those are big claims, aren't they?

Dr. Tim Clinton: They are.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Even when I wrote the book and kept reading the research, I thought, "Am I nuts here?" But this is what the research and what the story would tell us. And don't be a helicopter or a drone. You solve their problem before they even finish making the problem, because you're so fearful that they're going to be crushed by the weight of the wrong answer. No. Let them use their eraser. They have to understand that they're capable of discovering right work through the mistakes that they're making.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yesterday we learned, Kathy, that resiliency is a mindset, a process of adapting well when facing significant sources of stress or challenge in our lives. You said

it's a choice, it's a learned ability, and it can often become a part of a kid's character. I love that. In other words, this is something we can, quote, "speak into their lives."

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, we put the pressure on moms and dads as we opened the broadcast and said, "You are at the heart of it, Mom and Dad, at building resiliency in our kids." That ability, that strength, that capacity to bounce back, to work through, to rise above, that's internal, and it's supported by an external structure, if you will. That's why having someone who's safe, someone who you can trust is really critical here. Otherwise, it's challenging to get there.

Dr. Kathy Koch: I love that. And so what are the beliefs that the child has, right? So our beliefs drive our behavior. We've taught at Celebrate Kids for years that identity causes behavior, beliefs cause behavior. If I think I'm stupid, if my belief is, "I am stupid," because I'm not as smart as somebody else in school, or I made a mistake, "I am stupid," then when I make mistakes, I've really reinforced this idea that I'm stupid. So then I look at challenge spelling words, or I look at, "Dad wants to teach me how to sweep out the garage," and I'm thinking, "But I'm stupid. I won't be able to do that." So I walk into a new task, hesitant and depressed, or I don't even try the advanced spelling words, because stupid people would not be able to do that.

So what are we allowing our children to believe about themselves? Do they think that a mistake means that they're stupid, or do they think that a mistake means they just didn't try enough? How do they view failures? Is failure fatal and final? Is failure a part of life? The beliefs that they have, right, about how they work, and how the world works, are such a key. I love that you brought that up.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So how you react to your child's losses or pain, whether it's real or perceived on their part, is really a big issue.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes. Yes. And not to overreact, and not to quickly react. If your children are old enough and you see that they're struggling, to ask them some questions. "Why do you feel that that was hard for you?" "Well, I'm just so stupid." "Well, that's a lie." "But Daddy, it was really hard." "Well, hard things don't make you stupid. God doesn't make stupid people. Hard things means you don't know enough yet. Hard things mean you have less experience with it than your brother. Stop comparing yourself. Your brother's three years older than you are. Of course he's going to get better at this." So to have that conversation, and to observe longer.

Tim, I'm sure you agree with me that we need to observe with our hearts, and our ears, and our eyes. And did our kids try hard enough, or did they give up quickly? Did they whine and complain? Have we been so anxious around them

that they're anxious? And I don't know about you, but I don't do well when I'm anxious. I don't write as well when I'm anxious. I don't think as well when I'm anxious. No, it gets in the way. And so we got to be really careful. It's not easy, but it's doable. I wrote the book because we can make changes when we know that we need to.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I remember, Kathy, when my son Zach was playing baseball, he was probably in his early teen years, and Zach got into a slump. We went through a couple of weekends where he couldn't hit the broad side of a barn.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Oh, no.

Dr. Tim Clinton: He was struggling so much. But I'll never forget the moment, Kathy, and the moment was, I was there constantly supporting him. I'm his biggest cheerleader, and we're in a hotel room, and things were quiet. He comes back, and finally he breaks down. I mean, tears are flowing, and he is devastated. And it's like, "Dad, what has happened? What's wrong?" And I put my arms around him and I said, "Bud, listen to me. I remember when I was playing softball, and I got into a bad slump, and a guy whispered to me and said, 'You're missing the ball, Tim, by about an eighth of an inch.' In other words, 'You're making crazy adjustments, trying to fix an eighth of an inch.'"

I said, "That's why we're spinning all over the place. Listen to me, Bud. We're not changing anything. We're going to keep practicing. We're going to keep after it. Here's what we know. Talent doesn't typically go away. It goes away. In other words, we're just going to make the right small adjustment, because that's all we need. And guess what? You're going to come back like fire." "You think so, Dad?" I said, "Are you kidding? I know so. There's no doubt in my mind, and we're going to work until it happens." "We are, Dad?" "Yes." "Okay." Guess what? In the next game, he had a breakthrough. That's the piece we're talking about. What kids believe becomes really important here in building resiliency.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Explain that to us.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yeah. Absolutely. Beliefs cause behavior. So do I believe I'm capable of more? Do I believe I have to be perfect? If I believe I have to be perfect to please my dad, which is what I often hear, then I walk into any situation already anxious and already over it, right? Because perfection this side of Heaven just is impossible. Growth is, maturity is, all those kinds of things. Do I believe I have to perform to please my mom? Do I believe love is on the line? Oh my gosh. There's a section in the book, "Unconditional love." Is it real? Seriously? Is it real? You say it is. The Bible said it should be. But if your kids think that your love depends upon their performance, they're already going to lose.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's conditional. You're in trouble.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yeah. Absolutely. And so beliefs cause behavior. What do they believe? And they show us their beliefs by their behavior. You can interview them, but you just watch them. And just watch from afar, and watch from the side of the room, if you will. And how do you see them approach a task. When do you hear them grunt? Do they give up after the second hard problem, or do they wait until the eighth or ninth hard problem? So we got to be really careful. And guess what? You all know this. They get their beliefs from us.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, and the ability to, quote, "know when to support and when to challenge," becomes critical here, because some people just keep pushing and pushing and pushing, and that's not what he or she needs. They need your support. And you're right, it's all anchored. And listen, there's nothing you can do to, quote, "turn me away," or to "not love you." There's nothing. Are you kidding? We're together. We're in this thing for life. Knowing when to support and when to challenge.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Oh, I love that. And if you're a believer, then you pray. You do that flair prayer. "God help me now." And you ask the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts and your actions. I love what you're saying. What I write in the book about the danger of saying, "Hey, you can do it." You can't say to a kid who's full of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts, "Hey, you can do it." What makes you think they can? What's the evidence? Evidence doesn't lie. "I know you can do it because this has been your past performance. You don't know this, daughter of mine who I love, but I've been saving your old work, and you are improving. You don't know this, but the problem page today that is frustrating you, there are 30 problems on the page. Two weeks ago, there were only 20 problems on the page. So you actually have improved."

Kids don't know. Even older teenagers lose sight of their progress, especially if they're trying to be perfect. Then they're never satisfied, and then they give up quickly. So we are the evidence keepers. Use the camera on your phone for good reason, and keep track of things, and show your kids, "No, you can do it because I know." "Because" is a powerful word. "I know you can, because ..."

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think the ability to be attuned to our children is everything. In other words, "Am I aware of where they're really at? Do I get that?"

Dr. Kathy Koch: That's great.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because if we're attuned, and that means we're connected. I remember an old quote that said, "The busy, preoccupied parent misses many a cue or opportunity to be in those moments, those critical moments of life when they need us the most." And if we're there, if we're present, if we're engaged, it's a gift to them that says, "I matter," that, ""We matter," and that, "We're going to get through this together. We are."

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I can't think of anything more important to give to your kids.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Oh, I love that. With a smile on your face, to be present. So powerful.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host. Our special guest today is Dr. Kathy Koch. She's the Founder and President of Celebrate Kids. It's a Christian ministry based out of Fort Worth. She's quite an author, speaks all over the world. God's using her to help bring healing and hope, and I love this new word here, resiliency to families.

Dr. Koch, as we continue our discussion, what I loved about this book is you are very straightforward. You know that rain comes, storms come, tough times, and you talk about big T and little T. In other words, big traumas in our kids' lives, and little traumas. And they do come, and it's important to be attuned to them, and why are they important? Because this can become defining for our children, can't it? And we need to figure out how to help them navigate those difficult, defining moments of life.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Right, because if we don't help them navigate, they won't get out of those valleys. And the filth, if I can use that word, will just accumulate, and it becomes harder and harder to stand up the more that you're weighted down by the burdens. So little T trauma, a lot of people define those as things that would affect your ego. You're cut from the team. You were embarrassed at the whiteboard in front of a class of children. You made a mistake at a piano recital and you feel horrible about it. Those are defined by the researchers as maybe a little T. If you have enough of those kinds of experiences that are not dealt with, it does become major to the child.

If you're very musical, as an example, if you're a musical family, and you have put a lot of eggs in the basket of music, and your kid knows you're spending money and taking time on piano lessons, your kid does not want to disappoint you. Now again, they should be, "I don't want to disappoint myself." You have to be ready in those moments to hug them well and talk them through that, and maybe talk in front of the piano teacher, even, so that they can overcome.

And then big T trauma would be life trauma, suicide, drug addiction, abuse, a divorce of a family member, even relocating across country, if that's not handled well, and the kids don't feel like they've been a part of that process, can feel like it's big T trauma, big trauma. And it's harder to overcome those things. And there probably are listeners, Tim, who you know from your experiences haven't dealt with some of those things in their own lives, and we're sad for them. And I want to say, again, that God is the God of second chances. His new mercies there for us, and we need to lean into that, get help, get therapy if we need to, for us and for our kids.

But trauma is a part of life. And if I could boldly say that, if you read the scripture, you have to be grateful for it, because we know from the Holy Word of God from Romans 5 that we grow up through our valley experiences, if we walk them out. We know that our character matures, we get endurance, and hope, and our faith matures when we experience difficult circumstances. When I ask my audiences at my events, "How many of you have a more mature character because of experiences you've had?" And the hands go up. And then when I ask, "How many of you have a deeper faith in the God of the Bible-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes.

Dr. Kathy Koch: ... because you experienced Him in the valley?" Every hand goes up. So I want to say to our listeners, with a lot of respect for you, if you overprotect your children, they end up being weak, and needy, and clingy, and fragile. And I think it's a reason they're dropping out of faith and dropping out of the church, because they haven't had enough experiences leaning into the wholeness of God. And I don't say that to make anybody feel bad. Again, you don't know what you don't know, but we're here to teach you. And I think that the scripture's so true about that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: While you were talking, Kathy, my mind went to an old Alfred Adler quote. "Kids are wonderful observers, terrible interpreters." And usually what they do is when they face these horrific moments of life, they begin processing. They begin chewing on it in their own way, and often don't have anybody to speak into it. And so they're left to their own interpretation of what has happened in their life. You call it the explanatory style, and that it matters, and that you better be attuned to it, your child's style here, because how you approach this affects their resiliency capacity, and non-resilient kids become very pessimistic and down, which by the way, that can paralyze them. Am I right here?

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Versus the resilient, optimistic one. In other words, they can get locked into not trying things. They give up easy. They begin to hide their pain. All that can become a terrible habit.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yeah. It's such a good point. Exactly. Resilient people take appropriate credit for successes and failures. They tend not to blame others. Resilient kids don't think that the pain will last forever. Resilient kids don't think that if they had a bad math class, they'll also have a bad science class. And so it is important. I would never write a whole book on one subject if there weren't a lot of ramifications of it. And that was a fun section to write about. And people have responded really well to this idea that, again, like you're saying, we need to pay attention to our kids. How are they reacting, and what kind of help do they want? Do they want a cheerleader? Do they need us to cheer for them, or do they need us to teach them? That's part of being in tune to our children as well.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, we again are struggling with time here, but we've learned that the quality of our relationship even determines the effectiveness of our own discipline strategies. That if we're anchored together, if we're present, if we're participating in each other's lives, then it matters. If you can separate out 20 minutes a day or so and just get connected up with each child individually, it's a game changer. Kathy, we've got to get that piece right if we're going to build resilient kids, don't we?

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes, sir. And oh my goodness, I have tears in my eyes. My mom sat in the living room when I practiced. She didn't just sit in the front row at the concert. My dad sacrificed to take my brother and I to the lessons. He didn't just sit in the front row. To be present to the wholeness of your children, and to provide the support they need to get to the goal that they have, that you believe is a good goal for them. We matter tremendously. What an honor that God would allow us these opportunities to relate well and to relate fully to the children, to know them and to let them know, "I want to know you. I'm so grateful that you're mine," and to recover. Part of resiliency for us is to give our kids another chance to forgive and to choose to forget, and to believe that they'll get it right the next time. They won't spill another glass of milk. To have hope in that, it's critical.

So Tim, are we healthy? Have parents rested? Have parents slept? Have parents been in the Word of God? Are parents reaching out to prayer partners? Because it's exhausting. And if the adults are distracted by their toys and their tools, they're not as present to their kids, and I understand the role of the phone. I'm on it a lot. A lot of us have to be. I get that you have a right to be on your social media platform. But do as much as you can when the kids are in bed, and make sure that when they're present, they know that you want them present. Otherwise, they'll leave the room, and then you don't have a chance.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, resiliency is a beautiful thing. We all want it in our kids, but there might be someone out there listening, and they have a need beyond what they can do. There's a hurt, there's a challenge that possibly might require professional help or therapy. Let me say this. On behalf of the American Association of Christian Counselors, we can help. You may want to go to connect.aacc.net, and that's where you could possibly find a referral to a professional counselor, or someone who's trained a lot like Dr. Koch.

Dr. Kathy Koch: I would certainly affirm that. I'm a member of AACC, and have appreciated your conferences. I know that the people that you would have on that list are professionals who are trustworthy, who know what they're doing, who integrate well their faith perspective in the mental health instruction that they would provide. So great, great advice. There's no shame in knowing that we need help. The shame would maybe be in not taking advantage of it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kathy, I want to close with this, too, is I read the book. Early on, I could tell that you're anchored deeply in your relationship with God. You love what I love. And I learned this reading through the book of the Psalms, of the steadfast love of God, and how important, how significant that is, and to people who understand

the steadfast love of God, it's everything. And that we as parents were to bring that same capacity to our own kids, that no matter what, we're there. The images in my mind about my dad, Kathy, are him on his knees, are him reminding me and saying this to me. "Tim, I promise you, go with God. And if you do, son, you will be blessed. I promise you. No matter what, you'll find it if you press into him."

And Kathy, teaching spiritual resiliency, that they can hope thou in God, no matter what comes their way, that one day, he'll make the crooked straight, that one day he'll wipe every tear away from our eye. One day, we again will embrace each other, and celebrate the goodness and grace of God, the love of God in our lives and for each other. Now, that's beauty. That's beautiful, isn't it?

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes, sir. I so appreciate all of your words.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dr. Koch, what a delight to have you on the broadcast these last two days. I really believe that God is going to use this work, this message, in a powerful way, in a lot of families. Hey, again, the work is called *Resilient Kids*. Brand new book. Raising them to embrace life with confidence. Dr. Kathy Koch has been our guest. She, again, is the Founder and President of Celebrate Kids, a Christian Ministry based out of Fort Worth, internationally celebrated speaker, influenced thousands of parents, teachers, and children all over the world. Hey, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, our entire team, we celebrate you, and the good work God's doing in and through you. May God strengthen your heart and give you boldness, especially in this day and time. Thank you so much for joining us.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Thank you. A total honor and delight. Thank you very much.

Roger Marsh: Well, I pray that every parent listening to today's program has been encouraged to commit to a path of resilience in the lives of their kids, for their upbringing and their outcome. Even if you have a strong-willed child, remember that you can lean in with them to give them the appropriate strength to tackle life's challenges, whether it's at school or on social media. Teaching your kids to press into God, especially during difficult times, can be life-changing.

And a brief reminder, we are a listener-supported broadcast outreach, and we want to continue to provide you with God-honoring programs that you will enjoy and that will enrich your life. You can find us at drjamesdobson.org online, and when you're there, you'll see the tremendous resources that we offer for parents and Christians of all ages to support you in your faith walk amidst a confused culture. And keep in mind that your donations allow us to create even more resources for families everywhere. Now, you can make a donation online to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute when you go to drjamesdobson.org. You can give a gift over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh. Thank you so much for joining us today. We hope you've enjoyed today's edition of Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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