



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Talking to Your Kids in Times of Crisis – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Tim Clinton

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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 friend to today's program! Right now we are going to re-visit another program that made our 2020 best-of-broadcast list. Hope you enjoy it.

While the world is literally in chaos right now, many parents are wondering how they can talk to their kids about the COVID-19 crisis. Hello everyone. I'm Roger Marsh and on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we hope to give you some practical tips on not just how to talk to your kids during this time of upheaval, but also to teach them through the scriptures to put their trust in the Lord. Today we're going to hear the conclusion of a discussion that Dr. James Dobson had with his colleague, Dr. Tim Clinton. Now, if you missed part one of this conversation, you can go to DrJamesDobson.org and you'll hear it in its entirety. Now let's get to part two of their discussion on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: Tim, you have written an article. I don't know where it's published, but I have a copy of it on the Six Ts. As in Tom. Six Ts for Helping Kids Through Trauma. I think you've already talked about the first one, which is togetherness. Let's go to the second which is touch and tenderness.

Dr. Clinton: Grace Ketterman, who I think you know-

Dr. Dobson: I do.

Dr. Clinton: Years ago told me, Dr. Dobson, she believed that kids needed about a hundred touches a day. That it was just an amazing way to communicate affection. I think some children really need heavy doses of touch and tenderness during times of crisis and trauma. In my mind, it's like the pitching coach walking out to the mound in a baseball game and reaching out to his pitcher and putting his hand on his shoulder and calming him down, Dr. Dobson, saying, "Hey, listen, we've

been here before. You can throw strikes. We're going to get through this. I need one more out. He can't hit a curve ball. I want you throwing this ball low and away on him and sit him down and then we're going to go into the dugout and I'm going to high five you."

It's that kind of thing, when you reach out to Johnny and you say, "Hey, listen, I'm here for you." I think touch communicates proximity. It dispels this sense of insecurity or this brokenness that's in their life, this lack of safety. Maybe it's stroking their hair, letting them sit in your lap. Put your arms around them, kiss them, be present with them emotionally. That is such a gift, Dr. Dobson, when you're going through a crisis.

Dr. Dobson: You know I have observed parents who have dogs as well as children, and they're more inclined to pet the dog than they are to touch their children. There's something about a dog makes you want to scratch his ears and have him roll over and rub his tummy and everything. Man, turn that over to your children. I love dogs. I'm a dog lover. I'll always want to pet dogs, but your children need petting more than the dog does. Reach out there and scratch his head or her head gently or put your arm around them. There are just so many ways. And a child warms to that. It's a way of telling them that you love them. That is an expression of love.

Dr. Clinton: It is.

Dr. Dobson: I really appreciate your mentioning that one. The second is in the same category and it's called "talk."

Dr. Clinton: I think your kids are having conversations about what's going on. Even if you don't think they are or you don't want to quote "talk" with them because you don't want to expose them to a lot of the concerns. We all understand that, but you need to have conversations with them. You need to be present. You need to be sensitive. Dr. Dobson, you always talked about being age appropriate. But to think that if we ignore the subject they're immune to this, is a fallacy. Our kids are overdosing on it too, so appropriate conversations. Hey, avoid graphic details. You don't need to do that. But give them a safe place where they can bring their questions. "Mom or dad, are you going to get this and if you get it, are you going to die?"

Dr. Dobson: That's what they're worried about. Tim, I was talking to a good friend, a physician friend of mine the other day. He's very much involved in the treatment programs in the hospitals. And we talked about how children are doing, and he talked about his 14 year old and I said, "How's he taking all this?" And he said, "You know what his biggest concern is? He's afraid I'm going to die." And if your child is going through that, you must talk about it and allay those fears because that can really cause damage if you don't.

Dr. Clinton: I agree 100%. A lot of people think that talking about this will perpetuate anxiety. I've found it to do the contrary. It actually helps reduce anxiety. Meaningful conversations, age appropriate conversations and letting them know of your presence. And by the way, your own emotional stability. Dr. Dobson. I think it's such a gift to our kids.

Dr. Dobson: Well the next of the suggestions for helping children is truth.

Dr. Clinton: Yes. Fear, I know, paralyzes us. In sports they say that fear makes you play small. In other words, like in baseball you would pull your hands into your face. It slows your swing through the zone. If you're afraid thinking you can't hit that fast ball, there's no way you're going to hit it. You understand that. And I think truth means giving them the idea contrary to the fear. "Be anxious for nothing," Paul said. "but in everything, through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God." Let them know God's love.

Dr. Dobson right now, our family, we're sharing the Word more with each other. We're praying more together. I smiled during church service. We were singing together as a family. And you know what that does? It helps calm everybody because we're anchoring ourselves in the one who we believe- "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." And we claim that he is a tender God who is attuned to what we're going through and that we can bring our concerns. We can bring our hurt. We can bring our fear to him and that he'll hear us and respond to us.

Dr. Dobson: You're talking about singing together. I've always admired families that have the kind of voices to be able to do that because that's a great activity within a family. None of us can sing a lick. We have great appreciation for music. On Easter Sunday we were all doing the best we could and we were singing the old hymns, which we can remember by heart and it just became a very meaningful thing as a family to do that. If you have that ability and inclination, that's a good idea.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah, it certainly brings a lot of peace to our home and I know Dr. Dobson for many. And you know it's interesting? I heard Greg Laurie, who is a good friend of yours, Dr. Dobson, talk about the significance of what's happening with the church online. Probably more people are being exposed to the gospel message right now. People are looking for truth. They want to know what life's all about as they face all this.

Dr. Dobson: Something is happening there. I was just reading the other day that Walmart has sold all of its Bibles. They're all gone. There's a run on Bibles, if you can believe that. You mentioned Greg Laurie. We did an interview together and the next Sunday he had 300,000 people that heard him preach online. Well, we talked about it again and he's been talking about it. The next week he had 600,000 people who listened and the next week, which is two weeks ago, he had more than 1,000,000 and one of the listeners was President Trump. It is amazing how people are looking for truth today.

Dr. Dobson: And I think there's the beginnings of an awakening, the third great awakening. I hope. That's my prayer, anyway.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah, I'm with you, Dr. Dobson. It's stunning to me to see the posting that's going on social media. To hear people openly talk about their faith who would never have done that. To see Franklin Graham and Michael W. Smith on Fox and Friends on Sunday morning from Central Park.

Dr. Dobson: That was phenomenal. I saw it too, there must have been millions of people who saw that. It's amazing to me that Fox News has kind of opened itself to Christianity at this time. There've been a number of programs about it and I've never seen that in the past.

Dr. Clinton: Like you, I'm praying that God will continue to work and draw the hearts of men to himself. Could this be, like you just said, the third Great Awakening, who knows? Boy, we need to pray earnestly, earnestly, that men would turn their hearts toward him.

Dr. Dobson: Well, the next item on your list is "triggers." Now that one I have not written about. Tell us about that.

Dr. Clinton: I think with fear and anxiety and tense times like this, Dr. Dobson, kids for example, well they act out what they haven't worked out. So they may be a little tense around the house. A little loud, a little overly excited. But we need to give them a little space here. But someone screaming or a door slamming or maybe a siren going off or something could deeply affect kids. It could trigger them. Make sure that as a mom or dad, you're attuned to your child. They're all different.

Dr. Dobson, you've taught us that your entire career: each child is unique. Be attuned to your son or daughter's uniqueness. And then respond to them in a way that helps calm them. I think this trigger piece is so significant. It can lead to nightmares, crying. Dr. Dobson, we didn't even mention how many kids are at home because school's out. I think it was like some 50 million public school kids and another nearly 6 million private school kids have come home with their textbooks and everything and said, "We've got to do school at home." Think about how it's changed everything.

So, as moms and dads, if we can remember this "T," because I think it's really important. There are things that can trigger our children and throw them spinning into a little of the chaos. And it's our job to help be that stability that they can regulate their world around. And by the way, learn to regulate their emotions during a time like this.

Dr. Dobson: You talked about each child being different. It is amazing. In my earlier work, I'd have parents come to me after I'd spoken and say, "I've got four kids and I've raised them all the same. I don't understand why they're so different." What has

happened is that parents have been led to believe that children are programmed by the parents and there's nothing that takes place emotionally or intellectually inside of them that parents don't put there. The truth of the matter is they're born different. They are born totally different. Every one of them. If you had a thousand kids, they would be a thousand different individuals. Every snowflake is different and every grain of sand at the beach is different. How would we come up with the conclusion that they're born as a blank slate and then the parents program them and there's nothing that happens inside that child's mind that didn't come from the parents?

The truth of the matter is they're born unique, with individual temperaments and individual desires and concerns and interests and abilities. It's amazing the complexity of the human mind. That's why it is so important for parents to know your child. You have to get behind his or her eyes and read what he is trying to deal with and then you know how to respond to that individual, if you take the time to do it.

Let me give you an example. If a child is not able to go to sleep at night and he is screaming, and we're talking about a toddler, and he's determined to get up or if he is just really letting loose. You go in there. You have to decide, is this child afraid of the dark? Is there something that's going on that he's frightened of? Is there a reason why he wants to be with you? Or is he playing a game with you and he just does not want to stay in that bed? You react oppositely depending on how you read and interpret that behavior and that's why it is so important to know your child. And you've got an opportunity now that you are sequestered together and you're together 24 hours a day, to learn who he is or who she is and learn to respond uniquely to them. What's going on here is not simply bad news. It's good news too. It depends on how you deal with it.

Dr. Clinton: I love that Dr. Dobson, I was smiling just listening to you do that. It reminds me of just parenting Megan and Zach as they were growing up and I would try to follow those kind of lessons in their life. And you're so right. They were so different. They still are. They're both adults. Megan has her daughter Olivia now, and Olivia is so unique. And the mindset here is again, our children don't need less of us, especially during a time like this. They need us more. They need us emotionally there with them. And if we're sensitive to that, like you were teaching Dr. Dobson, that is such a beautiful gift to your children. Oh, by the way, to you as a mom and dad, because if you're attuned to your kids, it's probably likely that you're going to be able to help them and calm them so they can regulate their emotions better. Right, Dr. Dobson?

Dr. Dobson: By all means. We've got one more item here. Time is the last "T."

Dr. Clinton: I think we need to all understand that there's a process here. You opened up the program talking about the journey the president was on, and that it takes time to accomplish these major milestones. It's going to take time to make our way through this horrific dilemma we're in. But as we go through it, we know that sameness, stability, and more are significant. If we could think about making

sure that as we're on this journey, that we're giving our children time to come with us, and that our job is to make sure their lives are as caught up in the routine as much as we can. Schedules are important. In other words, keep their world the same. That sameness factor as much as you can, and stable over time. It helps keep everybody relatively calm. And by the way, we know we have to be safe. We know we have to be sanitary. The real job here is to keep us all sane in this process, Dr. Dobson. Because it's a time of insanity.

Dr. Dobson: Well, I appreciate what you did here in this article, laying these six T's before us. It occurs to me, Tim, that those suggestions relate to a man and a woman, too.

Dr. Clinton: Yes. They do.

Dr. Dobson: Mostly of a man, for a woman. He needs to be tough and tender. He needs to have touch. He needs to talk to her. He needs time with her. It's really a matter of human interaction, isn't it? It's not just parent-child, but it is adults as well.

Dr. Clinton: Well, it's fascinating to me that the whole new world of interpersonal neuroscience. Sounds like a big word. It simply means this. The antidote to trauma is answered in relationship. "It's not good that man be alone. I will make a helpmeet fit for him." When we press in together, it begins to change our world. We begin to feel safe. When the wheels come off in our life. When trouble and challenge come, we turn to someone. Hopefully we turn to our Lord and believe that he's there for us, and that we can trust him. Or we turn to someone with skin on that we believe has our best interests at heart. That they love us, that they reach toward us.

There's nothing more threatening though, Dr. Dobson, than to reach for someone and no one reaches back. That drives us further into isolation. I believe into despair. Because God didn't make us to do this life alone. And you were right when you talked about loneliness being one of the greatest challenges of this day, and we need to pray and we need to step into the lives of one another, especially our own little Judea. It starts at home. And in this moment, think about the opportunity that really is before us. Maybe you weren't a good dad or maybe you've struggled being a good dad. Dr. Dobson, this is a moment where you could turn your heart back toward home, right?

Dr. Dobson: You've been following me around for a while. Hey Tim, that was a wonderful discussion. I appreciate your taking the time to be with us. How are you spending your day during this sequestered time?

Dr. Clinton: What I've tried to do is practice a few of those behaviors. I try to keep routine, some sameness going. So I still get up early, try to exercise, have a cup of coffee with Julie. I try to stay in touch with everyone. And by the way, pressing in. I found myself even pressing in more to my relationship with the Lord and saying, "God, what is it that you want me to do in this moment? What do you want me to do?"

Dr. Dobson: Tim, it's always interesting to talk to you. I appreciate the time to sit down and talk about the issue of mental health. There's a lot here. You could write a book on this and I bet you will.

Dr. Clinton: It's always a delight to be with you, Dr. Dobson. We've got to pray that God really ministers to us and through us. We need each other more than ever.

Dr. Dobson: I'm going to ask you to end in prayer today, Tim, and I'd like you to address particularly the person who is almost claustrophobic and has been inside the house for weeks. Maybe there is no nurturance there, no sense of love or companionship. They may be alone. Maybe it's a single person that lives away from his or her family and is all by himself or herself. Whatever the need is. Would you pray for it? Ask the Lord to just be in that special situation.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah, I'd be honored to. Father, thank you that you're a tender, loving father. You're a good, good father who sees us. Lord, you know the fear and the anxiety in the hearts of those who are wrestling in this moment. Lord, you know the brokenness that many are living with. You know the sorrow and sadness, the grief. God, you know the aloneness. God, you see the financial challenges. You see the tension and anger. Lord, you see your children crying out. Lord, the scripture says that you put our tears in your bottle. God, would you give us an overwhelming sense of your presence? God, I pray for protection right now, for everyone.

I pray that you would make provision in this moment. God, I pray that you would pour out your spirit in a powerful way. God, would you do a work that would move the hearts of men toward you in this moment? God, we need you. I pray for our president, our vice president, for all those in the administration and in authority, God that you would minister to them. Give them wisdom in this hour. I'm so grateful that we have a president who is asking you for guidance and direction, seeking faith leaders who will pour into his life, and more. God, guide him each step of the way. Bring healing and restoration to our land. Lord, we love you and thank you for who you are.

Dr. Clinton: Thank you for Dr. Dobson. For Family Talk. This ministry. God, continue to raise it up in a powerful way to speak for the hearts of our children and our families. We love you, Lord. We thank you that you love us. In the strong name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Roger Marsh: A powerful ending to this insightful two-day program here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I want to echo Dr. Clinton's prayer for our nation. America is in desperate need of healing and restoration, and that can only happen with God's help. 2020 truly has been an unprecedented year. Unfortunately, a lot of the turmoil and uncertainty is expected to continue. In these trying times, we want you to know that we are here for you. When you call 877-732-6825, a member of our team will be happy to pray with you. Again, that number is 877-732-6825. And while you're connected with us, be sure you also ask about Dr. Dobson's popular book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. This is a perfect

resource to respond to this season of life that we're all experiencing right now. So, request your copy today by going to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Or by calling us at 877-732-6825. Thanks again for tuning in today, and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Family Talk's 2020 best of broadcast.

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

Roger Marsh: Do you remember Dr. Dobson's touching interview with Lysa TerKeurst?

Lysa TerKeurst: I had to start understanding that forgiveness was as much for my heart as anyone else's. And it was a great first step of healing.

Roger Marsh: Or what about the powerful interview with John Eldredge?

John Eldredge: We'd rather be distracted than spend 10 minutes quiet with ourselves.

Roger Marsh: There were so many great Family Talk moments this past year. It might be hard for you to pick your favorite. But don't worry, we've done it for you.

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Dr. Dobson: Hello everyone, do you help dealing with the everyday tasks of raising a family? I'm James Dobson here and if you do, I hope you'll tune in to our next edition of Family Talk. Our main purpose in this ministry is to put tools into your hands that will strengthen your marriage and help you raise your kids. Hope to see you right here next time for another edition of Family Talk.