Embodied Wisdom: Enhancing Emotional Regulation Through Body-Based Education Transcript

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Introduction to Create Kids Edu

Welcome back to ADHD, Autism and Chronic Disease Parenting Summit. I am really excited to chat with Natalia Rodriguez, who is the founder of Create Kids Edu, a super popular online Instagram.

I was funny because I was chatting with my wife that I was about to talk to you and she was like, oh, I actually like her Instagram. That's really, really good.

And she's not like a very sappy, like she doesn't love a lot of the parenting content where it's like, you know, the mushy stuff. But she's like, no, that's actually a good, good Instagram.

So I'm glad. I'm glad I get to chat with you today. Thanks for being here. Thank you. Thank you so much for inviting me. So it's gonna be an interesting conversation today because I think this is extremely important, but maybe not a topic that gets enough attention.

And it's really, you know, I know it's really important to you in terms of body based education and techniques, emotional regulation and behavior. So I just really would like to start very simply with talking about what is like body based education and how is that related to behavior and emotions.

Yeah. Awesome. So, so, I began pre about two years ago and with a mission of, increasing mindfulness and bringing it down into the body. And essentially the reason why that is so important is these days we have a lot of, of a focus on what mindfulness is and, and, bringing more attention to the emotions we're feeling.

But we are missing an important second half, which is essentially how the body's reacting and, experiences emotions.

Body-Based Education and Nervous System Regulation

And so what we do is we focus on nervous system education and what we teach kids, and parents, is, how emotions show up physically in the body and how to get rid of the nervous system reactions that automatically start.

And so essentially, our goal is to have kids understand that they're in a fight or flight response, because they are aware what emotions feel like in the body and, the byproducts of that.

So essentially how comfortable they are sitting with an emotion because they understand what's happening. And also, the awareness of body based coping skills that will finish that nervous system reaction.

And one, allow them to think better in the moment. But two, and very importantly, make sure that they're not retaining trauma in their body. And essentially, the reason why that is good long term is, well, one, we have better behavior in the moment, but two, we don't have, accumulated nervous system reactions, stress, tension, in our hands, in our face, in our, jaws, in our shoulders, which then becomes the messages for future misbehavior.

Right. And so, it's very important mission to us. We think that essentially, when we bring mindfulness down into the body, we're going to have much better behavior and much better decision making, and much better features.

So that makes perfect sense. Mean there there's no doubt that children are having more, emotional dysregulation. They're they're having more issues in their own body.

I mean, even just from the diagnosis standpoint, as a pediatrician, you know, you hear a lot more about, like,

sensory processing disorder, you know, all sorts of, I guess, nervous system type issues and just regulation issues in general.

And so I think that that's why it's so great that you're doing this, because not a lot of people are. I mean, certainly there's a lot of occupational therapists that are moving in that direction a little bit more, but I don't think a lot of parents even realize that it's something that you could do.

And, you know, when it comes to, let's say, like toddler age and tantrums and, and things like that, I mean, I guess I would like to start there because it seems like that's it.

Maybe in babies too. I don't if you want to study them before the toddler age, but but I think for sure we all recognize it more in the toddler age because it becomes more disruptive in the home and more difficult to to handle.

So what are some of the things that you're seeing and working on with that? Yeah. So we so for the toddler age, it's very simple skills. Obviously we talk about breathing.

With breathing, we try to teach kids two main important parts. And, for sure, that's about breathing from the stomach. And, the important part, especially as you get older, is to make sure that kids understand, the reason why, and what is happening in the body.

And so, so we make sure that we add the piece about stress, forcing you to breathe from your chest and, what that happen? What happens when you're doing that for a long period of time?

And so that kind of, extra information that really gives context and meaning is important. Right? But when you're talking about a toddler, you're you're making sure that they breathe.

We try to focus on exhaling and making sure they're doing pursed lips and pressing hard when they breathe. And we teach them essentially. Again, this is a slightly older child, but with with a younger child, it's very important to teach them also to breathe out forcefully, because you get 15% more oxygen in your in your, in your lungs.

And so you're, you're cleaning out the stress chemicals in your blood 15% faster when you're pursing out your lips. And so there are these small, little tricks in that we can, use when we are aware of how our body, our body's nervous system processes, emotions also, one that we teach kids that are younger, like toddler age is to squeeze your hands.

And essentially, anger puts, tension in our hands. And this is an automatic behavior that comes from caveman times. And it helps us, make sure that we can do what we need to do to keep safe in the moment.

Toddler Tools for Breathing and Physical Release

But most of the time, we're not in dangerous, situations. And so we can easily help a child, get rid of the tension that's automatically created in their hands by teaching them to squeeze their hands or push against a wall.

And I've actually seen, three year olds being very angry and squeezing their hands. Right. And so there's definitely, small tools, that are, applicable to younger ages.

But in older ages, like you were mentioning, it might be a little bit harder to notice. We truly believe that anxiety is at all time levels because we are so much more aware of our emotions and so much more aware of the pressures and stress in the world.

And we don't have body based skills to cope and get rid of that stress. And so mindfulness is great, right? And we can't do things without mindfulness.

It's some very important portion of behavior modification. Right. But without the practical tools we see anxiety. We

see depression, we see all of these different, conditions that are about latent stress in the body.

Right. And of course, that ends up being, you know, the reason for all these kinds of health conditions. Right. So, so, yeah. So it is something that we see at older, ages, you know, teenagers and stuff like that.

But we see through anxiety, we see it through loneliness and depression and things like that. What, you know, talking about anxiety, depression, which are obviously getting much more common and are kind of later, you know, later stage, you know, concerns or diagnoses.

What should parents be looking for? You know, maybe before at that stage where, where, you know, there's some dysregulation, there's some concerns, maybe we can get to it before, you know, gets to those stages.

So what are some of the things that you're seeing or you're, you know, directing parents to focus on where you're noticing these things and maybe the tolerating with the kids getting a little bit older.

And, and this is a place where you can intervene and kind of teach them these, you know, give them these tools. So that way we never get to the point where that's the kid that does have the depression or the anxiety.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, we a lot of our work is preventative and that's really the focus. And essentially what you were referring to before, a lot of these sensory based behaviors that show the body will always show you first.

And, and we talk about that with, even with kids and asking for connection. Right. And so the reason why they're so clingy and the reason why, you know, they're look at me, look at me.

And, and those are ways that, our behavior in our body might show the need for some more connections, more, one on one. And, work with a child. So essentially sensory based, you know, aggression, pushing and throwing things would be the first kind of signs.

Of course, a child that, is reclusive, we talk especially with girls. We talk about self-harm and food based, emotion, emotional regulation. So that's emotional eating.

And we have, we have therapy groups that focus on that. So essentially it's the ways that our body shows, emotional, regulation. Right. And so, you know, food is essentially one of the big ones, you know, picking out and not being active.

Maybe avoiding food altogether when you're talking about girls and, and self-harm, at older ages.

Early Signs of Dysregulation in Older Kids

But when you're talking about younger kids, it's all sensory. Based behavior and communication. Right. So that's the clinginess that's the fussing, not eating, not sleeping.

Well, running away from certain situations, like outsized reactions that don't match, especially when they're body focused. Right. So, you know, these pushing and hitting and things like that. And, I think it's such a again, an interesting topic because as a pediatrician, a lot of parents do come to me with some of these issues and really trying to figure out whether it's, it's a medical issue or whether it's something that's above normal, whether is normal.

I think that's a very difficult thing for a parent and a doctor to figure out. And that's always, I think, a confusing thing for parents because of course, you know, toddlers, they have outbursts and things can be normal.

Doesn't mean it's outside of normal. But but I think that this is really helpful for people to kind of see, you know, this is something that's consistent or it starts to seem like it's way outside of of what you would consider normal.

Then there are tools and resources out there like, you know, your your site that can be really helpful for people. So

if somebody does think that this is starting to move outside of the realm of normal, what are the first steps that you recommend taking?

Is that going to your doctor first? Is it, you know, watching some courses? Is it working with the therapist or you know what? What would be the progression that you would you would recommend when parents start to have these concerns?

Yeah, we get that all the time too. I mean, parents, you know, especially with concerns like attention span and ADHD, they really the first step is, is not going to be, a, a therapist or a, a medical or pharmaceutical intervention, but instead to be one on one, connection and time with the child, that will always be the first step, to especially because that creates a context and the connection that you need in order to make those changes.

If you do need to take that next step with therapist, and, that it essentially sitting down and figuring out the triggers and the experiences that lead to the behavior.

Is the way that you start finding the solutions together. Listening from the child point of view really doesn't matter what age. For gives you the context from their perspective, very often parents will assume that they understand why a child is disregulated, etc..

But they're not getting to the exact, you know, the exact thing that's causing the behavior. And so really listening or getting the perspective from your child is the, the very first steps.

Right. And if, if those intervene, if that, connection so that building that connection one on one. So going on a date with your child and just taking that child out for, for dinner together, keeping that one child up at night when all, all the other kids are going to bed and watching a movie together or having connection building activities.

After that, if that doesn't work, then you definitely need to, you know, sit down with a therapist.

First Steps for Parents and When to Seek Help

There's so many great ones online. We cover them all the time. If you head over to our Instagram, we cover amazing pediatricians like, Doctor Gaiter and therapists.

We also have a directory on her website, based on topics. So ADHD, depression, etc., and you'll find a list of really great therapists, there that that will help you with your specific topic that can speak to you.

And the problem that you're having with your child. And, and that's definitely the last step, because you have, a wealth of information, experience, you know, a therapist that has heard your type of problem many times over and, and has found successful solutions to them.

So, that's definitely the last step. There is occasions when you will not be able to solve this problem alone. But, without you, a parent, being the first advocate and the first line of defense, nothing else will work after that.

Right. So, so the one on one time, and and really sitting down and finding the, the things causing the behavior is always the first, step. And that's a step that actually runs through the entire course, even with therapists.

So it's definitely the first one to go. I love that. And, you know, you talk a lot there. But like kind of the last step, which is which I couldn't agree more with because it's very unfortunate and modern Western medicine that we jump to a medication, we jump to a treatment always or away.

Sometimes it's needed, sometimes it's very helpful and and that's fine. But there is so much that we can do at home first. There's so much that we can do with some great practitioners.

There's a lot that we can do before getting to the medication. Right? And of course, if you're worried, go speak to your doctor. That's totally fine, right? That's reasonable.

You know, you want to kind of put it in place and look for anything that's, you know, really outside of, of the norm. But but these are a lot of what you're talking about.

Are things that can be managed at home, that can be worked through, with a little bit of understanding and a little bit of, you know, tools. I would say to to really know what to watch for and how to be a little bit more supportive.

And I love that just just being there. And I do like to finish off talking about actionable steps. And so, you know, maybe going back to I don't know if it's going to be just connection for you, but what would be the thing that that you would want to leave parents with if they were going to do something today to really help their children, help their emotional regulation, help their behavior?

Would it be in a connection like you mentioned, or something else that you'd really want to leave parents to think about or do today or this week? Yeah.

Well, I definitely would like for, parents to start translating a child's behavior through the body. Right. So through nervous system reactions, and through especially because that that is what creates reactivity.

So, a parent will get angry at the child and their behavior very often because we assume a lot more of what's going on. We assume the behavior, the reasons why the behavior is happening, etc., when really a lot of things are innocent and have very specific causes, to them.

And so really, when you start translating behavior, in emotions down to the body, you start looking at yourself differently, you start looking at your children differently.

And that is the first step of, you know, not yelling the way that you usually do, not reacting and responding instead, and really finding the solutions instead of just focusing on on the triggers.

Right. And the triggers being always a focus. So, for sure, focus on the body. That is a missing piece. On our website, right on the homepage, we have a link where you can find a parenting guy that's free.

We also, if you're a doctor, listening to this, we have a file specifically for physicians that has studies, that has posters, parenting guides for you to give to your patients, and stuff.

Education for yourself. Right. And how the nervous system impacts behavior and really how you can help us make a big difference by making sure that parents and children understand emotions through the body and the nervous system, not just mindfulness.

And that, I mean, that's such a great point. And it goes back to what I've heard a lot of other great therapist talk about when it comes to behavior. And this kind of echoes that a little bit different angle, but kind of echoing that you're not you don't really want to focus on the behavior.

You want to focus on the feeling behind the behavior.

Practical Takeaways and Resources

Or in this case, like the emotional regulation, the nervous system, how that affects the behavior. Because behavior is just the thing that we see in the world.

But especially when you talking about a younger kid like a toddler, a lot of times they don't know how to regulate it. It's just either involuntary or it's an outward cry for some other thing that's going on, whether that's not understanding how to regulate their nervous system or a feeling or whatever it is.

And so I think that's like a really beautiful, scientific way, almost to put what but a lot of therapists have been saying for, for a long time. I learned that from Doctor Sigi Gupta.

Paint on this as well. And like I think it just really echoes it really well. So I think that's like a beautiful way to, to really finish here. But I just want to, you know, finish finish off with you, you know, letting people know where to find you again on your amazing Instagram and website and all that stuff.

Yeah. Awesome. Yeah. We will help everybody, ourselves included, feel, more capable and resilient with emotions if we understand more about how we react to them automatically.

That's really what I want to leave you guys with. So create kids. Edu, dot org is our website. You can find a lot of free resources there printables, guides, etc..

Our Instagram is at create underscore kids underscore edu. I think if you type it, you'll find us. And. Yeah, I really appreciate it. Find us, for a lot of content.

We we we highlight amazing pediatricians and therapists. We pride ourselves on being a directory of amazing resources, and free printable printables and activities that you can do with your kids.

And, yeah, maybe our programs will, reach you in schools sometime soon. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you, thank you for being on. And I just echo that. I mean, it's one of the the better accounts online.

It's one of the few that I repost fairly often. And I think that people have found a lot of value from, from everything that you do. And that's why you're, you know, closing in on a million people following you because, soon it will be more.

I have no, no doubt you put really great stuff out there. So again, thanks for being a part of this. And, thanks everyone for listening. Thank you. Bye bye.