Podcast Intro and Myth Setup

If they're telling you to toughen up your baby or child with your treatment, if they are telling to isolate them or yell at them, or do anything with their child other than co-regulate them when they stress, do not take this advice.

Welcome to Spoil Your Baby podcast. I'm Dr. Greer Kirshenbaum, neuroscientist, doula and mom, and I am here with my wonderful co-host. Hello, I Am Lucia Zunini, also neurosciences and Mom.

And today we have another myth, something that we often hear, right Greers? Should I share this with the audience? Please. So this is something we hear somebody, somebody's psychologist.

said this to a mom. This mom, you know, is co-regulating her baby and attending really to the emotions and needs of her child. And the psychologist said to her, well, that's great.

But when, when your baby is around three or four and they go out into the real world to kindergarten, they'll expect all adults to do that for them. That won't happen.

They're going to get into a shock. In the real world, they are going to meet adults who say, stop crying, that's enough. And so there's just nurture is just not going help them.

What do you say to this career?

Why Nurturing Builds Resilience

My gosh, I mean, this makes me so mad, right? Like, it's this idea, if you're nurturing your baby, you are not preparing them for the real world, because the world's harsh and mean and evil.

And they have to know that, life is hard. So you got to treat them, treat him tough when they're a baby so that they're going to go out into the world and know that the worlds tough, right?

I mean, it's heartbreaking. It's so heartbreaking to know, that parents are influenced by this, because it makes such a really scary impact on babies and their developing brain.

You know, we, know that babies need something so different than that in those first three years in order to be able to handle the harsh world. We're not naive to that.

we know this world is stressful, We know there is evil in the world, that all the adults in our child's life are not going to us. But we also know and you can tell us more about this, children do the best in that hard world when they have a deeply nurturing parent, at least one.

Right? You want to tell us a bit more about that? Yeah. Well, this is backed by a mountain of research. Actually, I wish I had my manual here. There is a manual of attachment research this big.

I have it up here on my cuff. Anyways. And that essentially says, yes, you're Children will do wonderfully if they have at least one secure attachment relationship.

And so what does this mean in this context that we're talking about here? So one of the main roles of they attachment figure is to be safe haven. So what that means, safe having is when the child is dysregulated and experiencing strong, difficult emotions, you act as safe have exactly that.

You read space, You hold a child, to co-regulate a And that is what is going to prepare him or her for the real world.

Attachment, Safe Haven, and Co-Regulation

I was just thinking in those moments, you can imagine yourself basically you're you were like a helper in like building their brain. Every time you are there in these moments.

It's like this is a session where we're going build your brain to get ready for that. That big scary world that eventually you going account. Exactly.

And so it's very, very important. the parents know that their relationship with their child is the most important and it can never be equal to a teacher that says stop crying to, I don't know, he went to camp and the monitor was like saying well stop, that's not, they're not attachment figures and yes there's going to be stress, but that is stress that is part of life, and tell us more about that, Greer, about what, yes, children is stressing their life.

But what type of stress, tell about it. Yeah, such an important highlight, right? Like that just completely knocks that myth out, to just say, you know, say you better be harsh because other people are going to be hard.

Right? No. First of all, your building that brain in your child to able to handle those stressors, flexible in dealing with challenges that are hard in their life.

And you can still be their safe haven, right? They can get they can something stressful can happen to them out in the real world. Maybe they'll deal with it really well, because you've been co regulating and helping them.

But then they Can also come home and say, someone was really unkind to me today, and I'm upset about it. And and again, like be able to unpack that with them.

And that experience will not be traumatic because they have the safe person again to go back to instead of storing that as some trauma in their mind and body.

Right. That's just so, so important. So you absolutely can. You know, in the infant years and beyond and should be that safe place for them to stop their brain.

There is what prepares them for the real world. completely. Because let's talk about how this inverted U stress curve, right, bringing in some science here.

The Stress Curve: Healthy vs Toxic Stress

So one of the big criticisms that I think this kind of myth draws on is, you know, if the kids are too protected, that's not going to be good for them, and that is true.

And that is true, 100%. So if we think of like an upside down U on one side, so that the U is low, that's low stress, right? And so if were doing sort of a helicopter bulldozer parenting style, where we remove all obstacles for our child, were we cater to their every single, you know, cup color choice and how they want the banana cut and, you know, the exact clothes that they wanted.

Right. And just kind of like fuss like that and not let them have those like normal stressors that kids have like, Oh, I don't like the color of my cup today.

I like this shirt. Then we're going to really be denying them experiences to get stressed from these normal everyday experiences. That actually doesn't prepare them.

very well for the real world because then they, you know, are vulnerable to stress. They're not going to be able to handle it later. The middle of the curve is the tolerable amount of stress and that's when we don't bulldoze or helicopter them.

We let them fall down and get hurt and help them recover. We help then recover from the banana being cut the

wrong way or the yellow shirt when they wanted a green shirt.

And we let them go through their stress with us, co-regulating them in those experiences. That's the sweet spot. that's The Goldilocks spot, that the place where they are going to be able to grow up and have a very beautiful, resilient stress system and be to handle things.

And then on the highest end, you know, the U is down again. And that's that toxic stress. That's where we are harshly parenting. We are isolating them when there's when they're crying or scared.

we're saying don't cry, shake it off. Were saying your feelings don t matter. I don' want to see your feelin gs. When we'r acting like that harsh person that this myth is describing we be, their stress system will grow up to also be very vulnerable.

So the truth is, we don't want to take away all their little stressors and bulldoze them away. We want them to experience them. with us there. We don't want to be this harsh person who doesn't tolerate anything.

we want them to have all those beautiful things, those stressors that will happen, see them as opportunities to grow their brain and be present with them.

And that is what actually prepares them for the real world. And it's kind of what, if we actually do that inner work and look inside what we all wish we had as babies.

Do you want to talk a little bit about some of the kind speculation of, what's going on for people who are telling parents this? Yeah. Well, in this case, you know, this person is a psychologist, right?

And so it just is mind blowing to me. that a psychologist should be an expert on the mind and body is so very uninformed about what that science to begin with.

Why Harsh Advice Gets Projected

But also, it just shows how harmful it is to work as a psychotherapist when you have not done your own healing and your work, because this is a projection To think that you have to prepare a little child for a world where they're going to be told, stop crying.

It's because you want this child to adapt to something you will probably say to a child. And why would you? You probably were told that as a So now you want the world to adapt to you.

That is my take, that's my analysis of the situation. And just I want to highlight, it's very, very important that when we are looking for a psychotherapist, they have done their own work.

Very, important. We really want make sure and not only their work, but their on work at looking at their infant experiences. Yes. especially those right?

Do they know how they looked at the pain that they might carry from being rejected as a baby or sleep trained as the baby? Or, you know, emotion silenced as baby.

Exactly. I know I've done that work. Yeah, this is projecting pain exactly that that's their own pain projected outwards because she this person cannot deal with that pain.

So there you go through life like this. Absolutely. So yes, and you know, even if you, you don't look, if your looking for mental health support, keep this in mind when you're having a consultation with someone.

And if You're already seeing somebody, they're not informed in this area. Don't listen to them in, this, in the realm. You know if any mental provider is telling you to sleep train to solve some kind of mental issue for yourself or your child, walk away from that.

If they're telling you to toughen up your baby or child with your treatment, if they are telling to isolate them or yell at them, or do anything with their child other than co-regulate them when they stressed.

Do not take this advice. Please do not. It is really, really out there. We're seeing it. you know, day after day, it's still there.

Resources, Free Event, and Closing

Yeah, this is why we wanted to do this episode. Completely, completely. And so we know you have a lot of questions about this, about probably this inverted you of like, what does it mean to be You know a helicopter or permissive parent and bulldoze all their stress and take away their stressing what does it mean to be harsh right and there is a lot of nuance to it and we absolutely welcome questions.

We've created a really fantastic free event for mothers. where we will go over this. One of the days is about stress and our baby's stress so we're really really passionate about this and we really want this to reach as many mothers as possible.

It's free to attend live or to get a recording. This will just help grow nurture in the world and so please join us for it. You can Get an invitation by commenting Bloom on any of my Instagram posts or at the link in my bio on Instagram, you can find a link.

And we're really hoping to change things with this free event and the programming that we have for mothers going forward, because this stuff's confusing and it's pervasive and gets into our subconscious.

And it comes out in our parenting in ways that are not going to really support our babies and ourselves as we grow. We want the opposite for you. The best for every mom and baby that finds us.

Yeah, absolutely. So check it out. That free event is in July. And we hope to see you there. I should also say we have a free community for parents in our app that will be open leading up to this event to where you can ask lots of questions as well.

Please join us in all the ways that feel welcoming to you and we're here for you. Take care until next time.