The Essence of Less: Cultivating Simplicity In Childhood Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to Simplifying Childhood

Welcome back to ADHD, Autism and Chronic Disease Parenting Summit. I'm here with the phenomenal Tracy Collette, founder of Raised Good, and I'm happy and excited to talk about simplifying childhood.

Childhood these days is intense. It feels like more intense than it ever was before. There's stressors that haven't been there. And so I think this is a really useful and valuable topic.

So thank you so much for being here. My pleasure. Thanks for inviting me. So let's just start off with the term simplifying childhood. So what does that mean to you and what's going on today in the fast paced world.

And do you feel like we need to simplify childhood? Yeah. Short answer is yeah, I absolutely think we do. I think we need to simplify adulthood. I think, life has just got so busy.

It has an A, and, and it's really trickled down to childhood. Kids have lost time to, for free play. They've lost time for for childhood, you know, they're overscheduled.

They've got, more toys than what they can play with. And, I actually wrote a post two years ago on that. Kids, you know, the the play more the fewer toys that they have, the more that they actually play.

So, yeah, there's there's too much stuff. We're cutting them around too quickly. Anyone with a with a toddler will know that kids don't do well with transitions.

Why Kids Need More Free Play

So the more scheduled activities that we're taking them to, then, you know, the more likely it is that we have meltdowns and all that kind of stuff going on.

We enroll them just in endless activities and, you know, organized sports that, that are directed by adults rather than kids playing with other kids and just having time to be to be out in the street and playing with each other and riding their bikes and building forts and, you know, using their imagination and, really having these sort of, having downtime, to, you know, to really be doing the things that they need to be doing in childhood.

Play is become so undervalued in our society. And, just in the last week or so, Jonathan Heights new book, The Anxious Generation, has been released, which is just everywhere you look.

Which is amazing. And I'm, I'm halfway through it myself and just so grateful that he's written a book like this. And he talks about the loss of the play based childhood and the impacts that it's having on Gen Z now as we see them in young adulthood.

And it's not good. You know, we need our kids need time for play and just for childhood to serve the purpose that it was meant to, which is to grow our kids up in this very precious time.

And it's not meant to be a resume for adulthood. So, yeah, I think it's it's a real urgent need. Why do you think it's like, why do you think we've gotten into this place where everything is so regimented in childhood and we've forgotten how important basic things are, like play or just climbing a tree or anything that said, like, how do we like, how do we get here?

Yeah, I think we just, it's like the the frog. So I think being boiled in the pot, isn't it? And and also not valuing something until you're saying that it's gone.

Something so simple as play, that we can kind of think of as being this frivolous thing that kids do if they've got nothing else to do. But it's actually what exactly what they meant to be doing.

And I think parents, you know, our world has just changed into this idea that if we can measure something, if we can, enroll our kids, you know, if enrolling kid in soccer at five used to be the norm, then enrolling them at two must mean that they're just going to be like, you know, the most amazing soccer player ever and become professional and and then that's going to somehow rub off on us as parents that we're successful parents if we have successful kids.

So it's yeah, it's really become the sort of comparison game. I'm sure that social media plays a big part in it, seeing what other parents are doing and just feeling like you don't want to let your kid fall behind if all the other kids are doing all these amazing enrichment experiences, then we should be sticking our kids in them, too.

And I'm not saying that I'm, not for activities like my son does theater. He showed an interest in that and really wanted to do it. He's done soccer over the years.

He's picked it up. He's put it down. But it's really if the child hasn't asked for it, it's for the child to really show an interest in it, rather than the parents sticking them in all these things and just trying to take up, you know, sort of fill time, I guess.

Pressure, Comparison, and Overscheduling

Yeah. And I also think, and I've been think about this more lately, that we just, we have this impression of where kids should go and what they need to do to get there, like getting into Harvard or whatever program is like the most important thing.

And that's like the measure of success for whatever reason. And you know, that that has been, I think, ingrained a lot more over the last few few decades.

And families of like, you know, they have to do they have to get into the right preschool so they can get into the right grade school setting. Every high school they can go to Harvard so they can, you know, become a doctor or whatever they're going to be.

And it's like, that's not the measure of success. A lot of people are are miserable throughout that process. They end up quitting. It's not what they want to do.

And so I, I feel like a lot of this, like over scheduling is just from this pressure that parents have put on themselves, that society has put on us to get our kid into, you know, Oxford or or Harvard or whatever school you feel like they need to get into even though no matter what you do, there's a low chance they're going to get it anyways.

And it doesn't mean that's even the right thing for them in the long run. Yeah, absolutely. I'm a veterinarian. I went to vet school like it's one of the hardest, you know, things to get into.

And, that's not what I'm doing today. It didn't lead to lead to what I wanted. And, and I think it's it's super important to allow our kids to figure out exactly what they want to do.

And, like, I'm not finishing this Anxious Generation book yet, but, But I took Telenor's scan easy last year. And she's, she's connected with Jonathan Hunt, and she's talking about schools, like, you know, Harvard's and whatnot that really are looking at kids that are being homeschooled or have had a different kind of, a different kind of childhood because, kids are getting to university now and they're falling apart.

They're wanting mom and dad to choose their subjects and help them, and they can make it through, and they're anxious and someone's always been telling them what to do.

You know, the sports coach has been telling them what to do. Mom and dad have been driving them around from

one activity to the next. I haven't had to figure it out themselves.

And then I finally get to university and they're falling apart. And that's what a lot of this anxious generation stuff is about. It's, we're really wanting to give our kids the skills that they need to go out into the world.

You know, resilience and, you know, being able to speak up for themselves and, really make good decisions themselves. So we can't keep making decisions for them and play is one of the places where they can, play with making decisions, where they can do things without consequence, where they can, mature emotionally, where they can play with fear, like when a child is climbing a tree and they want to go that little bit further and they get out on the branch, they're playing with fear, and feeling what fear feels like.

We need a three year old and a five year old to feel that and be able to play with it in order for them to then be a 20 year old who can deal with, you know, bigger things in life.

Resilience, Decision-Making, and Play

So, yeah, it it can seem counterintuitive that, that simplifying and making space for kids to just be kids and do the things that, you know, that our parents would have done when they were kids.

That that is, is, you know, it seems counterintuitive that that's better than sticking them in a bunch of activities and paying for all these things. But, but it's actually true. Yeah.

Or at least the balance. Right? I mean, I, I don't know that we we have to stick them in nothing. You can I mean, I think I think overall that's great if kids can use their imagination and play, but I, I, I feel like personally that the, the, the simplifying of a of a child life doesn't necessarily have to mean that you don't put them in soccer, you don't put them in dance.

But it's that we don't have to like schedule their their whole, their whole day. We don't have to put them in 10,000 things. We don't have to put them in math, school and science.

And this and I have to make sure that they're getting the best grades and be the best soccer player. If they really find a love and something, that's fine, that's great.

I mean, they can certainly be enriched, reaching for their lives to be a part of of something. So I think exactly what you're saying, like kind of going backwards a little bit and, and maybe again, simplifying it down to a couple of things or figuring out what they really like.

To me, seems like the, the best path forward and something that's more balanced because it seems like we're way out of balance right now. Yeah, exactly, exactly.

And that's what I said. You know, my son wanted to do theater, so he's doing theater and he does gym games because he really wants to do that. But, and but yeah, not, giving them the space so that they have a little bit of downtime.

And I also think you mentioned the Jonathan Hayden's book, which is fantastic. And do you feel like technology is also impacting this a lot? I think so I feel like, oh yeah, he's really impacting it.

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Big time. I mean Jonathan's talking, you know, predominantly about smartphones and social media. And yeah, as a parent to a ten year old, like it's I'm starting to look down that path.

Like, how do I make sure that, you know, what what we now know about the negative impacts that these devices are having on on adults, but particularly on a teenage brain?

And and how do we stop that? And he gives, you know, for very, straight forward actions in the book, which I think is one of the reasons why, you know, it's the message is just really catching on because I think, like he says,

parents have had enough and kids have had enough.

And, he talks about smartphones as being experience blockers, which they really are, because they just captivate you and they're meant to get your attention.

And, but we want our kids to have experiences in the real world. And again, it's like trying to find a balance with those things. It's obviously not saying like, our kids are not going to be on tech because we wouldn't be having this conversation if it wasn't for tech.

And, you know, social media can do great things. But yeah, but, not not for a teenager. And, and not in the sort of level of excess that I think it's got.

So now. Yeah, I completely agree.

Technology, Smartphones, and Social Media

I, I don't think we're going to get rid of, of tech and I don't think we should. I just think that we need to find the balance and the right way to use it in the way that is not going to affect mental health in the way that it is.

I mean, I you know, if you go back to when social media started for us, it didn't I don't think it had the same effects that it has on us now, because the way that it works is so different.

And and I don't think that that's the problem. It's not the problem of being on a screen. It's the problem how the screens are use how much we're on the screens, the the stress level, the way that these apps are, you know, wanting us to be on and comparing to other people and having to like all these things add up to that anxiety.

So potentially we could move in a different direction for the future for our kids. So the things that they're on are mindful of of our mental health. Right? I think that's possible. That would be amazing.

I love that, like, you know, when when phones came out, when we just had flip phones, when they first came out, you had to like, you know, press the buttons like multiple times to get the letter.

And you only had so many characters per text message and all that stuff. And and it was just used for texting and calling. That was wonderful. That was connecting us like you could connect more with your friends that way.

And social media was just on a computer, like, you would have to get on a on a laptop or something. So it had clear boundaries around it. But the combination of social media being on a smartphone and then smartphones having forward facing cameras, I think in like 2004 or something.

You know, that's when it really started to go, to go downhill. After that, I think, I think it was 2010, I think was one of the was when it really started to, to have an impact.

It's those are those kind of things that have come together for this perfect storm, I think. So it's sort of trying to unravel a bit of that. And yeah, I mean, Jonathan's calling for like no social media for kids until 16.

I have heard him say 18 as well. And, and just getting smartphones out of schools, I think is, is a real positive mood, real positive move, you know, to give kids time to, to be there, to be learning and to be socializing and to be interacting in person before interacting online.

Yeah. And I said that for a long time, too, that I think the big the big concern from parents is safety. So, you know, if that's your concern and you want to get a phone, you can have a flip phone.

They don't have to have that. And then really the biggest challenge is, is going to be making it more cool and normal. You know I think that like that's like the hard part, right?

Because it's hard to not be on social media when everybody else is. And that's what what is, I think going to be the biggest hurdle to seeing this change.

But but kids need that simplification. I, I really think so. I think it's really harmful to kids to have to have social. I mean, I think it's harmful to all of us, but it's much more harmful to kids.

And and we're we're seeing that and, and we have to find some way to move in the middle. And not all technology is good. Nanotechnology is bad. But the evidence is so strong that this is bad for their mental health.

And until the platforms, the apps change the algorithms and change the way things are done, the only solution is to be to cut it out. You know, at least for that period of time.

But but I would hope I really hope that maybe over the long run that we can kind of push the apps and the programs to work in a way that works with our mental health, because otherwise, you know, they're going to get they're going to become obsolete anyways, like people are going to stop using them.

They're going to get miserable with them, I think, over the long run. So hopefully, you know, there'll be some sort of, you know, middle ground where the flip flops and come back in.

But the apps can also start changing. That's my theory of how things are going to go, because I don't think people kids are just going to stop being on social, you know, that's going to happen.

Not necessarily. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, I love that idea of flip phones. Come back in. Like I can they can be cool. And then maybe, maybe the apps because of that will be forced to change, especially when it comes to kids and kind of adapt to it to get people back on in a more mindful way because it right now, I mean, you think about the apps are completely built for engagement and to make money, right? That's what they're there for.

And that makes sense. That's what they're supposed to do. But but if they kind of pull things back a little bit and try to also think about mental health and creating the app in a way where it doesn't foster so much anger and division and comparison, then it's possible.

I mean, it's certainly possible that it could be done. It doesn't have to be the way that it is. Yeah, yeah, I agree, I agree and yeah.

Changing Tech Culture for Kids

And I think, you know, with, with books like this, like I think that I think he's got the timing of this book perfect because I think it's really come at a time where parents have just had enough. And, and then, you know, I've, I've started a book club just within our school, where my son goes to a homeschool co-op.

It's it's quite a small group, but, you know, there's 20, 30 parents in there, and we're all reading the book together, and we're coming together to, like, figure it out, because, like you said, if there's if the other kids are, you don't want your kid to be the only one that's, like, missing out.

So it's coming together in community and, and, and really putting pressure because I don't think big Tech is just going to suddenly wake up one day and say, let's be more like socially conscious.

I think it's it's really going to be change coming from, from, the public and from parents sort of really pushing back and saying that these things have to change.

Definitely. And just to finish off. So I always like to finish off on a positive note and some, you know, actionable tips for today or this week. So if you were, you know, talking to a family, had some friends or asking about simplifying their life, what are some of the first things that you think that they should do with it?

Just be to to think about phones and and and decrease some of the clutter in their, their scheduling or what would

be some of your tips for this week, or what they can think about to kind of help their kids move in a little bit better direction, be a little bit more resilient and a little more simplified life.

Yeah. Well, I think, you know, for, for parents, you know, particularly with younger kids, is is thinking about toys like, thinking about doing a toy detox.

I think I think a toy detox can just be fantastic. You know, the toys, it's just this creep, like, you know, my son loves and it's like there's just more and more Lego homes.

So doing a toy detox I think can be fantastic. Particularly when my son was, was younger as well. You know, you take toys out of their room and then they come in and they play more.

It's like as if all the toys are new, because I can't say it when there's so many things. Start with the broken toys, the toys they don't use. You could implement a toy library.

So, like, get some of those, like, clear plastic, containers. Take some toys out, put them in another cupboard somewhere, and then, like, rotate the toys.

So I think that can be really great way, for simplifying. And, the other thing would just be to look at your schedule and just to honestly take a look at it and see how it makes you feel.

And, and if you're happy with it and if it's and if it's, giving your family a good rhythm, then stick with it. But consider saying notice things sometimes, giving yourself some space just for family time and for, and for creating some downtime in your life with your family.

Practical Tips for Simplifying Family Life

So I would say, yeah, just with every yes comes a no, and with every know comes a yes. So if we say no to something out in the external world, then maybe we are saying yes to doing puzzles and having pancakes for breakfast and having or having a board games night.

If we're saying no to to something else. So yeah, I think just, prioritizing that time with, with family because kids grow up so fast and, and giving them the time to, just to have the downtime that they need and, and really, encourage play as much as possible.

I love that. That's beautiful advice. Simple advice, not not overly complicated or rocket science type stuff, but super important. And yeah, the things that we're we're forgetting and are just so important to kind of bring full circle and, and, you know, we're moving forward, forward, forward with everything and a lot of ways that's good.

But some stuff was also good the way that we used to do it. And finding the balance between the two, you know, can certainly, I think benefit a lot of a lot of kids.

And just simplifying things a little bit is, is a great way to go. So I really appreciate you being here and being a part of this. And before we go, maybe can you just tell people a little bit more about where to find you and any other, any stuff on social media or whatever you want to mention about all your amazing platforms and things that you do.

Yeah, for sure. So everything is at right is good.com and I have, hundreds of blogs there. I've written a bunch about simplifying childhood, so you can find find resources there as well.

I also have a free resource on simplifying childhood. So I can I can give you the link to that as well. Joel. And then on Instagram it's just at raised good.

And Facebook is the same. So just over at raise. Good. Great. You have a fantastic platform, fantastic social media, lots of good tips, lots of great advice.

So I encourage everybody to go check it out. You're one of the, beacons of light in pediatrics and kids in general and just information. So I really appreciate everything that you do.

And thank you for for being here. And thanks everyone for listening. Well, thank you. Thank you. My pleasure.