

Ep #91 Creating change and increasing confidence: Part one

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This is episode 91. Let's begin.

Smarter Parenting welcomes you to our podcast series, The Parenting Coach for ADHD. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach, Siope Kinikini.

Hey, everybody, how's it going now? Hope everybody's doing well. I am doing fantastic. In fact, everything is going really great, and today I'm super excited to share the story of Doug and his son, Dylan. Thankful that they are allowing me to use their names, which is great because I think that this is a great story and a great way for you to understand why it's important for your children to learn how to [Role-play](#), and your responsibility as a parent to help your child learn how to Role-play effectively.

So, in this episode, we're going to talk about Role-playing, which is a big deal. And I know for some parents, this is probably the most difficult part of what we teach as far as the skills that you find in Smarter Parenting and for the [Teaching-Family Model](#) because Role-playing seems to be something that children do, but something that adults don't do. Which is bizarre to me because in some ways adults do this all the time. And yet we mislabel it or we minimize it and we look at it as not being Role-play, but we actually are Role-playing.

Let me give you an example. After I finished college, I was applying for jobs and as I was applying for jobs there was, in the career center at the university that I attended, there was this program that you could go to and they would interview you. They mock interview you for jobs. And you would come in with your resume, dressed, and they would have somebody Role-play this scenario with you so you felt comfortable enough to do that. Now, I worked in this center as well as used this program in order to prepare me for after college. After I got my degree I thought, "Okay, I'm going to have to apply for some jobs and I might as well go and prepare for the different questions that they may ask. And understanding my rights and the questions that they cannot ask during a job interview."

I would go in and I would Role-play, and consistently Role-play over and over until I felt confident and comfortable with it. And then I would, from there, jump off and go and interview at real places. Now, for me during the time, I didn't think that that was Role-playing. I didn't. I just thought, "This is something that we do in order to prepare a child or prepare a young adult for the workforce."

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And yet at the same time, now looking back, it was exactly a Role-play. I was playing the part of a person looking for a job. Another student was acting like a person who's interviewing for a job, and we would do this conversation back and forth where they'd ask questions and I would answer them. Adults do this. We do this quite a bit. I have a lot of friends who are single still, and it's interesting for me to hear their stories of preparing for dates. They practice. They practice in front of the mirror what they're going to say. How they're going to interact. What they're going to do. That's part of Role-playing. It's preparing and anticipating a future event by knowing exactly what you're going to say, what you're going to do.

Now, Role-playing is super important for children with ADHD, because it teaches three fundamental things that will help them become successful. And that's where we're going to start to talk about Doug and Dylan. Let me tell you what the three things are and then we'll discuss them and then I'll share Doug and Dylan's story because I think it's really cute. And when I mean cute, it's wonderful to see how Role-playing can cause a positive effect in people and in children.

So the three things that make Role-play important for children, specifically with ADHD, is that first it teaches your children sociability. So, social skills. Role-playing requires a child to be social. The second thing is it teaches your child the vocabulary that they should use. And then the third thing is it teaches empathy.

So let's talk about sociability first, then we'll talk about vocabulary and then we'll talk about empathy. The object of Role-playing is to anticipate things that are going to happen with another person. And so when you are Role-playing with your child a situation or a scenario, what is happening is that you are teaching your child how to interact. How to engage. How to communicate with another human being. How to be social. Do you smile? Do you not smile? Do you shake their hand? Do you not shake their hand?

And in our current state of affairs in the world, we're not shaking hands, right? We're actually not really smiling either because we're all wearing masks. But, how do we engage and interact in a social way with people? When you Role-play with a child, specifically with a child with ADHD, what you're doing is you're setting up the boundaries and the parameters that guide them along this path of what they can do and what they should do when they encounter somebody. You're preparing them and guiding them along the path and saying, "Kay, this is good. This, don't do. This, do. This, don't do."

So, sociability and social skills, super, super important. Children need to learn these skills in order to get along with people because they will be working with people in the future. They will be dating people in the future. They will have children. And these are all areas where social skills are vitally important. They'll have neighbors they need to engage with. They'll have to talk to a mechanic sometime or have customer service. All of these require education. They require the ability of your child to engage in an appropriate way socially. And so Role-playing with your child, how to do this, teaches them the social skills and the boundaries of what they can do.

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Very, very important. And it's one of those things that will last their entire life. You definitely want to be Role-playing to help them learn these social skills.

Now, the second thing that makes Role-playing important for children, specifically with ADHD, is it provides them with the vocabulary that they should use. Children with ADHD, and children in general, usually just have one framework of communication and they use that type of communication with everybody. But as your child gets older, they're going to start to realize the dynamics in relationships and the social structures that are around them that change how they can communicate with certain people. Let me give you an example. A child may communicate one way with his friend who lives down the street. However, once he goes to school, he realizes there's a structure in school and I need to speak a certain way with the teachers. And I won't speak the same way with the teachers as I do with my classmate or with my parents, or whoever it may be, with my sibling. They start to learn these things fairly quickly.

When you Role-play with a child how to engage and interact with different types of people, you're actually giving them the vocabulary to do so. You're teaching them, "What can I say in this situation? What is appropriate to say to this person versus what's appropriate to say with this other person?"

Let me give you an example. So back to my example of being interviewed and practicing interview skills. When you go in for a job interview, you put on your very best that you possibly can. And so I would go into this center to practice Role-playing and I had a certain vocabulary that I would use. It's not the same vocabulary that I would use with my friends as we're hanging out in the dorm room. And why is that? Because the social structure and the social interaction didn't merit me communicating that way. It was not right. It wasn't appropriate.

Role-playing the whole situation taught me, "Okay, in these instances, when I'm being interviewed for a job, it's important for me to use the appropriate vocabulary." And when using the appropriate vocabulary during the Role-play, I knew how to communicate, what to say when they ask certain questions.

One of my favorite questions during that whole process was, "Well, where do you see yourself in five years from now?" So the vocabulary, if I was speaking to my friends, I would be like, "Well, I hope we are just hanging out together still, and you live up the street and we can go to the beach and hang out and just have a good time." Okay. That's a great response for a friend group, but for a business group, where do you see yourself, right? In that social structure they're looking at, where do you see yourself in work? In business?

And the vocabulary required to do that? "Well, I see myself moving up the ranks and contributing and creating and providing value to the company." Those are the vocabulary words that I was taught during this interaction. And the feedback that I got back from the person I was interviewing with was, "Okay, these terminologies are good to use." And it gave me the vocabulary and the confidence that I needed in order to interview for jobs.

So, again, the first thing was, Role-play teaches sociability or how to engage in social interactions. The second, the most important thing for Role-play is, it provides children with the vocabulary. It provides you with the vocabulary. And then the last thing, the third thing is, it teaches your child empathy. When I was interviewing at the counseling center for job interviews, what I learned during that whole process is the role of empathy and how important it was to put myself in the place of the person who's doing the hiring as well as my own place.

So I had to think, "Okay, they're asking me these questions. What do they want from me specifically? What do they desire?" It required me to take myself out of my own mind and actually put it out there and think in the viewpoint of somebody else. Which creates this idea of empathy. How can I empathize with what it is they want and how can I provide what they want? Empathy is a very powerful, powerful thing. Specifically with children with ADHD, and with any children, because we want children to develop a sense of empathy for their neighbors, for their friends, for other citizens, for people throughout the world. We want them to be able to navigate this world socially appropriately using correct vocabulary and with empathy towards the suffering or the struggles of other people. Those are the three important reasons why Role-play is so essential in your interaction and engagement in teaching your children.

Children who are younger are going to love to Role-play. They're going to love it. They love it because playing and acting like an adult, or they play like, "I'm the teacher. I'm the fireman," or, "I'm the cop or the robber," or whatever that children do. That gives them a sense of, "Hey, okay, I'm trying to establish the social structure." And there's a certain vocabulary that comes with it and they develop empathy. Children are looking and they're feeding off of that. As they get older and they start to become more mature and they have more structure in their identity, it becomes a little harder for them to Role-play.

And yet it's almost as important for them to do it when they're older. However, if you can start when they're younger, start when they're younger and continue on as they get older, and you want to develop Role-plays that are appropriate for their age. They don't have to be super long when they get older. They can just be enough to teach them those main focuses of how do you socially engage with this person or in this situation? What's the vocabulary that's appropriate to use? And then teaching empathy is, "Okay, you're interacting with another person. What are the emotions and the feelings of the other person, and why is that important? And how can you engage with them in a positive way?"

So you're going to adjust the Role-play as your child is young and older, but younger children tend to gravitate towards Role-play very quickly and very easily. So, if you have a young child, start Role-playing right now. Role-play any situation that you feel you can correct a child's behavior or that need correction, Role-play it. Or if there's something that you want to teach them, Role-play it. This is the fastest way for them to adapt and get it.

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Lecturing does not work. Do not lecture. Don't just tell them what to do. You need to show them what to do. You need to demonstrate to them what to do, and then you need to have them do it so they can feel what it's like to do it. We're trying to integrate all the senses in this experience of Role-play so they can get a sense of it like really sense in their body this whole experience.

Now I told you at the beginning we're going to talk about Doug and his son, Dylan, and why Role-play was super important. Dylan is 16-years-old. He's a wonderful kid and he's extremely shy. He's had a lot of struggles with friends and maintaining friendships, and likes to keep to himself. And yet he's interested in dating. In talking with Doug about things that they can do to inspire his confidence and to help him feel better about himself. We started to explore different things that would be beneficial, like all the skills that you'll find on Smarter Parenting. And there are quite a few skills that we could have directed. However, during our conversation, the skill that I felt would be most beneficial was Role-playing.

Role-playing, I thought, would be the one skill that would help him gain the confidence that he needed in order to ask somebody out that he wanted to ask out. As everything is shut down, because of the virus, that's currently affecting the world, he did want to still engage in social interaction with his peers. And there's one specific girl that he really liked and he wanted to talk to her more and engage with her in a more social way. And so, talking to Doug, we just went to the skill of Role-playing. I taught him those three things that are important for teaching Role-play. Teaching him how to socially engage and interact. Providing him with the vocabulary. And then teaching him empathy on how to respond and keep the communication going.

This is powerful stuff that even married couples struggle with. If they can't grasp these three concepts, you're going to find a lot of fighting in relationships. So with Doug, we started listing opportunities and social interactions that his son could have that are safe with this young lady that he's interested in. And then we started to work through the vocabulary. What are some appropriate ways to talk about certain topics? What are the things he could bring up? What are the questions he could ask during his communication? Because he's extremely shy. Dylan was extremely shy. Wasn't sure exactly what questions or how to carry on a conversation with this young lady, because he just froze up. I mean, he just didn't feel comfortable.

And so, we came up with a list of things that he could do to engage the conversation and keep it going while always checking in on the social aspect. Teaching him sociability and in this social structure. How to we engage and interact. And then we went to the questions and looked at, how do these develop empathy on his part for what she is communicating. What she's feeling and what she wants in the communication? So, in what way would these questions help him get to know her better and understand her better and gain more empathy towards her?

Now, we came up with a huge list, and Doug took this to Dylan and talked to him about it, and Dylan was not comfortable with some of the vocabulary. He was not comfortable with some of the questions or the phrases that his dad had pointed out. And so they communicated on something that would be more appropriate for him. And that's absolutely fine. Your kids will

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correct you if they are uncomfortable with something. He made some corrections to the vocabulary part of it, but we went through the social part of it. How do you engage, interact, and how do you be social in this non-social, social-distancing environment that we live in now? What's the vocabulary? What are the words you're going to use? How are you going to communicate with her? What are you going to ask? What are you going to say? In what way are you going to say them?

And then, empathy. Listening. Understanding. And then responding. And Role-playing that altogether. So we got on a Zoom call and I started to Role-play this with Doug first just so we can get an idea of what it's like. And then Dylan didn't really buy into it. And I love it when teenagers do that. It actually puts me on fire. It sets me on fire because I'm like, "I know you don't get it because you're not doing it. But once you start to do that, you're going to start to feel it in your whole body everything that we're talking about. And it's going to start to click. It's going to start to make sense."

[So, I practiced with Doug a little bit and then had Doug practice with me so Dylan could see it.](#)

So that's the seeing part. And then I had Doug practice it with Dylan with this already preset vocabulary questions to ask and measuring empathy. So they started to Role-play while I was watching, and what I started to notice during that process because Dylan was playing Doug, the dad, during this process, and dad was playing Dylan. Dad was behaving the way Dylan would normally behave when he's shy. And I could tell Dylan was uncomfortable with it initially. And as the Role-play continued, you started to see this flow and this connection in the communication between the two where it started to become a lot more smooth. And they started to get into this rhythm and this pattern of communication. And after they had finished a few examples, they switched it and Doug was acting like the girl and Dylan was acting like himself, and they started this whole Role-play together, conversation with each other.

Watching them do that, over time, what I started to see, and this goes back to [Observe and Describe](#), is Dylan's posture changed. So he started to appear to have more confidence in what was happening as he continually practiced this. And he started to follow what was already in the plan, so scripted. It gave him the confidence to engage and communicate and ask questions, and then to follow-up with follow-up questions and develop more empathy in trying to understand and really connect with another person.

So I gave them the assignment to continually practice this until Dylan felt comfortable enough to do it on his own. And they practiced it a couple of nights, and I received an email from Doug saying, "I think he's good. I think he's going to try it." [And the shocking thing for Doug was, he never thought his son would have the confidence to be able to step outside of his shyness to do something like this.](#)

But I'm telling you, Role-playing something with your child has that power to give them the confidence to do what needs to be done when they need to do it and when they're confronted with it. It's such a great skill to use. It's so, so powerful.

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So now I'm on pins and needles waiting to hear how things are going to go with Dylan and communicating with somebody that he likes. So, woo-hoo. And as soon as I hear, and if Doug and Dylan are okay with it, I'll share their experience and see how things go. And in this whole communication process of teaching Dylan sociability. How to engage socially with other people. Giving him the vocabulary and empathy. As we have taught him, as a 16-year-old, just think how powerful that is in the future. When he needs to apply for a job, he knows he can do something in order to prepare for that.

When he needs to give a speech somewhere, he knows he can use the skill of Role-playing to prepare for that. I mean, Role-play is one of those skills, even though adults don't think we do that, we do it. We do it quite a bit. We replay conversations in our minds on what we would have said or what we should have said, what we will say or what we can say. We do it all the time. And yet we don't think of it as Role-play, but it is. It really is Role-play.

So, super, super excited. It's a super cute story for Dylan. I think because we're getting him on a path towards better communication, not only with this young lady but in future relationships that he may have with anybody including his children in the future, should he choose to have children.

So, anyways, Role-playing. You want to definitely focus in on Role-play. And remember the three reasons why it's important to Role-play for your child, specifically if they struggle with ADHD. It teaches them sociability. It teaches them the vocabulary that they should use. And it teaches them empathy. Powerful, powerful stuff.

I want to just give a shout out to you guys and give thanks to you for listening. Thanks for joining me. These are things that you can do and implement right now. You can find this lesson on the Smarter Parenting website under lessons. And it's a Role-playing video. You can just watch it. It will walk you through step-by-step what you can do and what you need to do.

If you want to call me up, do it. If you are on the fence of whether or not you need individual help and you're struggling with a problem, just do it. Just call me. Let's talk. Let's communicate. Let me give you a focused direction to guide you along your path to reach the goals that you want to reach with your child.

That's what I'm here for. I'm here to coach you through that. You can do that on the Smarter Parenting website. So sign up for coaching. The first session is free and we'll be able to communicate about what it is that's happening in your family, and then guide you along that path.

So this is the first part, part one of Role-playing. Next week we're going to talk about Role-playing again and Role-playing part two, because we're going to delve a little bit deeper into the power of Role-playing. And hopefully, we'll have some feedback on Dylan and how

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things are going, but I have complete confidence that he's going to be okay and that he's going to do well.

So, that's it for me, and I'll see you again next time.

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