

Ep #101 Teaching your kid to function without you

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This is episode 101.

We welcome you to The ADHD Smarter Parenting Podcast. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach, Siopé Kinikini.

Hello, my friends. How are you? I hope you're doing well. I am super excited today because we are going to be talking about something that a lot of you have questions about. In fact, last week, I was in a coaching session with Jessica. She's a mom, and we were talking about [Role-playing](#). And about memory. And about learning.

So, this is a question that a lot of people have also asked. Why do we always emphasize Role-playing as a way for a child to learn something? We're going to be talking about that, but it's more than just talking about it. What I want you to be able to do at the end of this podcast is understand the science behind it. I want you to understand why it's important to Role-play, and I want you to know how it's affected me and my child in our lives.

There are two instances that come to mind immediately in where Role-playing has been a lifesaver and has actually helped me as a father, feel comfortable with sending my daughter out into this crazy world.

Those are the things that I want to cover during this podcast. And it's important for you to understand that we are going to be talking about the science behind learning and memory. We're going to talk about why this is important to you, and we're going to talk about how this has really changed the game for me in my own life as an example for you in the way it can change you and your child.

Let's start talking about it.

[Now, Role-playing itself is a way of learning.](#) I want us to focus in on that area, that it is specific in helping a child grasp a concept and integrate it into their very being. When we Role-play something with a child, what we're doing is we're teaching them. We're helping them grasp something and make it part of who they are, so whether it be Following Instructions, whether it be responding appropriately to you. Whether it be doing what you desire of your child to do or react the way you want your child to react in certain situations, those are all learned behaviors.

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And you can teach your child the ways that they can learn and react to situations through the skill of Role-playing.

So, let's talk about learning and memory first of all. Because, again, this affects their memory. Are they able to retain something we teach them in the long run? Are they able to recall that information when it's most needed?

This is particularly important for children who throw tantrums. If you're able to them an alternative behavior, rather than the tantrum, are they able to recall that alternative, so they don't always explode and get out of control? Right?

Now, let's talk about the science behind it. I'm going to take you back to the 1800s. Yes. [We're going to talk about a German psychologist. His name is Hermann Ebbinghaus.](#) Now, I'm going to call him Hermann, because I think Hermann and I are friends at this point. I've studied a lot about his work and what he has done. But, he was a German psychologist, and he pioneered the study of memory. He focused in on the forgetting curve. He also brought out the learning curve. He's the first to describe the learning curve. But we're going to talk about the forgetting curve first.

The forgetting curve is this idea that we learned something, and then, at what rate do we start to forget that information? He initially started by memorizing letters, just random letters. Then he would come back an hour later and see how much information he could retain. Then he'd come back two hours later and test himself. He would do this throughout a week. So he'd come back a day later. Three days later. Four days later. Five, six, seven. During his study, because he continually did this, he started to realize that there was a pattern.

Now, this shocked me to my core. Because for me, I always thought that you learned something, and you can learn it once, and you'd be able to retain that information fairly easy. Well, Ebbinghaus found that even after 20 minutes of learning something, sometimes you can only retain 60% of what you learned. I want you to think about that. So, you learn something, 20 minutes later, you'll remember only 60% of that. He would later go on, and he found that an hour later you would remember roughly around 50%. A day later, it would drop to around 30%. Now, six days later, you could maybe recall around 20% of the information.

I want you to really, really absorb that. This slope of forgetting is really extreme at the beginning, and then it starts to level off near the end of the week. In his study, he found that this was fairly consistent. Other studies have been done replicating this study to see if it's true. And those studies have also found the same to be true. That we tend to retain information at 100% when we learn it, but it quickly declines immediately after we learn something. Yeah, isn't that fascinating?

So, I want you to think about your child. Let's say that you're teaching your child how to Follow Instructions. You're teaching him the steps. 20 minutes later after you finish, you can expect

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your child to only retain maybe 60% of that information. Now, if you don't do anything and just see how much he can retain, by the end of the week, it's less than 20%. That's crazy.

So, it makes me almost laugh when I hear parents say, "Well, I told you a million times." The reality is, is that, "Yeah, you may have told your child a million times, but you're not telling them consistently enough for them to retain the information. So you telling them again, and again, and again is like telling them for the first time each time." Weird, right? Completely weird.

Anyway, so Hermann Ebbinghaus also discovered the learning curve. In what ways could we retain the information that we learn? What he found is that we could find ways to retain that information. And he came up with the idea of spaced learning. Spaced learning.

The idea is that you would learn something on day one. And as it would droop, the second day, you would go back and you would repeat it. Then, you would start to forget, and then you would repeat it again on day three, day four. The more repetitions that you did of relearning it the next day or later in the day, the more likely someone would be able to retain that information. And by retaining the information, that dip, that slope of forgetting what they initially learned, changes completely. So by the end of the week, they're able to retain nearly all of the information if it's repeated consistently enough.

Now, that is what we do here at Smarter Parenting, right? When I tell you to Role-play something, Role-playing is this idea that you're going to practice it and integrate it into your child's being. Into the way that they respond, and they react to things, in the way that they behave. And I always recommend that you Role-play it the day of, and later that day, if possible, and then you're going to do it again, and again, and again. Then, inside each of those Role-playing exercises, you're going to do it at least three times where the child can do that behavior on their own without prompts from you.

Can you see how that helps a child retain all that information? It really does help your child retain the information. So in the long run, when something pops up and they need to behave a certain way or you expect them to behave a certain way, they can recall it more easily than if you tell them once, and then you leave it alone, and then you tell them again six days later and they completely forgot. And then you're saying, again, "I keep telling you. This is the millionth time I've told you to do this," right?

Save yourself some aggravation by using space learning, which is you're going to repeat the information over, and over, and over again, until it becomes integrated into your child's even physical being. They just know that this is a response that they need to have. So, fascinating, fascinating.

That's the science behind it, right? Ebbinghaus established that in the 1850s, and it's been used over and over. And in Role-playing, the way we're learning is more than just using words. We are actually acting things out. We're having you take on the role of your child and showing your

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child how to behave so your child can see it and then having your child practice it. So, the learning is multi-dimensional.

One thing I do want to say with Ebbinghaus is that he also recognized that there were certain things that we learn sometimes that stick in our brain. And they could be from traumatic events. They could be things that are highly different than the norm. Those tend to be learning experiences that we never forget.

So, there are things out there that we will always remember, and it's a one-time event. He understands that, and he does go into that. However, he says you can also train your brain in order to behave in different ways in response to that if, say, it's a traumatic event.

So, you can actually work around it, which is the whole idea behind therapy. Therapy helps you work around some of those traumatic events, even though those are strong and very defined memories and learned things that a child has gone through or an adult has gone through. In Role-playing, the idea is that we are learning to help your child retain the information in the long term and help them in the end so they can just behave the way that they need to behave. They can do what they need to do in any circumstance that may come up and happen in their life.

Now, why is this important to you? This is important to you because if you understand this concept, you will know that Role-playing is where this is all at. This is where the learning becomes more than conceptual. It becomes real. This is where everything you're discussing becomes real life. We're taking it in the discussion arena, and we're actually making it happen around us.

[Now, I need to go over the steps of Role-playing just so you know what the steps of Role-playing are if you don't remember.](#) And chances are you don't remember, according to Ebbinghaus, because we haven't reviewed this enough.

The steps to Role-playing are, step one, you want to practice at a neutral, calm time. Number two, you want to show your child how to do it correctly. Number three, you want to have your child practice it at least three times where they can do it on their own without any prompts. Step number four is to be flexible. [Step number five is to make it playful.](#) Step number six is to keep practicing.

Following these steps where you show your child how to do it correctly. Where you have your child practice at least three times. Where you're flexible and you make it playful, and you keep practicing. These are all reinforcers, things that reinforce what it is you're trying to teach your child. It helps your child absorb all this information, and so it becomes more real to them.

Now, I have said this over, and over and over again, but I need to repeat it. As we Role-play, we bring these lessons, these concepts into the real world. And when we bring it in the real world, and we involve every possible sense. Sight. Hearing. Feeling. When we bring in all the senses

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that we possibly can during a Role-play, it makes a huge difference in the way that a child learns something. So when you're Role-playing something, the retention is always going to be higher than if you just sit and talk about it.

Now, I had mentioned that I talked to Jessica earlier in this podcast. Jessica had some concerns because she didn't really like the idea of Role-playing. She felt it was weird and felt kind of hokey about doing it. In talking to Jessica, and Jessica, I know you're listening. The idea behind Role-play is really to help your child absorb the information. And your feelings about it may vary. But if you want your child to retain what you're trying to teach them, Role-playing is the best way to have them retain that information. It is the absolute best way for them to understand and to do that behavior.

So, it's important for you to Role-play. It is absolutely essential for you to Role-play something if you want the information to stick. If you just want to lecture every week about things you told your child to do, you can do that. That's absolutely fine. You can repeat yourself. You can be on auto play. You can be a record player. You can just repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat. But after a while, that does get tiresome for a lot of parents, and they don't want to do that. They want to move on to other things. They want to be sure that their child gets the information so they can move on, grow, and become more independent.

So if you want your child to progress, to have a growth mindset, to be able to move forward in their lives and function well, you have to Role-play. You have to Role-play. And this is about your child. This is about helping your child integrate these things into their lives, whether it's Following Instructions. Whether it's preparing them for something that may come up, which is an example I'm going to share with you with my own child, and why Role-playing is so important.

So, we've talked about the science behind it. We talked about Hermann Ebbinghaus. We talked about why it's important. Because really, this is the best way, and it's the fastest way for your child to learn a behavior. And remember, we want to stagger the learning, so we don't want to just Role-play the one time.

The more you Role-play, the more it's going to stick. It's like adding adhesive to the things that you're teaching. The more you Role-play, the more adhesive it is. You stick it on your child, and there you go. It's going to be there. It'll be there. So, you want to be able to practice it day in, day out until it becomes really an integral part of who they are and how they respond.

Now, let me share with you how this has been effective for me as a father with my own child. When my daughter was young and getting ready to go into second grade, she had some fears about communicating her own thoughts to the teacher. She would raise her hand if she needed to, but she didn't like to. She was very shy at the time. She wasn't shy with her peers. But with her teacher, for some reason, she was very shy. And if she needed to use the restroom, for example, or she needed to drink, she wouldn't raise her hand and ask.

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We talked to her about that because we're like, "[Hey, well, if you need something, you need to be able to advocate for yourself.](#)" Now, I didn't use the word advocate because she was in the second grade, but the whole concept was this idea of this is what you need to do. And since we're not going to be there, the best way for you to learn what to do is we're going to Role-play it with you.

So, we Role-played it. We absolutely Role-played it in our home. We had her sit at a desk. We had her pretend that she was in class, and I was standing up. I still remember it. I was in the kitchen, and she was just at the table. I said, "Okay, what you're going to do..." And I showed her first. "You're going to raise your hand and say, 'I have a question,' or just raise your hand and wait to be called on." So, I showed her how to do it. Then, I had her do it.

I was standing at the front of the kitchen, and she shyly raised her hand. I was like, "Okay, okay. That's good." But, what I wanted her to do, what I felt she needed to do, is raise your hand quickly, not to be shy about it, but to just be able to advocate for herself. Raise it up if she had a question. Just raise it up.

So, we practiced it again. This time I showed her, "What you're going to do is just raise your hand." Well, this started the questions. My daughter then asked, "Well, what if she doesn't answer me? Or what if she just doesn't see my hand? Or what if she doesn't..." And I'm like, "Okay. Well, let's practice it."

So, we Role-played this scenario multiple times. We Role-played it the night before school. We Role-played it the morning before she went to school. We Role-played it when she came back. She didn't do it the first day, which is fine, but we continually practiced it until she felt comfortable raising her hand. We practiced it in different parts of our homes so she was used to it. And in fact, I went to the school, and I saw where she sat. I'm like, "Okay, I want you to imagine that that's where you're sitting in your desk. Raise your hand." She would practice that in her mind, and so it was this consistent thing that we practiced.

And I remember she's in second grade, so I'm not exactly sure what the things were in her mind as far as worries. However, they were real to her. And because they were real to her, they were real to me. So, we just worked through how she should react and how she should behave if she needed to use the bathroom to raise her hand and ask to go to the restroom.

So, time goes on. Time goes on. And because we continually practice, she felt more and more confident. I could tell throughout the course of the week just how much confidence she was able to gain from that, because she knew exactly what to do. And she knew how to respond, say, if the teacher didn't see originally. So, we came up with a plan that she would wave her hand up in the air if the teacher didn't see in order for the teacher to call on her. We addressed all our concerns through the Role-play. Practiced it.

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Well, the next week came. She came home, and she was super happy. She's like, "Hey, guess what? I did it. I raised my hand and I asked to go to the restroom. The teacher said I could and that was great." She was happy. She was comfortable. She felt more at peace. She felt like she could be heard by her teacher, which was important to me. And for me as a father, that she could advocate for herself. That if she's in a situation where I'm not there, she at least has the tools to advocate for herself in the second grade.

So, fast forward. Fast forward now that she's older. She actually started dating, which is, most fathers are not too happy about that, and I'm one of those fathers initially. But, what we did was we Role-played situations where she would be at a party and what she needed to do and how she needed to behave. I have gone through pretty much every scenario I could possibly think of with my daughter through Role-play for her safety. Because I want her to be safe, and I want her to have the experience she needs, but I can't be there 100% of the time. So, that's where the Role-play came in.

There was one Role-play in particular that sparked a lot of conversation. And that is if you're at a party, how do I engage and interact with people I may not know? I said, "Well, there's certain rules. And here are the rules. If a guy offers you a drink or a drink of water or soda," because she's underage, obviously, "I would highly recommend that you say no, unless you can open a can yourself or you bring your own drink." So, we had a conversation. We talked about that and about safety, and then Role-played how she would react and how she would respond. How she would respond to somebody who kept pestering her and bothering her, giving her options during a Role-play.

I mean, can you see how ingrained Role-playing is in the way that we interact with our child in order to prepare her for the things that are to come? And that's what Role-playing does, is it helps your child know exactly what to do and how to behave in situations that may arise.

Now, Role-playing and the skills that we use on Smarter Parenting are the exact same thing. And Following Instructions, the whole idea behind the Role-play is to teach your child how to respond when something occurs, right? When you give an instruction, you have an expectation for them to behave a certain way. So, you're practicing that so it becomes just a part of who they are. It's very natural, and they feel like, "Hey, I can do this."

Now, in the steps to effective Role-play, it's important to be flexible. That's step number four. And to make it playful. For my daughter and the practicing how she should engage with peers, and if you were to go to a party if things were to happen, we were completely flexible in that. In fact, we use different parts of our house. We do it in the kitchen and practice in the living room. We practiced in the car, if something was happening and some comments were said, how she would respond. We made it playful where I joke around with her and say, "Really? You don't want to have a drink. I'm giving you a drink." She would politely decline. It was bringing in all of these components into the Role-play. Being flexible, making it playful, and then keep practicing.

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Now, I will tell you this. We still practice. This is something that we did a while ago, but there are still times today before a gathering of friends, we will still practice. "Okay. What are you going to do if this occurs?" We have her practice it so she knows and she can keep it there. And again, we're going back to Ebbinghaus. We're consistently going to practice something over, and over, and over again until it becomes second nature to her. And that's what Role-playing is all about.

So, we practice it at a calm and neutral time. My daughter was able to come back and report that when she is at a group gathering, she knows exactly how to behave and what to do if something were to happen. And in fact, something did happen at one of their gatherings where comments were made that were unkind and inappropriate. Because we had practiced it at a neutral time, when the situation arose she knew exactly what to do. She knew exactly what to do. She was happy to report, "That's exactly what I did. I said, 'Hey, that's inappropriate. I don't like it. I don't appreciate it. Do not talk to me that way.'" And she was able to advocate for herself.

So as a father, you can see how happy I am and how much peace it gives me to be able to Role-play these things with my child. Now, for you as a parent, Role-playing may come off as weird and as odd as something that maybe I'm not sure just how powerful this is going to be. I am telling you, I am telling you right now, the power in bringing the concepts that you're trying to explain to your child into the real world is done through Role-playing. You have to Role-play in order for them to get it because they can't get it through your words. Your words are your words. The Role-play makes it real.

So, I've covered a lot. We've talked about the science behind Role-playing. We've talked about why it's important for you. We've also talked about two ways that this has been beneficial for me in my own personal life and with my own daughter. Sharing some personal things with you, sometimes I wonder about how much to share because we have gone through quite a bit as a family. And yet, at the same time, I want to be able to help you understand just how passionate I am about this topic and about Smarter Parenting and what we do. [If you're looking to make the changes stick, make them last, you've got to be consistent. You've got to Role-play the skills.](#)

So, a shout-out to Jessica. Thank you for the great conversation we had during our coaching session. And I'm telling you, Jessica, if you want the information to stick, you want your child to be in a growth mindset and be able to move forward and so you can move forward to other things that you want to enjoy and develop as your child grows, you need to Role-play these things. Role-play them. Role-playing will give your child the confidence they need to navigate this world. This crazy, crazy world we live in. And believe me, there is great peace as a father knowing that this is possible.

So, that's it for me this week. Next week, we'll be covering another skill. Really dissecting it and getting in there. Helping you understand the importance of using the skill and giving you some examples of how you can implement them. Again, during these podcasts, I hope that you can learn enough to be able to apply it in what you're doing in your own daily life, because that will

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be very, very, very important for your progress and for your child's progress. All right. So, take care until next week. I will talk to you later. All right. Bye.

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