



How Do We Cope With Anxiety and Depression in Our Kids?

James 1:19: (NASB) *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.*

Special Guest: Taryn Zarnetske, LCSW



Life can be a real challenge when we are pressed by personal anxiety or depression. These things cannot only burden our days, they can constrict and suffocate our very moments. As difficult as it is for adults living under these circumstances, think about the overwhelming confusion that anxiety and depression would bring to a child. They begin to see the world through eyes of fear and uncertainty. They lose interest in things that used to excite them, and they have no idea why this is happening or what to do about it. They withdraw, they lash out and they feel alone. Anxiety and depression in children are real. It is far more common than we

would like to think, and for parents it is a fearful and confusing issue of life. How do we deal with it? How do we try and understand it? How do we become the best parents possible in order to help our children to cope?

recap
recap

This is the third and final program in our Anxiety and Depression series. In Part I, Episode 1124, we interviewed special guests Jane and Joan Landino, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses in the fields of psychiatry and addiction. They talked about the difference between anxiety and depression, treatment and stigma.

In Part II, Episode 1125, we met with a young singer/songwriter named Kylie Odetta who went through a time of crippling anxiety. We talked with her in detail about how she was able to recover from her experience, as well as her techniques to shorten future relapses.



When we talk about kids on today's program, does this apply to little kids, teenagers, adult children? And is it only for parents - what about aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends?

We are referring to children of all ages and everyone connected to them. We all need to work together to help.

Joining us today in a pre-recorded interview is Taryn Zarnetske, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.



RICK: What about our children and their potential battles with anxiety and depression and the like? How do you manage that? To answer that we needed another expert, so I am here with Taryn Zarnetske. Hello, Taryn. How are you?

TARYN: Hi. I'm good. How are you?

RICK: Doing well. Thank you so much for joining us.



TARYN: Thanks for having me.

RICK: Before we get started, Taryn, how about giving us a little bit of your background. What do you do? What sort of certification do you have, and how did you get into this particular field working with children?

TARYN: I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and I work at Yale New Haven Hospital in our Children's Day Hospital, which is intensive outpatient therapy, primarily group therapy for children age six to twelve. I've been working with kids for quite some time now. It's evolved into one of the specialties that I have. I really appreciate working with kids because I feel they have much more insight than we give them credit for, and I always learn from kids while I'm doing this work with them, so it's really kept me engaged in working with this population.



To get a professional perspective, we will be asking Taryn pointed questions about dealing with children who have anxiety and depression.

For a biblical perspective we will suggest five scripturally-based parenting principles as guidelines for powerful parenting. These principles first appeared in **Episode 1010: How Parental is Our Parenting?** We will take the general parenting principles from that episode and reapply them in the context of parenting children who are faced with the highly challenging circumstances of anxiety and depression.



RICK: First of all, with children, what are the most common kinds of issues that you see with kids - anxiety, depression, anger? What do you see more often, and can you just give us an overview of those things?

TARYN: Sure. Well, all of those...we see anxiety, depression, anger, trauma. Oftentimes, kids come to our program with what appears to just be a change in their behavior, whether they're acting out more often, or they're isolating a little bit more, and it's unclear really what's happening for them. We look at what the behavioral changes are, and we work with those pieces.

RICK: When kids come to you, it must have been because of something that was very upsetting in terms of a family environment, I would think, just very out of the ordinary.

TARYN: Sometimes, yes, absolutely. Sometimes there's family trauma, but sometimes kids have a shift in their mood and their *affect, and there's not always a clear trigger.

RICK: So, it can be something traumatic or something that looks like it perhaps has grown over time, and then it sort of clicks in.

TARYN: Yes, absolutely.



Taryn mentioned kids can have a shift in their mood and their AFFECT which is a professional term.

***Psychiatry Clerkship:**

affect: noun

An immediately expressed and observed emotion. A feeling state becomes an affect when it is observable... An affect is to be distinguished from mood, which refers to a pervasive and sustained emotion.

As we go through the podcast, we will be looking at specific parenting principles.



PARENTAL CARING: A caring parent is needed to raise a challenged child. Parental caring is acting according to the best long-term interests of our children. Parental caring is NOT a series of emotional displays, it is a series of courageous actions!

We need parents who are ready to work with both heart AND head.

The need for courage cannot be overstated. When our kids are struggling with such overwhelming challenges we need to dig deep, beyond our own fear and insecurity to find ways to help them. It requires effort, discipline and heart from a parent.

This can be difficult, and we should look at it as a process and not a quick fix. We are suggesting that it is an effort, and if needed, we need to get help to make that effort.

Let's return to Taryn as she explains how to help children understand what is happening to them.



RICK: How do you bring a child around to understanding what they're dealing with? It must be awfully difficult for a child to be out of their normal way of being. How do you handle that in terms of helping them understand it?

TARYN: Well, I think it's really important for them to understand that we're listening to them. Kids often come to us having an experience that nobody really gets them, nobody understands what they're going through, or they're not asking questions about how they're doing or what's wrong with them. So, a lot of the work at the beginning of our treatment has to do with just letting them talk, letting them talk it out, whatever it may be, without any judgments. That's the thing that they fear the most - is they're going to be judged for the things that they're experiencing, whether it's their internal thought process or the behaviors that they're presenting with. We really try to give them that space to know that they're not in it alone, that we want to hear from them, we want to understand what's going on for them and that we're going to work through that with them. We're on their team.

RICK: Listening without judgment, that seems to be an overriding theme, at least in the very beginning, to give them confidence. I assume that's what it is.



It's giving them confidence that, hey, I can talk to you because you are not coming back to me with some kind of proclamation.

TARYN: Absolutely. You know, we want to be careful not to make too many assumptions about what's going on for them. Of course, they'll let us know if our assumptions are wrong, but we really want to get them to tell us what's happening for them, and in the most natural way that they can. And sometimes that takes a little bit of time because they're still learning how to communicate in general, let alone something that's so complex like talking about our emotions or depression. How do you talk about that? Adults struggle with it. So, for sure a child will as well.

RICK: Getting them to understand is essentially giving them the safety of listening with NONJUDGMENTAL EARS.

Listening with nonjudgmental ears to help a child express themselves takes an immense amount of effort.



Here is a parenting principle of caring-in-action. Paul's parental caring is shown by sending a trusted co-laborer to help his spiritual children:

1 Corinthians 4:14-17: (NRSV) ¹⁴I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel (Paul was a father figure to the Corinthians). ¹⁶I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

Parents, if you do not know what to do, find and send those who are trustworthy to help. It could be an aunt, uncle, grandparent, sibling or a professional. Apostle Paul sent someone he trusted to build up the brethren. Do not be afraid to get others involved to help build up your children.



Parenting without dealing with mental illness is hard enough. This all seems really overwhelming for a parent and all family members. What about just leaving it alone and hoping your child grows out of this phase?

No, dealing with anxiety and depression is not a phase. Without treatment it can grow. Ignoring it will not help the child find peace within themselves.



Parenting Strength: Care with both your heart and your mind.

This means less reacting and more responding! Not there yet? Start now – small steps!

Let's look at caring through the eyes of a lifetime. My caring should positively contribute to my kids' lifetime.



Most every parent cares about their kids.
How does that caring become a vital lifetime contribution?

We all know that parenting does not come with a handbook. We also know that whenever we want to improve our abilities in some area of life, we need to be willing to do the work. Managing kids with anxiety or depression challenges us to higher levels of competence. This is NOT easy.



PARENTAL COMPETENCE: A competent parent is needed to raise a challenged child. To have parental competence is to seek our highest maturity and our strongest grounded character. Competence adopts the lessons of the experiences of life for the purpose of growth and long-term victory.

We said, SEEK our highest maturity and strongest character. We STRIVE for competence. This is not an arrival statement; it is a journey statement. True competence cannot be learned from a book - it must be learned through life. Competence in managing a child with anxiety or depression is RARELY instinctual. Find help!



Parents may think, “How can we fit in professional counseling when we have so much going on like work, school, sports, church, PTA, yoga, the gym and summer camp? We are maxed out.”

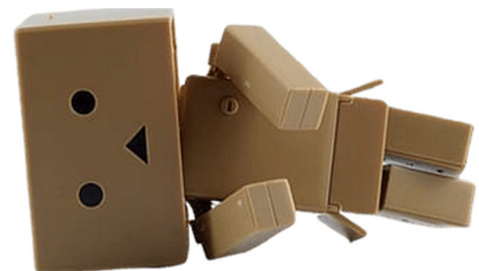
How can we NOT fit it in? Helping our children needs to be a family priority. We glorify God by taking care of the family unit.



RICK: You start to build that understanding. How do you get a child to get on the path to accepting that maybe the path they're on is different than they thought it would ever be, or something that's completely out of the ordinary, they've never seen this or heard of this before? How do you get them to accept what's happening?

TARYN: Well, I think acceptance is a process. It's understanding that there may be some bumps in the road. Those bumps don't have to define them. I think that's what they fear the most. Sometimes even if it's a minor setback in their treatments or in life that triggers some emotional reaction, they worry that it's going to be the thing that defines them. But one of the things we try to really work on with them is to understand that that doesn't have to be a defining moment for them. It's something we can learn from, and we work through together.

RICK: So, not a defining moment but a learning moment. And taking it out of the, okay, this is a reason to put me in this particular box to - no, this is a reason to help you flourish in life.





TARYN: Yes, absolutely, and you don't have to be placed in a box. You can experience different things, but you don't have to have a narrative that you're the "bad kid" that's got the big behaviors that's acting out, or you don't have to be the kid that is depressed or anxious. We can work through those things. And certainly, we understand them, we will learn how to understand them together, and we'll figure out the types of things that help you get through those feelings. But they don't have to define you.

RICK: That's a really basic and important thing. When we talk about children, it's echoing in my mind that you're really talking to adults as well. Helping to understand that things that happen to you don't have to be the defining parts of you. They can just be, like you said, perhaps bumps along the road or places to learn things and grow from and grow through.

There is power in having a professional like Taryn help parents.

The Apostle Paul focused on teaching with parental competence. He was qualified to help and feed those who needed higher levels of competence:

Hebrews 5:12-14: (NRSV) ¹²*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness.*

We may not be equipped to handle our child's issues when they become evident. This need not be an issue. What is important is what we decide to do with our present state.

¹⁴*But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.*

With our eye on growing into competence for the sake of our child, we will be also growing into competence in Christ.

Back to Taryn as she explains that part of helping our children is understanding that there are tools.



RICK: What about tools? In all of our previous conversations we've had with other individuals, there's always talk about using tools and things that are available. They're probably a lot of different ways tools are used. Explain to me... a typical kid comes in very befuddled by their own behavior, just not understanding themselves. Their parents are probably a little bit bewildered. Where do tools come in? How do you introduce them? What kind of tools are there? Let's see where we go with that.

TARYN: That's one of the things we learn from kids. Some tools work really well across the board and others have to be a little more individualized. But I think one of the things you hit on is when kids come to us, there's often a time where everybody in the family has that bewilderment of what is going on, and how do we work through this. One of the things I think we find most effective is when we empower not only the kids with certain tools to work through their



emotions and to communicate about what's going on, but we empower their parents at the same time with those same strategies.

It's really important the adults help with that because it creates a foundation of safety and a safety net for those moments when they're setbacks or there's extra challenges. If those moments come up, they can work through them together. We do a lot of recognizing what's happening in our body when these tough things occur. What happens in our body when we're feeling anxious? What happens when we're feeling sad? How does that impact our thought process? We start to understand that connection in order to start to make some changes in how we're behaving and how we're communicating.



RICK: The first thing that jumps out at me when you're talking is this idea of tools. One tool is that of recognition. When you look at that and say - and I really appreciate the way you said that - what's happening in our body. That helps to focus the recognition into something very clearly specific that a child might be able to begin to describe. Understanding what's happening and giving the parents understanding is all important. When you're dealing with a child who's got issues, what's the role of that individual child? You've talked about giving them a place where they can express themselves and start to understand and accept the things. What role are you going to ask them or teach them or guide them to play?

TARYN: Finding the way to take control over their actions. They're not at fault for having depression or anxiety or having experienced a trauma, but they can find ways to address the things that happen because of depression, anxiety or trauma. We try to empower them to just recognize - oh, that's what's happening to me. I'm acting out right now because I'm sad, but I can talk about this, and I can let the people around me know I just need a minute alone or, in fact, the opposite. I need to talk to somebody. Sometimes kids act out because they don't know what else to do. We like to try to give them the space to communicate that and to say it out loud so they can find the strategies. And if they can't find the strategies, they can get the support from the people around them to find the strategies to feel better.

RICK: They are kind of the guidance system that can help us understand what to do.

Empower the parents and children to work through the issues. Help the child recognize what is happening in their body. This helps them build trust and be able to describe what is happening to them.

We have a longtime listener named Dodie who is a retired Christian Marriage and Family Counselor. She wrote to us with an unusual tool she has used to combat the anxiousness that comes at night for parents, or really any of us.

We have all been wide awake worrying over something. This technique is based on the inability of the brain to think two thoughts at one time.



Fear and faith cannot occupy the same space. Her suggestion is to write in your own words the entire story of Noah, for example. Put in as many details as you can. Reread it until you almost have it memorized. When you go to bed, visualize it as if you were creating a movie. Describe cutting down the trees. Hauling the timber. Climbing the ladders. Walk through the ark. What does it smell like, where are the animals, where is the food supply, what does the family say? Be there like you are watching in virtual reality. There are so many details; you could work on this scenario night after night for months.



Jesus taught us to think about others. Do for others. Instead of concentrating on our worries, rewriting the Noah story is shifting our attention to God and Noah and meditating on the details we read in the Bible. This fills our subconscious with godly thoughts.



True parental competence is the **act of growing** through the journey. It is **not a destination!**

To absorb this ever-growing competence, **we need to look to those who can teach us.** Not there yet? **Start now – small steps!**

This is a huge relief. It does not matter what we do not know, it just matters what we do with our challenges.

Caring is an action. Competence is a journey.
How do these principles help us to be more capable?

Kids who have such oversized challenges in their lives instinctively desire those who are capable to lean on. This again is daunting. Who among us would just march up to such a situation and say, “Hey, no problem!” To be truly capable comes through practicing tenacity and humility.



PARENTAL CAPABILITY: A capable parent is needed to raise a challenged child. To be a capable parent is to have the capacity to absorb the challenges and failures often encountered along the road and use them as tools towards your ultimate objective.

Be willing to learn from our failures along the way - a failure is only final if we do not learn from it.

This is daunting because as parents we sometimes feel more scared than capable. Accept that our capacity to be capable grows with our efforts to meet the challenges before us.



What if you feel more scared, or even useless, than capable? How can parents keep it together when they themselves are often broken?



Find those you can talk to and trust - a family member or a friend. They may not have all the answers, but they can be supportive. Sometimes communication with a child can have a better result from someone who is not their parent.

When my kids were teenagers and I wanted them to know something, I would sometimes tell my sister, Merrily. My kids thought my sister was cool. Merrily would talk to them and a week or two later my kids would excitedly tell me what Aunt Merrily told them. Find those who can communicate with your kids.

If you are not capable, just try to *increase your capacity by one percent*. Then one percent more and one percent more...



RICK: You had mentioned that you deal with groups of children. What's the dynamic of having a group of children together to work for the benefit of all of those children when you're dealing with them in a group?

TARYN: One of the things that I love about group work is that it allows the experience of dealing with mental health to not be as isolating. When you're in a space with other people who "get it," who understand it, who have been working through it themselves, it allows you to have a connection to know that you're not alone. This tough thing that you're working through and dealing with is not just on you. You're not the only person in the world who's experiencing it. Oftentimes, that's one of the biggest struggles because they do feel so isolated. They either don't know how to talk about it with their friends, or they're fearful they'll be judged about what's going on for them. In a group space where there can be that safety of confidentiality and nonjudgment, they're offered that opportunity to see that there are other people that can understand them. And that's huge for them.

RICK: In that group environment, do you find that children can more easily reach out to even try to help the other kids?

TARYN: Oh, absolutely, we see it often. We see kids making connections on the types of triggers they experience, or in the intensity of the feelings they experience. Sometimes they help each other understand, "Wow, I'm noticing that I feel sad, also, but I feel sadness in a different way than you. But let's talk about how we can talk about that with other people." I'm not sure if in an individual setting that they might be able to get this.

RICK: The power of numbers - and I'm going to get to a question on stigma in a moment - but the power of numbers is really amazing because you get the synergy of everyone with a commonality that they're maybe not comfortable with but having to deal with, and they find a way to essentially build each other up. I imagine it's not all rose petals and ice cream though, huh?





TARYN: No, no, no. They also offer each other some very frank feedback, as well, which is really helpful because it's a bit easier to hear feedback from a peer than it is to hear feedback from an adult.



RICK: Interesting.

TARYN: Oftentimes kids come to our group, and one of the common themes amongst them is when they come to therapy, they're so used to being told what they're doing wrong and that they're making poor choices, or that they shouldn't be doing certain things because, remember, they're coming oftentimes with changes in behavior. Schools might be noticing, "Oh, they're acting out more," or parents might be noticing they're not following directions very well at home. They're used to those "finger shake" moments. When they come to group, they might be expecting that. When they get that space of the attentive, nonjudgmental adults, it can be really helpful to kind of let that guard down. But when they get the space of, okay, there are other people that get it, and they're my peers, and they've experienced some similar symptoms that I have, and now we can talk about it. It lets them feel more comfortable with that feedback, and then they offer it to each other.

RICK: That's awesome.

TARYN: It can be ugly, and we work through it.

RICK: By working through it you're also teaching them to just be patient with their own things and work through them as well.

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (adaa.org), a common type of anxiety is social anxiety disorder also called social phobia. This is intense anxiety or fear of being judged, negatively evaluated or rejected in a social or performance situation. This goes beyond shyness and often starts manifesting in teens. Symptoms may be so extreme that they disrupt daily life and can interfere significantly with daily routines, occupational performance, or social life, making it difficult to complete school, interview and get a job, and have friendships and romantic relationships. People with social anxiety disorder are also at an increased risk for developing major depressive disorder and alcohol use disorders.

Group therapy like Taryn describes may be of great help where kids can remove that intense scrutiny of their peers.

A capable parent is a humble parent. This means you are willing to be emptied and refilled:

1 Peter 5:6-7: (NASB) *⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*



As a parent, we need to be humble. We should not hesitate to say, "I did not properly handle what I said yesterday. Please forgive me." When we do that, what effect does it have on our children?



A child does not want a perfect parent; they want a sincere, honest and humble parent who loves them.

Pray and ask God for help with humility.



RICK: So, just a couple of examples of the kinds of tools that you might give to a child to take home and apply. I know we talked about recognition and all of that, but breathing exercises? What kinds of things would you want a child to take home with them and say, okay, I need to do this now?

TARYN: We do a lot of work around deep breathing. It can be really helpful for them because it calms them down, and it stops them from having that big emotional response. It does a lot of wonderful things for their bodies, and so it definitely helps them to feel a little bit of relief from that escalation in their behavior, their mood. The other thing that we like to do, and we've done it in our groups, is progressive muscle relaxation. It can be really helpful because it helps them work out some of those intense feelings that they have in their bodies, and it helps them to get to a really awesome place of feeling a bit more relaxed and a bit more capable of being able to control themselves and their bodies.



It is not just about talking to children but teaching them how to handle their bodies and their reactions. Let the professionals help when needed so we can be more capable parents.

A capable parent is willing to learn to do those things necessary to be an example for their children:

1 Corinthians 9:26-27: (NASB) ²⁶Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

As a parent dealing with children who have difficult challenges, we need to focus on the objective of giving our child hope and help, putting ourselves second. From humility grows the ability to be an example.



RICK: Let me ask you about stigma because stigma's a big deal. Somebody is diagnosed at a relatively young age with anxiety and depression, and you alluded to it earlier - I don't want to be that kid. I don't want to be the one who people look at and say, "He's crazy." How do you help them deal with that feeling?



TARYN: Talk about it. Kids, much like adults, are not afraid to say what those fears are. Oftentimes coming into therapy, if it's especially the first time they ever experienced therapy, there's a lot of unknowns about what that process looks like and how they'll experience it. So, we talk about it. We help them understand what to expect. We empower them with that information so that they feel like they can be part of the process versus us telling them, "this is what's going to happen," and "this is what you're going to do." We work together. It's a partnership.

RICK: To help them deal with the issue, you alert them and then build them, essentially. You keep coming back to your talking with them. Talking means listening. I think one of the biggest challenges is to **BE QUIET ENOUGH TO LISTEN** long enough to get to the core of a matter.



A capable parent is willing to look for the places in their own experience that needs maturity:

Ephesians 4:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ.

Sometimes our emotions are often waves that can toss us about when we are trying to understand what is happening to our child. Bring God the glory by applying faith when dealing with our child's difficulties so we can help build them up.



Parenting Strength:

A truly Capable Parent is one who is committed to the never-ending adventure of **learning and growing**.

Every experience, especially our failures **can offer opportunity for greater capacity!**
Not there yet? **Start now – small steps!**

Remember the one percent rule. Start now, take small steps and keep adding one percent at a time to grow into the role of a capable parent.

Becoming more capable as a parent is not a matter of pass or fail, it is more a function of growing in wisdom.

**To be caring, competent and capable are worthy goals.
What happens when I want to just be angry?**

This is one of the great challenges we have when nurturing children with anxiety and depression issues. There is nothing wrong with our angry or frustrated emotions, but we need to be sure we do not make anyone a victim of them. It is all about remembering the highest good. For a Christian parent, this is where our faith and prayer come in. Getting the help we need, both spiritually and physically, is an important part of this process.



If we cannot control our own emotions, how do we expect our children to control theirs? Personal parental control requires learning to see yourself from the outside in, just as your child would see you. Our actions must be based on righteous principles and not immediate feelings.



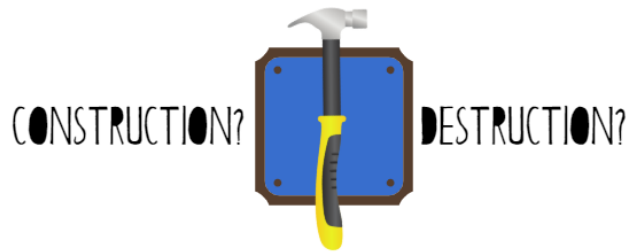
PARENTAL CONTROL: A personally controlled parent is needed to raise a challenged child. To exhibit parental control can be an extraordinarily difficult parenting characteristic for it requires the firm governing of your emotions.

To exhibit parental control is not for the faint of heart:

Ephesians 4:26: (NASB) *Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.*

Do we look fearsome or firm to our child? Can anger be a tool?

Anger can be a tool, but not if we are just lashing out. That would be like waving a hammer around instead of strategically pounding in a nail. A hammer used in the right way is a powerful tool of construction. Otherwise, it can be a powerful tool of destruction.



Our anger still has to glorify God. Jesus, for example, used his anger to glorify God. He did not have outrageous emotional outbursts; he had a controlled response to something that needed correcting. It was corrected and the anger did not linger. We should use anger as a tool for good and nothing else. If we need to vent our frustrations to a trusted person, we should vent and let the emotion harmlessly drain away.



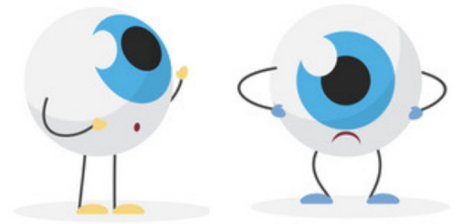
Check out our **CQ Kids video - Did Jesus Ever Get Angry?** As with many of our CQ Kids videos, this is good for adults to watch to learn about the specific times Jesus displayed anger. ChristianQuestions.com/youtube



RICK: Parents, again, these things are hard for a parent. I raised three children, and life wasn't all roses and ice cream in our experience either. You go through things and start to question your parenting skills and abilities and all of these things. I imagine in this particular situation you find the same kinds of things. What kind of challenges do you encounter with family dynamics, especially when kids come for the first time?



TARYN: First of all, I think the stigma. Again, if it's the first time they've come to treatment, they're really uncertain about what this means. There's a stranger in our life. We're going to have to talk about really uncomfortable things...or will we? There are a lot of questions about what that will look like. That's a big part of what we do to kind of understand what the family's needs are. But sometimes in those conversations, we notice that parents can sometimes be on different pages about what either their perception of the problem is or what they think they need to do to fix it or to deal with it. That sometimes can cause some uncertainty in the treatment for kids when parents aren't seeing eye-to-eye about that stuff.



RICK: Let's just address that for a moment. You have two parents that see this very differently, and you're watching through the experience of what you know and understand through your education, through your experience with many children, and you're seeing that one or both of them are not on the page they really need to be to help the progress. What do you do? How do you handle that?

TARYN: Part of what helps me is when I have a good understanding of what the child is dealing with; I can help the parents then understand the kids' perspective. Sometimes we're so focused on our own adult agenda as to what we need to do to fix things that we sometimes forget that we have to understand what the kid is asking for and what the kid needs to feel better. Sometimes just getting back to basics about that can be really helpful, and so we do a lot of work around that. Let's try to understand this situation from your child's eyes - how might they be experiencing this?

RICK: When you're dealing with the parents - I don't want to put words in your mouth - but it sounds like what you do is advocate for the child's perspective because the ability for a parent to hear the child's perspective from someone other than the child, someone who actually knows, is probably very enhanced because now you've been working with their child. And if you say, "Hey, listen. Here is what they're feeling, and here's what they're experiencing," and then making suggestions - the entire theme for everything you have said, everything, is to listen enough to understand, to be able to then respond with understanding and not judgment.



"R.L." said this in our live chat room: Good point on being quiet for long enough to listen! Helping our troubled children can be a long path with ups and downs along the journey. I am reminded of Galatians 6:9: (GNT) *So let us not become tired of doing good; for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest.*





Chaos creates clarity, meaning we must be willing to see what is in the mess to find the clarity of where to go next. Parents may not know how to do that, but professionals do. Let them see the chaos to help us find the clarity to move forward.



What about the toll this takes on siblings? Their time is diminished because so much attention goes to the one with depression or anxiety. Can there be collateral damage with this process?

There can be if we are not careful. This becomes the big attention-getter. Parents need to be wise in dealing with these things. Get professional input to help manage this. Keep looking up in faith.

Our personal parental control desperately needs daily wisdom from above for proper guidance:

Ephesians 6:4: (NASB) *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*



God knows our child better than we do. Use godly principles in the right place and circumstances. Do not forget God's parenting of us and His knowledge of our children.

Let's talk about parents feeling judged by others. When we are on the outside looking into a family struggling, our instinct is to help. But we want to help in a way that is really helpful, not hurtful.



One of our CQ Team members has had well-meaning people tell her, "God is giving you this experience again because you must not have learned the lessons the first time around." What is the appropriate response to that kind of "help"?

The appropriate response is to assume the comment is made in your best interest, not trying to break you down. Maybe it was not stated in the best way, but we want to assign good intent to the comment. Rather than imply lessons were not learned, a better way to say it might be, "It seems like you are having the same experience over again. What did you learn from the experience before?" Instead of making a statement, ask a question. "What else do you think God is teaching you?" God does not teach us everything all at once. It is more like a seven-course meal. We can only absorb so much. As we grow, we may get the experience again so we can grow from the previous lessons, like the next course in a meal.



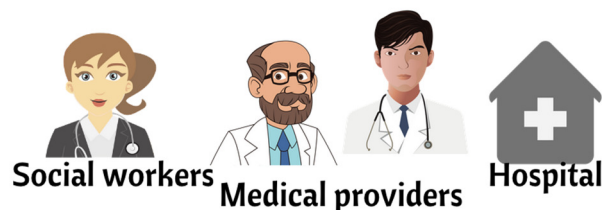
RICK: What do you want every parent to know about mental and emotional issues, especially with children? If you could talk to every parent in the United States, what would you want them to know as a basis for understanding?

TARYN: I think it's so important for parents to understand that they're not at fault. They can work through this. They can support their kids, and they can get support as well. You don't have to be alone in this. There are people out there who are so willing to support you through this hard work. It's okay to reach out for help.

RICK: Your message to every parent of every child is, look, this is a process. Don't assume you're breaking them. If I can just take it a step further, assume that you love them, and you want the best for them. When somebody needs help, what should they do then? What should they do as parents if they feel like something's wrong?

TARYN: It's important for them to always rely on the providers who are already involved in their lives - pediatricians, doctors that might see their child on an ongoing basis, those would be really great resources, particularly for mental health services in that family's specific area. They can always reach out to those providers. They can also reach out to their local hospital or children's hospital to find out if they're any resources or supports that those places can offer, like most hospitals have social work departments. It would be a great step to ask that department, "Can you provide me with a list of referrals for local agencies that provide support to children dealing with anxiety or depression or behavioral issues?" (Whatever it may be.)

Resources:



RICK: The whole point is to reach out.

TARYN: Absolutely.

Where do you go for help? Start with your pediatrician and let them guide you. Call Child Services in your area. We are not alone unless we choose to be.

Our personal parental control can be framed within this simply stated biblical process of thinking:

Proverbs 3:5-6: (NASB) ⁵*Trust in the LORD with all your heart (this is where we start) and do not lean on your own understanding (this is the test to see if we actually trust in the Lord). ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him (again the test - are we leaning on our own understanding?), and He will make your paths straight. (He won't necessarily make them easy, but He will make them so we can navigate the paths.)*



Just because we call a social worker, nurse or doctor, does it mean we are done? This can be a lifelong issue depending on the child. We have to make the effort.



Parenting Strength:

A personally controlled parent is not perfect and is not devoid of anger or frustration.

They are, however, daily seeking greater awareness of the role that **anger and frustration** play in their daily lives and they diligently work to rein in their emotions. Not there yet? **Start now – small steps!**

Every small step forward is one more step to build on so we can do a better job helping our child.

Working at controlling our emotions is an absolute key to being able to help our children control their emotions.

**We absolutely want to help our children through their troubles.
What is the last necessary principle?**

Strong parenting in circumstances of dire need always requires a big picture perspective. Understanding the magnitude of God and His eternal plan and the smallness of our own struggle helps us to continually look up for direction. Faith has to be a part of our lives. Our conscience needs governing. Let God do that job.



CONSCIENCE-DRIVEN PARENTING: A conscience-driven parent is needed to raise a challenged child. To be a conscience-driven parent is to be in willing submission to a cause and force higher than you.

This principle applies to friends and family members, too!

Faith is such a critical part for the Christian family. Do not let this experience be outside of our faith; let it be *surrounded* by our faith as we seek the right kind of help. This is how we glorify God in this type of experience.

The human conscience is at best unreliable. Our Christian conscience needs to be tuned to the biblical principles of godliness and Christlikeness. This is the “high road” of spiritual integrity. This process requires awareness, focus and action. We need to have our consciences tuned by God!



RICK: Let’s talk just briefly about the stigma for parents. Sometimes stigma is simply perceived. We perceive it is going to be, and it may not even be there. But do you think that it’s harder for parents than for kids, and would that be a deterrent to going through the process for getting the kind of help you need, and what can we do about that?



TARYN: Yes, I think that sometimes it can be harder for adults than kids because, look, we have more years of experience hearing negative perceptions about mental health and mental health treatment. It can be really hard for us to get past some of those viewpoints. It's important to also remember that sometimes what we say and how we say it can impact how kids feel about mental health and mental health treatment as well. I really like to make sure that we provide that space for parents to be able to talk about that. I learn from parents when they share what their fears are about receiving support and accessing treatment with providers, and so it can help me learn a great deal about their family and how we need to start talking about things.

RICK: What you do for a living has a lot of uphill challenges because you're really starting with a lot of unknowns when you're dealing with the human beings that come before you. There are certainly clinical definitions and procedures and so forth, but I imagine every child starts out with that sense of "it's unknown and we have to learn." Does that ever overwhelm you?

TARYN: Yeah, I think it would be silly to say it doesn't. Certainly, there are moments where I take a step back and a deep breath and say, okay, this is a wave we have to ride together. And we do that.

RICK: And the way you deal with being overwhelmed is you listen, and you ride the wave.

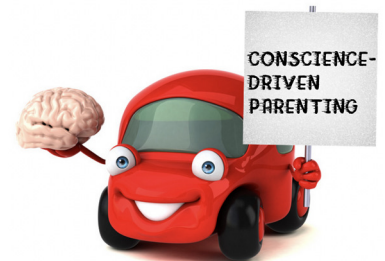
TARYN: You ride the wave.

Notice she says she learns from parents. When dealing with professionals in these situations, we must be as honest as we can because the more they learn, the better they can apply what they know to help us, our children and our family get through really hard things. When we watch the professionals work and develop trust in them, we can see they care. Have faith that they can be the driving force to help pull us through these difficult episodes.

Our conscience-driven parenting must first be patient and humble before God. Kids who are fighting anxiety and depression notice our patience and humility:

James 1:19-22: (NASB) ¹⁹*This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

We are to be quick to hear, but slow to speak and, of course, slow to anger. This is our basis for moving forward.



Our conscience-driven parenting needs to swallow its pride and be receptive to God's word and will:

²¹*Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.*

Our conscience-driven parenting must then be driven to act in accordance with God's righteousness:

²²*But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*



Listen, adjust and then drive forward. Taryn is teaching us how to deal with our children in an earthly sense. We need to learn this in a spiritual sense through faith, prayer, fellowship, study and through constantly looking up for inspiration.

Sometimes we need to laugh inside! When a child says something outrageous, instead of getting mad we need to “laugh inside” to let off steam. We have to realize they are trying to find their way and are a little lost. They can grasp and hold onto our patience. They need to rely on our maturity even when they fight it, until they can find their own. Laughing inside (not out loud) helps us to cope, which in turn, helps them to cope. Isn't that what we are trying to accomplish?



RICK: What would you say to parents and children in terms of dealing with these things? What should they be looking for? What are your words of advice to get them in the right place?

TARYN: It's so important for parents to know that they are the expert in their child. They know their child very well. You know if there is a change in their behavior or their mood, or how they seem to be at home or at school, and if it's something like a child who previously was really outgoing and all of a sudden is isolating, or doesn't seem to have an interest in the types of things that used to bring them joy; those would be things I would say, let's talk about that a little bit more. Changes in behavior are something to always look out for, so acting out, more tearfulness and crying, appearing more worried than they usually are. You know your child, and if there's a change that you're concerned about, that's something to start asking about. I think it's also important to know that if a child is talking about feeling like they want to hurt themselves, or all of a sudden, they're talking about death a little bit more or even using the word suicide, those are scary words. Those are scary topics. It's okay to let them talk about that with you because it gives them a safety net for talking about something that's really hard that many people fear judgment about. Take a breath. If it's a topic that comes up, listen. If you're scared, it's okay. If you're not sure what to do, that's okay, too. There are resources in your area for people who can provide support around those types of things.



RICK: That's an empowering statement to any parent. You're the expert on your child. If you see something that is not in accordance with your child's normal characteristics, pay attention. I think that's what you're saying. Pay close attention.

TARYN: Yes, absolutely. And sometimes those things can happen little by little over time, and sometimes there can be a dramatic shift suddenly. Whatever it may be for your child, if it's something that you're noticing, it's worthy of starting to talk about or ask questions about. “Hey, I noticed you don't like to



go to soccer anymore. You used to love soccer. Has something changed? Is there something that's going on in the team that you're having a hard time with?" Just asking simple questions like that. They'll talk about it if they're ready, and if they're not, they won't. But don't give up asking questions.

RICK: That's a beautiful way to begin to conclude this. Don't give up asking questions. The idea behind asking a question is to be willing to wait for and listen to the answer.

TARYN: Yes. Sometimes they don't always have the answer. That's also okay. They might not know what to say, and so sometimes they just might get frustrated that you're asking them all the questions that you are. What it shows them when you are willing to ask and you're willing to sit through whatever silence may come up, is that you're going to be there on the other end for when the time comes that they're ready to tell you what's going on, if there is something that's going on for them.

Taryn is giving such clear, practical advice as to what to do and how to handle these situations. She is a professional explaining how to handle the really hard things our child might share, like suicide or hurting themselves. It is scary but listen and then contact the appropriate professional who can help us to know what to do next.

A conscience-driven parent seeks to rise up to the present uncomfortable challenge:

HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU?

Be strong and courageous!

Do not tremble or be dismayed,

**FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD
IS WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.**

Joshua 1:8-9



Christian Questions®
Think about the Bible like you never have before

This reminds us of how Joshua did not want to take over after the great prophet, Moses, was removed by the Lord in Joshua 1:8-9.

Sometimes we need to be a Joshua for our children! We might not feel we are ready, but God believes we are. Let Him give us the strength and courage to do good for our children.



PRE-RECORDED INTERVIEW

RICK: Taryn, as we wrap this up, I just have to tell you that folks like you who do the work you do, I have such incredible respect for, not only the professionalism and the experience, but the incredible patience and wisdom it takes to take these children that have such difficult issues, and to walk with them and to talk with them, and to listen to them and to help build them up and to sort of embrace their families. It is such incredible work. I'm in awe, and I thank you so much for what you do, who you are, and just keep it up.

TARYN: Thank you so much. Well, I'm merely a tool in the room with our families that we work with, and all the hard work is really done by the kids and by the families. We guide it a little bit, but it's all them.

RICK: Guide it a little bit, huh? Taryn, thanks so much, I appreciate it.

TARYN: Thank you.

Taryn may be a “tool in the room” to guide parents and children, but she is a smart tool. Sometimes we need these smart tools in the room, the professionals who are trained to help us when the situation is beyond our capabilities.



Parenting Strength:

A conscience-driven parent strives to be **willing to rise to the challenge** of caring for and supporting their troubled kids, **even when it is overwhelming**, and the path is not clear.

They approach with godliness and humility first! Not there yet?
Start now – small steps!

Sometimes we do not feel conscience-driven enough. It is okay. Start with one step, then another, applying the one percent rule. Work towards doing what is God-honoring by protecting and helping our family, getting the help we need to accomplish this. Even if there is no cure, we can learn to manage the child's challenges by God's grace.

*So, how do we cope with anxiety and depression in our kids?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future. — Franklin D. Roosevelt



Join us next week for our podcast on May 25, 2020
Ep. 1127: What Does the Sabbath Look Like for Christians?

Bonus Material and Study Questions

Let's go back through the steps of conscience-driven parenting:

Let your parental care be action-based:

Proverbs 29:14-18: (NASB) ¹⁴If a king judges the poor with truth, his throne will be established forever.

Let your parental competence be driven by maturity of character:

¹⁵The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

Let your parental capability be rich in practical experience:

¹⁶When the wicked increase, transgression increases; but the righteous will see their fall.

Let your parental control override all emotion:

¹⁷Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul.

Let your conscience driven-parenting always see the big picture:

¹⁸Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law.

Colossians 3:21: (NASB) Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

Our children will honor us when we live the example of maturity and integrity that we want for them:

Proverbs 4:1-6: (NASB) ¹Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding, ²for I give you sound teaching; do not abandon my instruction. ³When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, ⁴then he taught me and said to me, Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live; ⁵acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth. ⁶Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; love her, and she will watch over you.

There is something to be said about passing wisdom down from generation to generation. One of our most troubling problems today is that we think we are so enlightened that we throw away the wisdom of the generations before us.





The whole idea of disciplining a child is to bring them to maturity so they can grow up, move out and become independent, contributing adults.

Maturity goes hand-in-hand with freedom and privilege:

Hebrews 5:12-14: (NRSV) ¹²*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.*

Maturity is measurable in our spiritual lives as well as our family lives. Be mature and you will find freedom - be a child and you will not!

Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and Study Questions

Text

CQREWIND

to **22828** to get started.



christianquestions.com



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1126: How Do We Cope With Anxiety and Depression in Our Kids?

<https://christianquestions.com/program/1126-anxiety-depression-kids/>

See:



1. What is parental caring? Why is it so important when raising a challenged child?
2. How did the Apostle Paul show his parental caring? What can parents do to truly understand how their children are feeling? (See 1 Corinthians 4:14-17)
3. What is parental competence? How did the Apostle Paul show it? How can we grow into parental competence? (See Hebrews 5:12-14)
4. What are some tools parents can use when dealing with a child with issues?
5. What does it mean to be a capable parent? What can parents do to help their children if they themselves are feeling broken? (See 1 Peter 5:6-7)
6. What are some practical things we can do to help our children when they face the stigma of anxiety and depression? (See 1 Corinthians 9:26-27, Ephesians 4:14-15)
7. What does it mean to be a controlled parent? How should parents use anger when dealing with their children? (See Ephesians 4:26)
8. How can we help parents we know that are in this difficult situation? Where can parents look when they need professional help? (See Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 3:5-6)
9. How can you be a conscience-driven parent? What can we do to help us cope with our difficult situations? (See James 1:19-22)
10. What should parents watch for in their children to identify mental health difficulties?
11. What will you do to help your children or other children you know who are struggling with anxiety and depression?