

Adult Talk: How to Get Your Kids to Meditate – Emily Fletcher with Dave Asprey – #817

Announcer:

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Dave Asprey:

You're listening to bulletproof radio with Dave Asprey. And today, we have a live studio audience from The Upgrade Collective. Well, live online anyway, because that's how we roll these days. And at the end of the show, you're going to be able to hear some questions. The Upgrade Collective is my membership group where people go with calls every couple of weeks, with coaches and with me and with a structured program where I'm teaching all of my books, all of the stuff that I know about biohacking, living longer, having more energy, all that sort of stuff. The things that I couldn't write in my books, but you're getting it in a very active community. And one of the benefits of The Upgrade Collective is you get to be in the live audience and see the podcast first. It usually airs a few weeks after The Upgrade Collective members get access.

Today, I have a dear friend, and someone who's been on the show before, who's the founder of Ziva Meditation. And she teaches something called the Ziva technique. And for a decade, she's reached about 40,000 students, including Oscar, Grammy, Emmy and Tony Award winners, Navy Seals, NBA players, CEOs of big companies, she's taught me meditation techniques, and she also works with busy parents. What I wanted to bring you on the show today was how to teach your kids to meditate. And the reason for this is that when your kids are calmer, because you've fed them the right way, or you taught them to meditate, that means your quality of life as a parent goes up a lot. I'm a parent of two kids now, 11 and 13, so I've lived through a lot of this, and we're going to learn from a master how we can meditate, but also how we can have our kids meditate, which makes our meditation easier. Emily, welcome back.

Emily Fletcher:

I'm so excited to be here. I was just saying earlier, how many adventures we've gone on together in this life. And I feel so grateful to be here and so excited to talk about something totally new, which is kids and meditation.

Dave:

It's one of those things where even with me where I've access to lots of meditation stuff, I've taught my kids some meditation things saying, let's do some deep breathing. Let's do some heart rate variability stuff. Let's focus on gratitude and all. But it's really different for their little brains than it is for adults. And the stuff that might work for us doesn't always work for kids, or they just don't really care. Like, what's in it for me? I want to go play. Where's my Rubik's Cube? How did you figure out how to do this for kids?

Emily:

Well, I think you hit the nail on the head when you said, "Why should I even care?" Because I find that that's the biggest obstacle that parents are facing is that you're competing with robots, you're competing with virtual reality, and now you're going to tell your kid to go sit quietly in a chair and close their eyes when they could have one of the most addictive things in the world at their fingertips, video games or social media. And so I wanted to take the pressure off of parents. Especially right now parents are being asked to do an extraordinary amount of things, homeschool their kids, learn to become

science teachers, deal with the emotional and psychological ramifications of isolation. And so the last thing I wanted parents to do was have to become a meditation salesperson or a meditation police officer.

Dave:

Meditation police officers, isn't that a contradiction of terms?

Emily:

Well, actually, not really because even with partners, even with two adult partners, someone will become the meditation police. Like, did you meditate today? You seem sort of crabby, did you do your meditation? And then the other partner is like, can you get off my back? Like, this is my practice. This is me connecting with myself.

Dave:

Okay, screw talking about kids. How do you hack that problem? So if your spouse is a meditation cop, what do you do?

Emily:

What I teach when couples come to me is I say, you just deal with you, you clean your own house, you be in charge of your practice. And actually, neither one of you is allowed to be the meditation police. And if someone is doing that you could say ... I would just negotiate and be like, hey, here's the deal. If you want me to meditate X amount of time, you do something X amount of time. Like, everything is a negotiation, right? Or if you want your partner to meditate, which is likely this audience, like this biohacking audience is like, I know this is making my brain and body so much better. I wish my partner would do it. Negotiate. Be like, okay, you meditate 14 times this week, [inaudible 00:04:26], or you meditated 14 times this week, I'll make your favorite meal. So it's all like, what's in it for me? And that applies to children as well. Not the [inaudible 00:04:36].

Dave:

Good God.

Emily:

God, we went there already. Just every human is like, what am I going to get out of this? And so with kids, just like with adults, I really operate under this premise that we meditate to get good at life, not to get good at meditation. And so I would say whatever your child is into, if they're really into soccer, it's like, well, guess what? The last stressed you are, the better you're going to be at soccer. If they're really into debate, excellent. Guess what? The better your brain is operating, the better you're going to be able to see both sides of this argument.

And so I think rather than framing meditation as something that they have to do, or a discipline, or something's wrong with them that they need to fix, it's like, no, this is a tool that's going to help you be better at whatever it is that you love. And that applies for all ages. I call it the Popeye effect. Because like imagine Popeye gave a whole generation of children ... He got a whole generation of kids to start eating spinach. Not because spinach is delicious, but because they thought it would give them big muscles like Popeye. This was the same meditation. What's in it for me?

Dave:

Now you realize that Popeye wasn't really using Spanish, he was using testosterone, right?

Emily:

No, tell me more.

Dave:

No, really, this was basically, the spinach was the kind of popular version. But if you look at the details in the cartoons, like it was pretty clear they were talking about performance enhancing drugs there. So there was a time in the 70s where Popeye was basically getting jacked, because he was doing this thing that would get him big. And then remember Mighty Mouse?

Emily:

Yes.

Dave:

Well, you know what was making him mighty?

Emily:

Tell me.

Dave:

It was cocaine. And they actually pulled it from the airwaves, because they showed him snorting lines. And they asked the animators, what the hell? And they're like, it was ground up flowers. [crosstalk 00:06:23] They just say no, Nancy Reagan crowd, they basically this was one of the first canceled culture, things like that. You can't say that. So they kind of killed Mighty Mouse. But there was a time when all these cartoon characters were doing the same stuff that humans were doing in sort of an eye-rolling way that the animators were amused by. So-

Emily:

That's awesome. Well, now I've got to update all my copy on my Popeye effect. Be like, never mind about spinach, just take testosterone, just give your kids testosterone.

Dave:

It worked. But it was funny, there was like the underlying thing and then there was the what do we tell the public? And you see that so often in things. When I look at the benefits of getting kids to meditate like, well, what's in it for you? One of the things that I do with my kids even around sleep, I'm like, "You know why your bedtime is important? Because after you go to bed, your mom and I get some time together. And if you want me to show up for you, I have to recharge my batteries with mom." And I don't exactly describe what recharging my batteries entails because they're kids. But it's important. And so making bedtime something that gets them more daddy time or daddy's not cranky, it actually sells really well to the kids.

And they go, "Okay, I get it." And I understand that if I fight at bedtime, it's going to do for them. But if I play little games to extend it to half hour because I only had an hour and a half with your mom

before it's bedtime. So if you take a half hour that, you took a third of my mommy daddy time, and that's not okay. And so does that same thing work with meditation? It's like, okay, look, when you meditate, you're going to be calmer and that means that we're going to get more time together. Is that a win for the kids, depending on the age?

Emily:

Well, first of all, I would say like bravo to you on being so authentic and honest with your child. So I've been studying a lot like preparing for creating Ziva Kids, I studied something called RIE, which is basically respectful parenting. And one of the fundamental premises of it is authenticity and honesty. And of course, you want to deliver your honest reality in an age-appropriate way. But part of that is like your own boundaries, your own needs, your own preferences. And so for parents, it can be like, hey, meditation is really important to me. And this is something that I would love to share with you. Or you know what, it's hard for me to meditate when you're putting Sharpie on the walls. So I want you to do this with me because I selfishly want to protect my own practice.

I actually think that we all love the truth. And kids, they can smell it out. They know when we're lying. They know when we put on a brave face. They can feel our energy more than we can, likely. And so I think the more honest you are with them, the better. And again, in an age-appropriate way. So I do love that. And I think it's a matter of knowing like where your kid is on the journey. So Ziva Kids, it's for ages 4 to 14. So obviously, you're going to speak to a 14 year old in a much different way than a 4 year old.

But I think framing it, one, what's in it for them, and two, why you honestly want them to do it. And it could be simply like, I love the idea of us having this sacred time to connect in this intimate way together. Or this is something that I want us to do as a family. I know you really care about this test coming up in your math class. And this is something that's going to help you with that pre-test jitters. So I think he's just being honest and knowing how to frame it.

Dave:

Okay, that makes sense. I think honesty is usually the best policy with kids, although sometimes honesty doesn't mean tell them everything. But everything you say is true. Some things they don't need to hear. From that point of view, I mean, the first time you came on the show was hundreds of episodes ago, but you talked about using meditation for better sex and better sleep. And then you came on using meditation for performance. How do you handle that? You talk about the power of sex for adults in meditation. And at the same time, you're talking about kids. What's the connection there?

Emily:

Well, how do we think kids got there. Kids got there through sex. And one of the things I love that you just shared that like sex is adult playtime. There are some similarities in meditation and sex. Some people will call an orgasm, I think in French is la petite mort, it's like the little death. And so in that moment of orgasm, you're transcending the left brain and moving into the right. So you're moving beyond your individuality and starting to connect with totality. So that happens for fleeting moments or hopefully not so fleeting, depending on what type of sex you're doing in the tantric practices, but that is very much a connection to the divine.

I think meditation can be the same, and meditation depending on what style you're doing, you can transcend the left brain and access the right. It's like you move beyond the piece of you that dies with this body. And you start to connect to the piece of you that's connected to everyone and

everything that even transcends time. And so there are some similarities in the practices themselves. And again, none of this you would necessarily share with a child.

But I do think it's important for adults to understand that meditation and sex might seem so different, and one might seem secret, and one might seem like that we have this sort of like societal shame or guilt around it. But if we take away this sort of like recent doctrinated guilt paradigms, and remember that ecstasy historically has been a method for cleansing, and purification, and connection to the divine, then I think you start to see just how similar these practices can be.

Dave:

It's also something that happens when you have young kids. Usually you have some kind of a sex life, and then you have kids, and then you don't have a sex life for quite a while. If you're following sort of the average, whether it's a year or for several years, and part of it's because you're recovering from pregnancy, but then you're tired all the time, and then you've got kids distracting, you don't have as much free time as you thought you did, and all of that. So both meditation and like an intimate relationship, they both take kind of a big hit for adults once you have kids. Like I had a really good morning meditation practice.

And once we had our daughter, like that just goes out the window, because you can wake up at five but little babies, they sense, parents awake. It doesn't matter how quiet you are, like they have radar. And then well, no meditation for me. Right? And so I literally replaced it with focus neurofeedback, where I could get a lot of it done in little bits of time, just because I couldn't find a time when between starting the company and all that other stuff and just some free time in the day. When you teach your kids meditate, they're more focused, though, right? And they're calmer. So does that mean they interrupt you less, and you might be able to meditate some more yourself? Is that part of the day?

Emily:

I think that you do buy yourself some time, because now your kid has depending on their practice like 5 minutes or 10 minutes of a practice of their own. But I just want to say that I'm a meditation teacher. I do this for a living. I've been doing it for a long time. And when I had my baby, I didn't meditate one time for a whole month. And for me, that's a very long time. Like I haven't missed a meditation in 12 years. Like I do it every day, twice a day, for 12 years. And so for me to go a whole month without meditating was a big deal. And some people will ask me ... They're full of guilt. Stuff like, well, I just had a baby and I want to get back on my practice. I know I need it. I'm like, this is why we meditate.

Meditation to me is like putting deposits in your bank account, so that you can make the withdrawals when you come into high demand phases of life. And so it's like don't have any guilt about pausing. Because for me, especially postpartum, I felt like I was in a battle zone. Like I had to stay awake. I was nursing every hour and a half, I wasn't making enough milk, I had mastitis, I had stitches. Like my son was not gaining weight. It was a nightmare. And so it was like I had to, I needed that cortisol, I needed that adrenaline to sort of stay awake and stay in that battle mode. And then once things started calming down, and once we knew he was gaining weight, and I could start to sleep for even an hour or two hours at a time, then I could start to go back to meditation. But for that time, it's like no guilt. You just survive in those particular life chapters.

But then the trick is we want to get out of that ... Where the mastery comes in is knowing the difference between, okay, I'm actually in go time, this is battle mode, or all right, now I have some semblance of routine. And now I'm just using I don't have time as an excuse. And that that takes some discipline. I would say more importantly than discipline, it means you need a practice that is going to

give you a return on your time investment. So for a 15 minute meditation, you better be getting back hours in your day of productivity, you better be getting back hours of better sleep, decades of better decisions. And I find that what most people are calling meditation in this day and age is actually like guided visualizations on apps, or someone walking you through.

And while there is some value in guided meditation, it's still a left brain phenomenon. You're still directing your focus. And so it's really only handling your stress. And then now it's creating a state change. Whereas I think what makes Ziva so special and even for kids, is that we're de-exciting the nervous system in a way that induces such deep rest, that we start to heal stresses from our past. And this is really where we get that return on investment. And some people will ask, well, can kids have stress from their past? Just listening to one of your episodes, it's like, yeah, we can have birth trauma, stopping breastfeeding, you can inherit trauma, having a sibling, a move, starting school, like all of these things can be quite traumatic.

And one of the things I loved about this episode that I was just listening to, was that you can have, and this is my therapist too, she says you can have capital T trauma, or little t trauma, but your 100% is your 100%. And so it doesn't matter that there are children, soldiers somewhere, if you're five, and you had a sibling, that can be a traumatic event for you. So it's really like how is your body metabolizing that stress. And that's why I feel so passionately about getting these meditation and mindfulness and manifesting tools into the hands of kids. Because it's like, if you learn these tools at this age, your resilience and your ability to metabolize high demand situations for the rest of your life will be better.

Dave:

I love that perspective. And that's why teaching kids to maybe be less affected by bullying and social anxiety and all that sort of stuff. I just watched Mean Girls with my daughter, it was funny. It's one of those why are kids so mean to each other? Because that's what they do in their early teens, because they're figuring it out. But that in and of itself bullying can cause trauma as well. So there's all these things, but kids, you can meditate, have more skills there. But what I'm seeing is a lot more anxiety around the pandemic. What's going on with kids this year in the data that you went through as you were forming Ziva Kids.

Emily:

Well, I mean, it's not a surprise that we're really dealing with two pandemics. We have the viral one, but we also have the emotional and psychological one. And the trick here is this long tail of the emotional psychological one is going to be, I think, a lot more costly and does take a lot more time to heal from in the long run. We now know that physiologically, loneliness is worse for us than smoking. So a lot of people think like, stress is just in my mind, or meditation is just a mental tool. Not true at all. Your brain is responsible for printing every single cell in your body. So if your brain is stressed, this is going to compromise the quality of cells that it is printing.

And a lot of people don't understand that like when you get stressed within 30 to 45 seconds, you have stress hormones in your blood. Like okay, great, a tiger comes in, I go into fight or flight adrenaline and cortisol in my bloodstream. But within 10 minutes, the most viscous fluid in your body, which is your marrow, you'll start to have the marrow of stress. And so if you've been marinating in loneliness, isolation and stress for a year, like what do we think that's doing to the physiology of our children. Forget about the emotional and psychological peace. Like we know that's real. But now even let's look at like what's happening on the gross manifest.

Now, the good news here is that when you start meditating, within 30 to 45 seconds, you can start to release dopamine and serotonin, which are bliss chemicals, which are more alkaline in nature, so we can decrease inflammation. But the even better news is that within 10 minutes, you can start to have the marrow of bliss. And so by changing your brain state, you are changing the physiology of your body. And you start to do that every day, over time, this is where we start to see what feels like magic, what feels like this huge return on investment.

Dave:

That is really cool. There's something that happens when you do a meditation right. I certainly feel it. The numbers for kids are pretty shocking. The suicide rate has quadrupled over the last 50 or so years. Only a third of seventh graders, this is something that you posted, would agree with the statement, I'm happy with my life. Do you think parents should actually ask their kids, are you happy with your life? Is that a good opener? And they're like, no, I'm not. [inaudible 00:19:26] even tell you the truth?

Emily:

Well, I feel like it could be an opener. Like if you have permission to have that conversation with your child, it could be a question, but you certainly wouldn't want to end there. You would want to say, okay, well what are you enjoying about your life? What is challenging about your life? So you can get to specific pain points and specific things that they feel inspired to shift. But you're right. I was speaking to a child psychologist because we got a real dream team of folks to help us with this. Dr. Shefali who's Oprah's go to parenting expert, Dr. Christina Cohen has a double PhD in child psychology, a Harvard child psychologist in Hailey and then folks from Sesame Street. So we like a real wide range of experts helping us with this.

But one of the psychologists said when I was doing my, what is it called when they're like rotations, like lab [crosstalk 00:20:19] training, residency. When she was her residency 15 years ago, they didn't even talk about team suicide, it wasn't even part of the conversation. And now she's having to do like whole courses on it every year on continuing education because the numbers have gone up so dramatically. And that was even pre-pandemic. So this is the thing that I want people to realize is that even before we dealt with sort of isolation and uncertainty that our children are dealing with now, I think just social media, the digital world that we're living in Zoom, like all this has an impact on our happiness. And social media, it's not a joke.

Think about like face to face bullying, and then you see it, like people are so much braver behind a computer screen. Now take that sort of like teenage tribal thing that happens physiologically, well, where am I in the pecking order, and then add on a barrier of anonymity of social media, and you can really do some damage. I don't like to harp on all of the ailments and all of the potential pitfalls, because I don't want to stress parents out more. But I do think that it's important that we were honest about where we are, and know that there is a way forward, that there are tools. Turns out stress is a curable disease.

There is a there is a cure for it. It's called meditation. It's been around for thousands of years. The reason why people aren't doing it is they feel like they don't have time and with kids, they think it's boring. And this is where I've spent my 10-year career on Broadway and work with puppeteers and writers and puppet builders from Sesame Street to make this thing so dang entertaining that your kids aren't even going to really know they're meditating. It's like, hang on, I just had a lot of fun for 15 minutes. And I happen to learn about my emotions and these tools I can take with me for the rest of my life. So that's what I'm really proud of in this course.

Dave:

It's a hard thing to do. I mean, there's tons of free kids meditations on YouTube, right? And you're charging for Ziva Kids. I actually believe that it's usually a good idea, like things you get for free are usually like you're the product if someone gives you something for free, so they're going to sell your ads on YouTube or something or a YouTube subscription. But what's the difference between Ziva Kids and whatever you find on YouTube?

Emily:

Call me crazy, but I don't really understand why anyone, adult or a child would want to go to their phone in order to meditate. Like, why would you go into the belly of the beast in order to unplug? This is like having AA meeting in a liquor store, as far as I'm concerned. This is like the home of distraction and addiction. This thing is competing for your attention. It's been designed to keep you in it. And then we also know that looking at the screens, the blue light, like all of this is not good for our brain. And ostensibly, we're meditating because we want to improve our brain health. And so yes, I am using technology just to get these tools into the hands of the children. But the cool thing about Ziva is that once you graduate from this seven day training, you don't need me anymore. You don't need the course anymore, you don't need technology anymore.

Your child is going to have planted this seed, and know how to turn inward for their own bliss and fulfillment. The three traits that we bring up inside of Ziva Kids is bravery, creativity, and kindness. So we keep coming back to these superpowers. And the whole premise is that these things bravery, this creativity, this kindness, these things are already inside of you. And all the meditation is doing is that it's unlocking your superpowers. There's two courses, actually. And in the younger one, my co-star, his name is Z Bunny. He's training to be a superhero. So he's kind of like, he's like the puppet biohacker, if you will, because we as biohackers want to be superhero versions of ourselves.

And so every day he's training to be a superhero. He faces challenges. And of course, big emotions come up. I told you I had props. So here they are for the live studio audience. These are called the stormies. We've got a cloud here with some raindrops. This the mad stormy. And then we have the scared stormy. These are like the most common emotions that kids are facing, like anger, fear and sadness. And so I'm teaching Z Bunny these tools that he can use to move through these emotions. Not to suppress them, not to judge them as bad, but to meet them exactly where they are, to feel them fully, to move through them. And then he unlocks this bravery, creativity and kindness that's already inside of him. And so the kids are doing this alongside Z Bunny and by the time they graduate, it's like I have these tools.

And there also is an adult training inside of the course where I'm training the adults on how to be a good sidekick. And that includes not being meditation police, that includes not forcing your kids to meditate, and also when they have these big emotions to let them feel it. Actually, for the adult to increase their own emotional resilience so that they have the capacity to sit with the bigness of whatever their child is feeling. Because I think that honestly most of the world's problems come from we as children being trained to not feel our feelings. It's like have a bottle, have a toy, have an iPad, have a phone, have some pills, have some sugar or have some social media, but just don't feel. Whatever you do, don't feel. And now 40% of American adult women are on either anti-anxiety or antidepressants.

Call me crazy, but I don't think that 40% of American women have Zoloft deficiency. I think that we have not been trained how to feel our feelings. And if I had a magic wand, this would be the ripple effect of Ziva Kids. That we equip an entire generation of kids to feel safe enough to feel whatever it is that they're feeling, and then have the tools to know how to change their state when they're ready. And so this is a big thing that I talk to the parents about it like, meditation is not a pain pill. It's not like,

you're sad, do some breathing. You're angry, just count your breaths. Because that's dismissive. It's disrespectful of the process.

And you wouldn't want your friend to do that to you. Like, if you call your best friend and just needed to rant for a minute, and they're like, Dave, just do some breathing. You'd be like, eff you. It would feel dismissive. Anyway, it's a roundabout way of saying that the meditation is unlocking these tools that are already inside of our children and that my dream case is that kids are like, I can be wherever I am. I have the safety to feel all of my emotions.

Dave:

Man, that's so well said, Emily. Every time like, don't cry and all that sort of stuff, it's hard as a parent because we have mirror neurons. So when our kids experience pain, we experience pain especially because we're connected. So being willing to sit with yourself and say, I'm going to let my kids experience pain because that's how they learn. You fall over. Well, the ground hurts. Eventually, you realize what to do to not fall over. We call that walking. But you have to fall over a bunch. And if you have a kid who never falls over, they never learn to walk.

Emily:

Yes.

Dave:

So it's the same with emotions, right?

Emily:

Yeah. And thank you for bringing up the mirror neuron piece because, honestly, people have been asking me for 10 years to create a meditation training for kids. And I was like, "No. Not me. Not me. Not me. I'd rather teach fancy pants adults." But then having a kid and like knowing what it feels like to have your heart beating outside of your body, to understand the visceral intensity of pain that you experienced as a parent when you see your child in pain like I get it. I understand why we as parents the way habit is to repress because it's so dang painful for us to see our child struggling or suffering. And this is why I have the adult training inside of Ziva Kids because without that, without that support system and honestly, without our children seeing us model that behavior of like, mommy sad right now. It's not your fault.

You didn't do anything wrong but mommy sad right now. I'm going to cry for a few minutes. You know what, I'm angry. This is not your fault, but I'm angry and I'm going to give myself some space to be angry. I'm going to take a minute. I'll be back in five. So we as parents have an opportunity to, one, lead by example of how we express and are brave enough to feel our own emotions. And then two, create the resilience, our own emotional resilience to create the container for our children to feel everything that they're feeling. To be honest, I didn't ... Like that word, that term like giving space or holding space, I kind of roll my eyes at that because all my friends are like real ceremonial and they're always in ceremony in like, hold space, hold space. And I was like, "What does that even mean?"

But then our mutual friend Layla Martin, I was with her in Costa Rica and I was going through a really intense life experience and I had a lot of fear and sadness in my body. And she just asked me, "How are you doing." And I was like, I just started sobbing. I mean like deep, ugly sobbing. And I think that my body, something in my body knew that she had the emotional fortitude and the capacity to hold the bigness of everything that I was feeling. And so my body intuitively felt safe enough to release with her. This is sort of a roundabout way of saying that for adults and parents especially, it's really important

that we clean our own house, that we manage our own stress. Because if we're like on our last leg, if we are at a 9 out of 10 on the stress scale, our children will feel that and they will want to placate or make us ... They'll try and make us feel better versus being like, mommy's good, she's strong, I can be where I am.

Audience Member:

[inaudible 00:30:07].

Emily:

You're right, I just got like the world's best people to help me learn how to teach kids to meditate and my son's two and a half, so it's perfect timing. And I will say that, I mean, he's a terrible data point, but he loves the program. Like, it's for four to eight-year-olds, but he ... I'm sorry, there's two courses. One is called Play, and that's for four to eight. And there's one called Grow, which is for 9 to 14-year-olds. But he loves the Play one. Like, he'll watch the whole episode and he'll put it back to me. And he'll sing the stormy song and like shake out his stormies. Now granted, he doesn't watch any TV except for that and it's his mom and his only friend. And there's this funny there, so he loves it. But you're right, I definitely hacked this life situation.

Audience Member:

[inaudible 00:31:35]

Emily:

So I've made actually like a welcome videos. There's seven days of training for the preteens, but there's also like the intro/welcome. And this is where I go, hey, I don't even know this, but Ariana Grande meditates. Hey, did you know that Steph Curry is a meditator? Hey, have you heard that this TikTok star meditates. And so I'm basically just giving them like all their coolest idols are meditating. Because I know when I was at age, I didn't care about what my parents wanted. I just wanted to know if the cool kids were doing it. And so instead of having Z Bunny as my co-star, which he does make a few appearances, and like the kids at that age, they don't want to like Z Bunny, but they secretly do. So he's just like, showing up. I'm like, "Get out of here Z Bunny." And he's like, "But I'm back." He's like, "Look how cool I am." And he puts on sunglasses and I'm like, "You're a ding-dong. Get out of here."

So anyway, instead of using Z Bunny so much, I use other preteens. So I interviewed a lot of my students. So I have been teaching kids for about 12 years, it's just I would do it in person and I would do it twice a year in my studio. And so I've learned a little bit over that time, but I wouldn't call myself an expert. But I did get to interview some of those students and I would put their experiences inside of the course. So one kid is 18. He's captain of his lacrosse team. He's a straight A student. He's preparing for an Ivy League school. And he is saying like, "There's no way I could have handled my sports responsibilities, my captain of the team responsibilities and my school responsibilities, if I didn't have Ziva."

And so again, I think if you're 12, and you see some like very smart, successful, like sports star saying like, hey, I do this thing and I think it's cool. It's just going to change the way that you perceive it versus your mom telling you to do it when you're like, you don't know what's cool. Shut up.

Audience Member:

[inaudible 00:33:34].

Emily:

Yeah. And I think the thing for parents to know at that age is that of course, there's going to be more resistance. Like if you just tell your 12-year-old like, hey, I got your meditation course. And like, sure, let's start right away. Like, that's likely not going to happen. Just like my son, I have to invite my son to eat vegetables like a lot of times. Like every day with new sauces and blended up in new ways and keep reminding him, it's going to make you strong and big. So it's every day, I'm inviting him to eat vegetables. And I think it's ... What's that?

Audience Member:

[inaudible 00:34:13].

Emily:

Tell me. Okay, tell me.

Audience Member:

[inaudible 00:34:21].

Emily:

Yes. You're right. We actually had to do that last night. Like he went to bed with no dinner, no bottle, no stories, and it broke my heart, but it was like they got to learn, like cause and effect. It's like, okay, no vegetables, nothing else. You're [inaudible 00:34:50]. All right. Yes.

Audience Member:

[inaudible 00:35:03].

Emily:

Yeah, it's about leverage. And it's about inspiring your kids to meditate and knowing like what leverage you have. Because as your kids get older, you do have less and less leverage. They have more and more agency. And so I think it's even more important that you frame this and introduce it in a way of not like, there's something wrong with you, we need to fix it. But hey, by that age, they're probably really into whatever their interests are. So it's even more important you're like, hey, this thing is going to help you do whatever you love even better.

Audience Member:

[inaudible 00:36:01].

Emily:

Well, yes, and I do. I kind of take the kid gloves off in the older program. Like I'd tell them the science of what stress is doing to their brains, how meditation can improve their performance. I mean, there's brain scans in there, they get to really see interviews of other kids about how stress is impacting their performance, and then how mindfulness, meditation and manifesting helps them in these different areas of their life. And it's not like they're just sitting still the whole time. Like that's a really important point, too, is that we are teaching like a kid-friendly version of the ZIVA technique, which is mindfulness, meditation and manifesting.

So the mindfulness piece for kids does include movement. So for the preteens, we start with something called squeeze me. And they're actually going through and pressing and releasing every single part in their body. It's like they're giving themselves a hug almost, which stimulates all of the nerve endings. So it's like you're testing all of acupressure points all at once. And then they go through, I call it, giving this as 100 high-fives, where they're just like tapping from the top of their head to the bottoms of their feet. So it's sort of stimulating all those nerve endings as well. And it's amazing what just a bit of pressure can do to the body, and especially in this age of loneliness, even like self-touch, how healing that can be for these kids. And then we start there. And then we move into the more contemplative and small and silent practices.

Another big piece for the preteens is that I have them look at people that they emulate, like who are their heroes, and it could be a sports star, it could be their best friend, their parent, a fictional character, and I have them look at what are the attributes that you admire about that person. And remind them that look, if you can see someone else's bravery, it's because you already have bravery inside of you. If you really admire this kid's intelligence at school, that's because you already have that intelligence. In order to see it, you have to be it and vice versa. So I have them sort of create these alter egos of like, this is who I am when I'm at my best. And this is who I am when stress really has a hold on me. I can I talk really fast, even for a meditation teacher. And so when I'm stressed, it's like, I talk really fast. Yeah.

It would be like a like, Anastasia, like anxious Anastasia would be one of my alter egos. So I invite them to have a sense of humor about how stress shows up for them. And then to get really clear on which attributes they want to dial up or down inside of themselves. And then teach them the science of how meditation gives them the ability to choose versus ... Like you say so beautifully, like if you're in fight or flight, that fear center of the brain takes over. That amygdala is going to hijack everything. And you're not choosing at that state. Your executive function of your brain, it doesn't speak English. So you don't get to choose which attribute you want to dial up or down or who you want to be in that situation.

So step one, let's get out of fight or flight. Let's go ahead and cultivate these tools so that when you have that test, so that when you're auditioning for that play, so that when you have the sports tryout, you already have the muscle memory and you know how to turn inside for your own bravery or whatever attribute it is.

Audience Member:

[inaudible 00:39:28].

Emily:

Well, I think the other thing to know is that you're right, and I love that you're using the 10-year lens, because they might meditate every day for two weeks and then stop for two years. And then they might come back to it when they're preparing for college. And they might stop when they're at college, because they got to learn how to do keg stands for a little while. And then they might ... Upside down drinking. I went to Florida State when we were the number one party school in the country. So I'm very familiar. So I think it's about playing the long game here.

And another thing that I teach in the adult training is like, please don't expect your child to wake up every day at 6:00 a.m. and sit down in lotus position and do 15 minutes of meditation. That's your plan, that's your program. You as an adult can be disciplined. with children, we're really just planting the seed, we're reminding them that they can turn inward for their own happiness instead of turning to external screens. It's like, well, what's happening on my internal screen. And then they're quite creative. Like, they will come to it intuitively when they need it. And also, I mean, I'm sure you know this even

better than I do, but like kids from zero to seven, are in more of a theta brain state. So it's almost like they're in this ...

It's like this walking meditation. It's almost like the state of hypnosis, which means they're highly suggestible, which is a great time to introduce meditation, it's a great time to remind them that there's nothing wrong with their feelings, and to teach them these tools. Because the cool thing is if you introduce it early enough, then they can remain connected to their authentic selves. So what Dr. Shefali says so beautifully, and she's one of our guest experts is that she says that the older you get, and as you start to try to conform to society, and patriarchy, and meritocracy, and the way our school systems are formed, we can lose ourselves. We're trying to fit into a societal mold and we forget our own unique, authentic self.

And so if we can give our children these tools to connect to their inner selves, to connect to the divine at an early age, it's like they don't have to morph or change as much to become happy because they realize they already are happy. And then they don't have to spend a lifetime reconnecting to themselves because they've maintained that connection throughout adolescence and early adulthood. So anyway, zero to seven, they're in that theta sort of meditative brain state already. And then around eight is when we start to become more conscious, that prefrontal cortex starts to really come online. And that's why also we have to separate trainings for the kids.

So from eight to 12, we go into more of that beta brain state. And so it requires also knowing as parents that my kid is going to change, and that's okay. And so how do I roll and adapt with that? And how do I change my language so that they're able to receive whatever it is I'm communicating? Kid, you better meditate or I'm going to waste you. I do not recommend that. Just do it, kid.

Audience Member:

Okay, okay. So I wanted to say that I love the Ziva Meditation program. Been using it with my four-year-old since she started, because I love the Ziva Meditation program for adults and I was like, he needs some help. And with my meditation, I needed some help. So brought it on, and I wanted to show you our coloring pictures because we are fans of Z Bunny. So wanted to just say that my two-year-old, two-year-old and three months, he loves the program as well. So it is something cool just with a four-year-old to be able to use. He's been able to do some of that deep belly breathing. But even the little toddler is using it as well. And he will sing, shake, shake, shake out the stormies.

So just wanted to say there's a benefit to the family, even at those younger ages. But I am having a bit of a challenge with helping my four-year-old transition from that belly balloon where we're really breathing to the wish balloon. And maybe it's just age appropriate for his attention, but sometimes we just become transformers. I'm not sure that we're getting to the actual manifesting, which maybe he's manifesting that he wants to be a transformer. But I wanted to see if there were maybe some tips on that or if that's just let him go with it. And that's where we're at. Tell me.

Emily:

I think that this sounds awesome and creative. So you could affirm like, hey, look how creative you're being by imagining that you're a transformer. And at four, that might really be the thing that he would love to manifest. And so, because children are so literal, the manifesting was a bit of a challenge, because I never want kids to think like, I want to manifest that I have superpowers. And so I'm going to jump off the roof of this building because I can find out. So instead, we really wanted to highlight, well, let's manifest how you want to feel.

So I think you could simply say yes, okay, let's say today, you pretend that you're a transformer, how does the transformer feel? What about the transformer makes you feel brave, or creative, or kind,

and just bring it back to those like emotions or those qualities? Because at the end of the day, that's what we "have control of" really. I mean, we can talk about the quantum and law of attraction and all of that. But for kids is basically like, how do you want to show up today?

Dave:

By the way, I had no idea that [Candy 00:46:51] had learned about Ziva on the show earlier. She's a member of The Upgrade Collective. So that was a random audience question, not pre-planned and also, congratulations on having an impact.

Emily:

That makes me so happy. Actually, I'm thinking about changing the bottom limit on kids, because we just keep hearing this that two-year-olds, three-year-olds are actually loving it. Of course, some of it it's going to go over their head, but why not? Like when you enroll in the course, you have access for the life of the program. So you can do it again when they're three, four or five, so why not start earlier?

Dave:

I also should mention, I should have mentioned earlier in the show that you are one of our speakers at the Virtual Biohacking Conference that's coming up here as well on May 8th. You guys should go to biohackingconference.com and sign up because Emily's going to be teaching some more stuff there.

Emily:

Yeah, I'm so excited. Thank you for that. Thank you for inviting me.

Dave:

You're welcome. It's one of my favorite things to do every year, that virtual conference last time was just blew off the doors. It was awesome. Now Deborah, from The Upgrade Collective has another question for you. Let's go over to Deborah.

Deborah:

Hi. I'm also a Ziva person. I did your course online and I wanted to say thank you. I appreciate how accessible you make meditation, you take a lot of the woo-woo out and make it real practical. So thank you for that. My 10-year-old I think would be great and would love the bunny and all that. But I have two 15-year-olds also. Do you think that teens would benefit from the adult program or they're kind of ... They're a little too old for the Bunny. But do you think they can hang with the grownups?

Emily:

So can you tell me a little bit more about your teens? Like, are they too cool for school? What are they into? What kind of books are they reading? Because I did this question really does vary. Like I'll tell you the sort of format that we've chosen but then I think you know your kid way better than I do. So we made the choice that at 15, we thought that kids would be advanced enough to just use zivaONLINE or to read the book, which is called Stress Less, Accomplish More. I don't think there's anything in zivaONLINE that would be inappropriate for a child. However, in Grow, which is the preteen training, it's 11 to 14, so they're just on the cusp, there is a lot more of like kids they're going to relate to. And there are three audios inside of it specifically for teenagers.

One is interestingly, what to do when you feel like you've disappointed someone, which might not be something you would think is a big deal, but that was something I would feel devastated when I was a teenager. If I felt like I'd let my mom down or my teachers down, like I was such a perfectionist and people pleaser, that was a big deal for me. And there's some about dating, there's some about tests and college applications. I would say that even if they were to do the Grow, there are some more advanced teen supplements inside of it. But if your kids are like 15 going on 30, then they might like going straight to the adult course. But can you tell me a little bit about your kids?

Deborah:

They're twins and they couldn't be more different. So once to cool for school and one is still kind of younger, and they started high school this year all virtually, pandemic. So it's been challenging. So I think I have one of each. I think I have one that would love to go ... Who's already 35. And then the other one is kind of-

Emily:

And the cool thing is, is since you've already done zivaONLINE , which is our adult training, like you could share that with your child, and then you could get the Grow. And then they could check it out. I've had a lot of folks who have one kid in the younger age range, one in the older, and fascinatingly, they would switch. They would be like, let's do each other's course afterwards. And they get a lot out of it. I think my favorite piece of feedback I'm getting so far is adult saying, I feel like I'm re-parenting myself going through this. And I feel like I've actually come back to the basics, into the fundamentals of meditation looking at it through this lens. And so that's been really like a nice thing to hear from folks as well.

Dave:

I have another suggestion that works really well at that age range, starting around 13. We're wired with evolutionary biology to right around when puberty starts to hit is suddenly our parents and our family have to be the dumbest people on Earth. And this is so that we will be so disgusted that we have to brave lions, tigers and bears to go to another tribe to reproduce so that our small tribe of 150 people on the savanna won't get inbred. I've told my kids this forever like, "There's going to be come a time where I'm the dumbest father ever and it's totally okay. Like, I get it. I'll be smart again when you're 23, it's okay." Daddy, that could never happen. But then they turn 13, and all of a sudden eye-rolling and all the stuff that teenagers do.

But what kids will always listen to, which is really cool, they'll listen to any other adult. So to my kid's friends, I'm the coolest guy on Earth. And to my kids, their parents are the coolest kid on Earth. So if you want to be really sneaky about it, call a friend and be like, hey, suggest this to my teens, and suddenly they'll want to do it like crazy because someone else's Dad told them to do it. So parents should be forming manipulation networks to get your kids do what you want.

Emily:

You heard here for first you all, right from Dave's lips. But actually, and that's a really good point, but that's the role that I'm trying to play in this. Like, I want to be the cool aunt, or like the mom's best friend who's like, all right, I'm not going to listen to mom, but Emily seems kind of cool. She seems like she knows what she's talking about. And so for that age range, and I know this isn't the question that you asked, but if your kids are feeling resistant to it, that's why I made that welcome video. And you could just put it on while you're making dinner, or put it on while you're on a road trip somewhere and just let them come to it.

And something we haven't really spoken about yet is this idea of worthy inquiry. And this definitely applies for adults, but it also applies for children. Meaning that if someone doesn't want to do something, we can't make them do it. Like trust me, if I could make people meditate, I would. I am that controlling. But people have to want to come to it. And so with our kids, it's like, that's what I want to do is just be like the cool friend when your teenagers don't want to listen to you anymore.

Dave:

And just also as a parent to not be hurt by that. Just be like this is the kids actually growing as human beings and spreading their wings and all. And that does take awareness and you see them do little selfish activities. Not selfish because they're against you, but they're actually selfish. Like, come on, that wasn't nice. You were mean to your brother or mean to your parents and like you didn't think about impact and all that. But also just understand they've got to fall down and make those mistakes and all with consequences. But having them not feel shame or even worse, feel apathy, because they push everything down, I think that's why meditation is important for kids and just that emotional awareness that comes with that.

So thanks, Emily for sharing this knowledge and for doing the research and putting together some good stuff, which is cool. I was actually really surprised that two Upgrade Collective audience members already were using your stuff. I think because you've been on the show multiple times, which is really, really cool. I think right now with the pandemic, it's just really important that we teach our kids you are going to have more anxiety because it's actually not normal to look at faces without smiles. And it's not normal to learn through a screen like this. And of course, it feels weird because it's not normal, but it's okay and at least you can feel it. So good timing on undoing Ziva Kids and just thank you and thanks for the discount. For listeners, use code DAVE at Ziva Meditation. And thanks for being who you are.

Emily:

Dave, the feeling is so mutual. Thank you for your lifetime of work and helping so many of us to be the best version of ourselves, and for allowing me to share Ziva with your folks. It's such an honor.

Dave:

If you guys liked today's episode, you know what to do. Couple things you can do, you can join The Upgrade Collective and be part of the live audience who actually gets to look at all the behind the scenes stuff and get some extra questions answered, which is really cool. Go to ourupgradecollective.com or learn more from Emily and a lot of other really, really powerful knowledgeable people at the Biohacking Conference on May 8th. Go to biohackingconference.com and sign up now. We are going bigger and better than last time. Many people responded and said it was the best online conference that they've been to all year, for the last one we did.

So we've got a fantastic production team and we pull out all the stops, all of the people. My companies all show up except for Bulletproof. I'm still do my Bulletproof test. But all my other companies were all in the house, we're all putting together for you. So this is one of the biggest things that I do every year because I think it's worth it and it works globally. I'll see you guys there. That's biohackingconference.com, and the link for Emily is zivameditation.com with code DAVE. See you soon.