# S10E1- The One Who Advocated

It only takes one person. So not every child gets the perfect start, but every child needs one person who doesn't give up on them. We often say, and especially here at Resilient Kid, it takes a village to raise a child, and sometimes that's true, but research consistently shows something powerful. The single greatest protective factor in a child's life is one stable, supportive adult.

One person who shows up, who believes, who stays steady when things feel tricky or wobbly. Welcome to the "Only Takes One Person," a special series on the Resilient Kid Podcast. I'll begin by sharing my own reflections, and then we'll hear some powerful stories from people who had that one person, whether it was a parent, a teacher, a coach, or a mentor, and the lasting impact it had on their lives.

Because resilience isn't built through perfection, it's built through connection, and sometimes one person is enough. Let's begin.

📍 It Only Takes One Person, Episode One: The One Who Advocated.

So I'm really excited to start this new series of the podcast because I think it's really special. But before we dive into it, we are fresh off the stage. We just won the Heart of the Community Award with Will Manifest. Woo woo. What a moment.

Standing there holding that award, what struck me wasn't just that we won, but who was in the room. The runner-up that evening was a really good friend of the show, Deb Dixon. She does cardiac screening work for cardiac risk in the young, in memory of her son Aaron, who died far too early. She works tirelessly and fundraises so that other families don't have to go through that same experience, that same heartbreak.

I was lucky enough to host a table that night, and Debbie was sat with us as a real friend and who is really good fun. She's one of my favorite humans. She's funny, she's mischievous, she's deep, and she's fiercely loyal, which, what more could you ask for in a friend?

When all the finalists went up on stage at the beginning and when our name was called, Deb got runner-up, and I just turned to her. I won't use the exact language I used. What I said is, "Oh my God, if you've come runner-up, raising over three quarters of a million, who's come first?" And then our name was called, and we were just so pleased, so proud, and very grateful.

But here's what I kept thinking. Behind every award, every movement, every program, there's always a person. And that's what this new series is about, because research consistently shows that the greatest protective factor in a child's life isn't money, school, or even circumstance. It's one stable, supportive adult. Just one.

And I'm going to tell you who mine was in a minute. But actually, that night, sat at the table listening to some really inspiring stories, particularly apart from Deb, there was also a firefighter. In fact, she's in charge of quite a lot of stations. She gave her story, and that is where the idea of this series came

from. Wait and see. I've reached out and asked her to come on the podcast, so I won't drop a name yet until she says yes. But let's get into it.

Let's hear about who that person was for me. That was Auntie Vera, or as we very lovingly call her, Auntie V.

So let me tell you, I was 21. I had just finished a psychology degree, and it was the summer as I'd finished uni, and I was traveling around South America with friends. At the time, my parents had moved down south. I stayed up north, being a loyal northern girl, and I was living, or I'd moved my stuff in with Auntie V before I went off traveling.

While I was away, she received a call. It was a professor running the counseling course I'd applied for, due to start that September, and he asked for me. She said, "Oh, what's it regarding?" And he said, "Unfortunately, she's too young. We won't be able to accept her on the course." Too young.

Now, my Auntie V was not someone who quietly accepted decisions. Born to a Jewish mom and Irish Catholic dad, she never took things lying down. So she questioned him calmly and firmly. She said things like, "Do you know that she was born in South Africa? Do you know she traveled back there alone at 13? Do you know she grew up in a multi-generational household? Do you know that she helps to care, at 21, for her grandparents? Do you know what she's navigated in her life, including her dad having a nervous breakdown? Do you know why that's exactly why she chose psychology?"

She didn't shout; she advocated. She didn't just talk him into reconsidering—she probably packed his head until he said yes—but she talked him into giving me a place. And I became the youngest person ever to be accepted onto that course, and I'll be forever grateful.

But here's the thing. She changed the trajectory of my life. She showed me what it looked like when somebody advocates outside your immediate family for you. She showed me what belief in me looked like. Not somebody who had to, because Auntie V was a powerhouse. She was tiny. She was less than five foot. And she wasn't a real auntie, as in the bloodline. She was one of my mom's very best friends. And she was a powerhouse.

So to hear her advocate for me at a time when I couldn't, I wasn't even in the room, let alone the country, she advocated for me. She showed me that sometimes somebody else sees your strength before you own it, especially at 21. You don't know what you're made of at that point.

Now, I will say, traveling South America with a group of friends does show you what you're made of quite quickly. Particularly because, and I remember her saying that she mentioned this, it was at a time before mobile phones. I didn't get a mobile phone until I was 22, and it certainly wasn't a smartphone. At that time, we didn't have mobile phones, so I would ring home once a week. That was the deal with my mom. I would ring home, and I happened to ring when my mom then rang Auntie V. There was a bit of a chain—Auntie Pat, Banana—they all rang round because I would only have rung home.

At the time that call came in, I was in a village where the only currency was bread. You had to go to another town, buy the bread, and go to this little village. You couldn't hand over money; you handed

over literal bread. If you wanted anything, if you wanted a drink, if you wanted to buy something, you had to buy it with bread. Lo and behold, if you got waylaid moving to that village and it was stale, you wouldn't have got anything for your bread.

So, you know, when we talk about bread being money, it literally was there.

I remember Auntie V recounting the story to me and telling me that's the kind of thing she told him. And I'll never forget Peter, actually, because I'll never forget what he said to me when I joined the course. "My God, everybody needs somebody like your V in their corner. She was not letting me go until I said yes."

And that phone call shaped my life. This year marks 30 years of me being on that journey towards becoming and being the therapist I am today. Thirty years. My goodness. But it began because that one person refused to accept no on my behalf.

That is the power of that one person. That is the power of love and of care. But it is the power of one person who sees something in you that maybe you don't see in yourself. And how many of our teens now don't see their worth, don't see their strengths?

It's one of the reasons why I started the job I do. It's one of the reasons why we brought the coaches on. And I think this podcast series has been a bit of a perfect storm, really.

We ran an anxiety workshop last week, and at the end of the call there was a lady down south. She was absolutely lovely. We go through the topic for an hour, and then you can ask questions. I think it was around children not wanting to go into school and being anxious about going into school.

So we answered it, but at the end she went, "I want a coach," because the coaches were there, and some of the families they work with were there. And I'm going, "Is it right that SJ is your coach? Or is it right that Emily's your coach? Or Fiona's your coach?" And she just said at the end, "I want one. I want a coach."

And of course we do. We all need that. We all need to know somebody's in our corner.

So that, I know, with the awards, is how this came about, really. But it's why I care so deeply about the work that we do here at the Resilient Kid. For some children, we might be that person. For teens, one coach believing in them changes everything.

That can be a teacher. I have plenty of teens, and I go into high schools all the time. One of the first questions I ask is, "Who's in your corner? Who's the teacher that you know has got your back?"

Last week, there was a young student who was having a really tricky week, and their person, their advocate, who is a teacher who runs a big department, had emailed round that morning and said, "I know he's got trainers on, and I know he's not supposed to, but please let it slide for today. He's having a really tricky week."

And I told my student, "That teacher's advocated for you today." And he said, "Oh, that's really funny, because one of the deputy heads came up to me, looked at my shoes, went to say something,

and stopped themselves and just said, 'Good morning.'" And he said, "I thought, oh, it's not like them not to tell me off."

But how lovely. For that teacher, it's just an email. For that kid, it's massive. Because that would have just tipped him, would have just tipped him over the edge that day.

So for parents, even sometimes one workshop shifts how we see our kids. For teachers, it might be some training that helps them stay regulated, to not bring in all the rubbish from home into the classroom and vice versa. To leave school at the door and go home and be with their kids. To have something left in the tank to go home and be with their own families.

It is not about perfection. It's not 24/7. It's consistency. It's feeling safe with that person, and it's their belief. And I think the ripple effect of that kind of thing is absolutely extraordinary.

We are really lucky because we get to see it from our sides. The coaches and I are all parents—thank God, most days. We've all worked in education settings. We have good relationships with teachers. We go in to deliver CPD, and because of that, we get to hear their stories.

We go in and we listen to them, the TAs, the teachers who are on the ground. So we hear what they are having to deal with. We work one-to-one with the kids. We're really lucky in that way. Really lucky.

I think what I want to say to you is, when I stood on that stage accepting the Heart of the Community Award, I thought about Auntie V. And I thought, that didn't just start with me. It started when somebody advocated.

And I think really that's what we want for our kids, don't we? We want them to understand we've got their back. It isn't always easy when we're also saying, "Pick up your socks from the floor. Tidy your bedroom. Have you done your homework? Have you started revising? Have you brushed your teeth? Even get in the shower."

For them, that doesn't feel like we've got their back. And sometimes, depending on the narrative, if you've had a meeting at school and the kids come home saying, "Oh, you didn't help me," that depends on the narrative that's been spun to them.

But for them to know that we have their back. I always think it doesn't matter what we say as parents; somebody outside of that immediate family has so much more of an impact than we do.

I will often say, if there is something specific you need to speak to your child about, have they got a coach in their life, as in a sports coach or a coach like us? Or if they've got a teacher at school that they really trust, ask them to have that conversation, because it lands differently for them. It absolutely lands differently.

I think it's amazing if our kids, our teens, have got that person. I hope whoever's listening to this today—and this is going to be a short one because this is just a very small intro into the series—I hope you have that person.

I have got several people in my life, and I know how lucky I am, and I'm very grateful for that. People who keep me grounded, who challenge me to do more, to do better, to go bigger, to take up space. I have people who will pick up the phone and say, "Congratulations," but I'll also have people who will pick up the phone and say, "You messed up there. What did you do that for?"

And that's what we need. We need those kind of people in our lives.

So this series is about that. In the coming weeks, I'm going to be interviewing people who had that one person, and you'll hear how it shaped their lives.

But today, I'd love you to reflect. Who was yours? Who believed in you? Who stood up for you when you thought, "Oh, this couldn't," or "This wouldn't"? Who saw something in you before you saw it in yourself?

We would love to hear your story. Because resilience isn't built in isolation. It's built in relationships. It's built in connection. And sometimes it only takes that one person.

So next week, you're going to meet our first guest, who is a very special person, and I can't wait to tell you more about her. But I want to leave you with this.

Who was your person? Who was your Auntie V?

Drop us a message at Ashley@TheResilientKid.co.uk or DM us on the socials and tell us who that person was for you.