THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 5 – Episode 4

Support for you and our Children after the Southport tragedy

A message first to the families. Our heartfelt are deeply saddened by the recent tragic events in Southport and we extend our sincerest condolences to the families of the children who were killed and injured on that day. No words can truly capture the pain and sorrow that you must all be experiencing.

As a community, we grieve with you and stand in solidarity during this incredible difficult time. Our commitment is to provide unwavering support, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all of our children. Together we can navigate through this challenging time. And I hope that this video will help those children affected and those families.

We need to, after a monumental tragedy like this, we need to start to create a feeling of safety for our kids. This is kind of, not unprecedented, but a very rare event. And we need to remind our kids of this, so that they don't live in fear for the rest of their lives. One of those ways is to give them a real sense of where their safe place is, so if that's in the home, that could be the bedroom, with you, if it's in a summer camp for instance, and I've had lots of people who run summer camps reach out and we've got a little guide, so I'll put that up there for you, um, for parents or, for employees, and for

summer camp operators. But creating that sense of safety away from the hustle and bustle of either the house or the, the rest of the children, where they can go and just process what's happening and where they can just kind of get a little bit quiet time. Now one of the questions that often comes up with tragedies like this is should we tell them?

So for instance if you're, my advice is if they're under seven and they don't know already, then I wouldn't tell them no because what we're going to do then is, is probably traumatize them, you know, because where do you stop with, with that news? So if they're under seven, I wouldn't tell them unless they're asking questions.

Children don't need to know unless they're asking about it. If they are asking, give them the bare facts, and please, please reiterate this is a very rare event, and then talk about if they're going to summer camps, holiday camps. Talk about what is in place, what safety features. Now, I spoke to a lot of holiday camps yesterday and their operators.

They are making sure doors are locked. They are making sure people are signed in and signed out. They have got key workers so that each child has got a person of safety, a person who they can trust to go to if they're worried or they're anxious. As a parent myself, I know, our immediate thought is to just keep them home, and at time of recording, my child is at holiday camp.

Um, and we thought long and hard about this, and actually, what are we saying? And he's older, we discussed it with him, but there was no doubt that he was gonna go. I am more than confident in the safety aspects of where he is, and also because I don't want to let them win. I don't want my kid growing up with that anxiety.

Is it a risk? Yes, but that risk is small and we risk take every day and we, we assess as parents, we assess those risks all the time. And I think it's really important that we give them that opportunity to learn, to laugh, to make connections, and as horrible as what's happened in Southport, it has happened and we can either hunker down and everything in us as parents wants to keep them with us, don't we?

But I feel like it's really important because kids look to us. They absolutely look to us to see if we are anxious, if we are worried, and they take their cue from us. And so for me, it's around making sure that they are supported, that the camp staff know what they're doing, that the operators know what they're doing.

And things like having a key worker, having regular check ins with everybody. Buddying up, you know, getting them to buddy up with friends so that they know where they're at and so that if there is anything, and it's often the quiet ones, it's not the ones who are telling you their worries, it's often the quiet ones that might be worried, but I wouldn't tell them unless they already know, over seven the chances are they'll have heard about it from other means, whether that's social media, friends, parents, overhearing conversations, the radio, the news, the usual.

So have very open and honest frank conversation, but keep facts, keep to the facts, and talk about the kind of safety procedures they've put into place. Also, give them a code word. So, I do this all the time with mine, that if they're somewhere away

from me, they can either message me, or get to use somebody's phone, and they only have to say this code word, and there's no questions asked, I will go and get them.

They clearly don't feel safe, and I will go and get them. Now, we know there will be a lot of anxiety. That anxiety won't be just around us as parents. But it'll be for the kids, it'll be for the employees, it'll be for the camp operators. This is something that's going to affect everybody. And so it's really important that we lead, as parents, we lead on this.

And, you know, we make sure all the checks are done, we make sure that our kids are safe. But actually, do we keep them home? In my opinion, no. My opinion is to let them enjoy and be kids as long, you know, as long as they can. We want to restore that sense of safety and stability for our kids and also promote that those familiar activities really help kids process their emotions.

And, the last thing we want is for them to have long term anxiety or separation anxiety from us. You know, when they go to nursery, part of us handing them over to that safe person is that their safety then is transferred to that other person, and they do that throughout their life, and it's really important that we promote that.

Also, the benefits of going is, you know, independence, it's building their confidence, it's making those social connections. And actually, right now, I think they need opportunities for distraction and fun, you know, and fun. But what can you do if your child is struggling with this? Maybe they have overheard or you've had the conversation and they can't understand and they're, they're worried.

So a couple of things I would say to you is Yes, create that sense of safety and that feeling of safety for us because our brain doesn't know the difference between real and an imagined threat. So creating a feeling of safety will really help alleviate those anxieties. Um, when we are stressed or when we are anxious, We, our body releases stress hormones and it often sits in the tummy of younger children and can cause physical pain.

So do take it on board when they say they've got tummy ache. It will be real. You know, there is research to say that pain is real, that they feel. Um, so what can we do about it? Exercise. So anything, kind of running around, playing tag, excuse me, things like that. Any physical activity helps disperse those stress hormones, as well as this distraction, but it is around getting rid of those stress hormones for them.

Water is really good for this, so baths, showers, swimming, anything like that really helps. But actually, even if just washing the pots, putting the hands in water, getting the wrists under running water really helps disperse those stress hormones. Outside. Take your dog for a walk if you've got one. Get outside, just go, you know, see what you can notice.

Give them a little list walking outside. If you've got older kids, teens, again, all of these will, be relevant, still trying to get them outside, whether it's, you know, you go walking down to local, coffee shop to get a milkshake, getting them to take the dog for a walk, anything like that, but just get them outside really helps calm the nervous system.

It's really important and talk to them. You know, really talk to them about it, give them the opportunity, and if you can, kind of refrain from jumping in with your opinions. Allow them to just get it off their, chest, of what they're thinking, what they're processing. Ask open ended questions, there's some examples in the, in the handout.

The free handout, so please get that, download it, read through it, there's more tips in there. Again, as I started, I will finish. I cannot imagine what those families are going through, or friends of those families. We entrust our kids to these places, and we need to continue to do that. And this is not a PR exercise, this is our kids need to live a full and rewarding life.

And making new friends, having new experiences is part of that. And what we don't want to do is build a long-term anxiety issue for them. If you are struggling in the handout, there is also some resources there, free resources that you can go to. But you can also reach out to me here, Ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk And I will be more than happy to jump on a call with you. Again, my heartfelt condolences and sorrow for everybody who has been affected, whether they knew those children or not. Um, our love, light and prayers go with them. Take care.