Transcript

The Resilient Kid Podcast

Season 8 – Episode 6

Where is the space for our young men with Sarah Vogel

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: Where do our young men belong in society? That is the hot topic at the moment, and I am very lucky and very privileged that Sarah Vogel has come back as a second time guest on the podcast here at The Resilient Kid, because we had this conversation off air and we thought, lots of people are talking about this and we think it's really important that this is an open debate.

That we look at the reasons why that might be for our young men. And , anybody who knows me, I talk about our kids and that is from teeny tiny right up, , into the twenties. But our as in our responsibility, we are a society together. It's really important that we claim these kids.

So, hello Sarah. How are you? Welcome back.

Sarah Vogel: Oh, thank you so much, Ashley. I'm thrilled a bit that you invited me back and this is a topic that has been, I've been so burning about for years now, . So I've noticed that the conversation has escalated since Adolescence was broadcast fairly recently.

But for some time now, I'm speaking now as a school governor as well as a parent of a young man that I've been raising the issue of how do we connect better with our young men in schools. So that, as we discussed, that they're not attracted elsewhere to less healthy relationships, to less healthy activities.

And what's interesting is that it really has started to open people's eyes to the issues that we have if we don't connect with our young men from a really early age and allow them to be who they need to be and give them some positive messages about what masculinity means these days.

So yeah, I'm delighted. It's just one of my most passionate subjects recently.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: Yeah, I think let's start on that masculinity, because I find very much at the moment that our boys are, are walk in this tight rope of masculinity and they feel pressure to conform to like, , traditional norms and being tough, still being competitive on the one hand. And I heard a phrase this week and it kind of made me feel a little bit sick, but I have seen it in my son's friends.

And it is let me think what it's called. It is called.

Bigorexia. So bigorexia is where they just wanna build muscle and I think that is an external extension of what we're talking about. So on the one hand we've got this masculinity and like we've said before Sarah, on the other hand, we have brought up these young guys, strong feminine women, , bringing up our boys with , feminist values, which a hundred percent we should.

However, there is a little bit of a caveat that you and I were talking about, that we, in society, we are saying not as us as parents, but in society we are saying feminism is just for girls.

Sarah Vogel: Yeah, I think it's one of the big misunderstandings about feminism and , when we think about feminism, I mean, I've only recently in the last few years come to recognize that feminism should always be intersectional.

In other words, we should be considering all the different types of issues that women face. But I think it also should include the fact that , it does not harm men. And I think there's a whole narrative out there that feminism has been very harmful to men which is a whole nother subject.

But one of the things I, I wanted to go back to in terms of influence and I was staying with my brother last week and , he's in his kind of mid-fifties. He's a little bit younger than me. He's my younger brother. And I was thinking about our upbringing because one of the things he was telling me about, and he's, so he would be Gen X, okay was that he's got a couple of male friends,

so one lives quite near to him and he's known him ever since primary school. And another guy is a, a friend that he knew from, the town that we grew up in, in, in Sussex. And the one , he's got quite severe mental health issues. Really doesn't go out of his house much, but my brother kind of, he'll drive an hour and a half and take him shopping every week so that he gets to go.

There's a, very sweet, tender, caring relationship that they have also. Really vastly inappropriate humour they have between each other, ? This isn't kind of all sort of, , blue birds and rainbows, they're very kind of rough and ready, but there is a sweetness about it.

And equally, he was talking to me about his friend who lives quite nearby, who's recently moved down to be close to him, and how he will take him a plate of food or he will invite him over. And he said, he said something like, it's just a couple of blokes in their fifties looking after each other.

And I thought, this is the sweetest, most lovely thing. And I thought, well, what's going on there with masculinities? Because obviously, it's not necessarily a societal thing, , we don't hear people saying men should take care of each other. And what I, I was reflecting on was the fact that we grew up in a single parent household.

So it was just my mom, my grand and granddad had a fair amount to do with our upbringing. But I'm the eldest, so there's a woman, and I've always been quite, believe it or not, quite a strong personality. So I think his influences were, were fairly sort of matriarchal growing up. And I also think, if you think Gen Xs and Boomers, although we had some unhealthy influences, they only really came from our friends, our parents,

and , what we might have seen on tv, but there was really very little else. And maybe, , if there was some religion in the, , in the family or whatever. But I think we, we now recognize that young men have. So many places they can go for their influences. , They have gaming, which is notoriously sexist and misogynistic.

They have , dark places in the internet that they can find that I bet most parents dunno about. Like it's says in Adolescence, we don't even know the emojis that they're using. We don't understand that. , They have all kinds of different influences, all kinds of different media.

And I was thinking about how in my childhood, the boys that I grew up with wouldn't have had quite as many, so they would've been much more driven by the messages that they had from their parents and the messages they had from school, which in the sixties and seventies weren't ideal. But somehow there has been, for instance, for people like my brother, there has been that ability to just develop who you are and to develop your own kind of masculinity.

And whilst my brother's heterosexual, but I know he used to nick my eyeliner when I was at school. He stole my denim jacket, and he would take things. and he's always expressed himself in a way that doesn't necessarily conform to a hundred percent straight white masculinity. So it was just something that occurred to me just from observation recently.

And again, I would contrast that with something that I experienced recently as a governor, I had to sit on a panel to handle a complaint, and I won't go into the details, but one of the things that was emergent was that the messages that this particular year six boy had been receiving was, you need to be a soldier and you need to protect your family when I'm not here.

So this was a strong message that the father was giving out. And I, I can see that that was causing this child quite a lot of confusion in terms of what's he supposed to do. And it was kind of getting him into trouble.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: And I think, those two very polar opposite examples you give us there, Sarah, and now listeners, you can hear why we've brought Sarah back.

But yeah, , I think first let me just talk to that example about the young year six boy, because no year six, irrespective of race or gender should be in charge, should feel responsible. And I add an old, professor who taught me hypnotherapy . And he was amazing, but he said he'd struggled all of his life and he had like, he looked like a Viking, if I, if I say that, you'll know what I mean.

He had a big beard, long hair, , he did reenactments at weekend. He was real masculine, , looked, and he said he really, really struggled all of his life because he'd gone into a nurturing career because he, , he was a counsellor and a therapist, and he did hypnotherapy. He said he portrayed this big Viking thing because his dad said to him as he was leaving for war you are now in charge.

And he said, that stayed with me all my life and he said, is this who I am? He said, and I kind of got to like the age of 50 and thought, oh my God, really? Is this who I want to be? And , and it's, it's really hard because those messages and something that you and I are both passionate about.

If a child or anybody, any vulnerable. And if they don't know where they are at, if they don't know where they fit, if they don't know they've got a place at the table,

they are vulnerable. And these messages that they're getting, , can really influence that and, and shape their brain. Like this is not just a, oh, I think this one day, and I don't think it the next, if you are listening to messages and you're being bombarded by messages, then it shapes our brain and that's really hard to unshape after that.

Just to, just to return to your, to your brother for a second, because I thought that was a brilliant example. ? And my son is, , he dances, he acts, he does rowing, , he did rugby for a little while, but didn't really like it. But he, he's found his stride now, ,

with the acting and dancing. And at the beginning he never told anybody and now he doesn't care. And , he was in a production this year for school a couple of months ago, and all of his mates, proper gym bunnies, , footballers, like, they've built like six pack. They were, they all bought tickets.

They came, they supported him, they whooped and hollered, and at the end he was playing Shrek. So he was all green. But at the end, I have this. Heartwarming. Beautiful photograph of them all going, mate, you rocked it, you did it. ? And it was just so beautiful. And a couple of them came up to us and went, didn't he do well?

They were like, Mrs. Costello. And they never comment, oh, , Mr. Costello, blah, blah, blah. And it was so lovely. And they were like, we're so proud of him. And it was a bit of a game changer I think, for him with his confidence and also because he's very confident on there. But , what, a beautiful group of lads who will take the mickey out of each other, absolutely rip each other mercilessly, , go to the gym, build all these muscles, but appreciate that this is his thing.

And they'll meet him where he is at. And I thought that about your brother. How beautiful that he's got that nurturing element of two 50-year-olds just looking after each other. That is, and that's something to be celebrated. , Along with him probably being in that, I was trying to work out probably romantic eras where the lad were eyeliners, , the days of like, the style heaven, 17, all the, , span out ballet where they were all wearing makeup, Adam and all that.

So Amazing. So we've had like a few different examples there and just shout out as well to Finn's friends because they sometimes listen to the podcast of, well Done you guys. But we kind of talked about that. What do you think, Sarah, the messages are that these young boys are getting at the moment?

Sarah Vogel: Well, I think for many of them and a different generation momentarily. So I spoke about Gen X, which you are right? Would've been in the era of new romantics, although it seemed bypassed my other brother who wouldn't wear eyeliner if you, , did something to force him to wear eyeliner, they wouldn't happen. Okay? So but what I will say is that, I think you and I did speak about Love Island. Another thing that, I'm not a , mad, passionate fan of it, but I remember thinking when I've been watching it, and these would be so not millennials, probably younger than that, so probably Gen Z I would say kind of young, the young boys, the young men that are on that.

And, and I've, I've noticed a real dichotomy in the way they behave. So on the one hand, it's the boys that express their emotions, cuddle each other, kiss each other, get really upset when their friends get voted out, really observed that behavior and that body language. On the other hand, they've still got some really, what I would consider to be really old-fashioned sexist tropes about things like making her my girlfriend.

I made her my girlfriend, , this idea and wifey and wifey material, this kind of narrative. So it was, it was quite interesting for me to kind of see these two things going on with that generational group. And it was very heartening to see them being emotional and cuddly and sweet with each other.

But then very disappointing to hear them talk about making someone their wife. It's like, it's not 1950 love. But anyway can you remind me what question that was? Because I just forgot what you asked me originally.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: So what I was saying, and you're a hundred percent right but what I was saying was what messages do you think these young, vulnerable men are getting?

Sarah Vogel: I think the issue is we are never gonna really, or we, I don't think we can really completely stop the messages because society is what it is and , children don't ask to be born into a certain family, a certain area, even the schools, they don't have any choice, do they?

So, however. Let's say , young men in general I think don't feel as listened to and as understood as they need to be. So let's, let's kind of wind that on a bit and think I'm a young man. I don't feel listened to. I don't feel understood. I'm quite confused about what masculinity means.

I may even be confused about something like sexuality. , I could be confused by all the messages that are out there, but I don't feel like I've got anywhere to go or I don't feel there's anyone that I trust to express myself in that way. And then I discover whilst I'm playing games, I discover somebody that says, look, .

Women are causing us problems. , They're making us feel inadequate, et cetera, et cetera. And before they've been pulled into a spiral of what we know to be in cell culture. So and I'm talking about boys in sort of secondary age here, but I think that there are other kind of unhealthy things.

I mean, this is how boys end up being lured into, if not listening to Andrew Tate himself. And I hate to even put his name in my mouth, but his disciples. So other men that have listened have thought about this and are now talking about it while they're gaming or talking about it. And I think if we think about those kinds of messages, I would imagine if I'm a young man or, , maybe an older primary school child who I feel disengaged, I feel disconnected, I feel like nobody really cares about me or listens to me. I'm gonna be gravitating towards some of those places where they're, they're designed to make me feel, listened to and understood, designed to make me feel included, designed to make me feel like I've found my people.

And of course, then the, the more toxic stuff starts because it may seem quite innocuous at first. So I think, I think that's the messaging that I would be more worried about. But I think as parents and teachers, educators, anyone who's around those, vulnerable children is to counterbalance that, is to ensure that you are trying to understand where they're at.

And I remember when my son I met Johnny when my son, my stepson was at 13. And we used to have dinner together as a family every night, which wasn't how they used to be. Cause Johnny was a single parent to Adam before we met. And they were kind of used to just taking their food and going off somewhere.

And I kind of said, let, let's eat together. And we used to eat together and Adam used to come down from his room, , and I remember saying to Johnny, if we didn't eat together, how would we know him? Because you can tell me if I'm wrong here, but I've certainly heard that there is psychological evidence that when children reach teenagers, girls get closer to you.

So girls are like this in your face with their problems. I have a girl as well, and that was true. And boys detach themselves they move away. And , you do have to work a bit harder to stay connected with them. You do have to ensure that you are creating that space for them to feel understood.

And I think, , parents will probably get that a bit more readily, but I don't necessarily think that all schools have recognized that yet because I think there's a more, , if, if there's a behavioural issue, a lot of schools are still in that punitive culture, , we'll give them detentions.

I've attended permanent exclusion panels, mostly in secondary, but we're talking a bit about year seven sometimes. But let's say this child has gone on to , they've got, as far as year 10, we're talking about people that have had a hundred detentions a year. And I'm thinking, well, my immediate thought is at what point did you realize the detentions weren't working?

So this system, and have we been, , a hundred surely, , if you banged your head a hundred times against a wall and said, it hasn't taken my headache away, , you'd kind of stop banging your head against the wall, wouldn't you? And I, I appreciate teachers do thankless tasks and they are dealing with different and more difficult behaviors quite a lot of the time.

But , , I, I feel like there needs to be a revolution in the way that we provide more nurturing, more listening, and more abilities, particularly for young men. I mean, young women have their own issues. But slightly more naturally young women are, are kind of, I mean, this may not, this may be a bit gender typed, but I think, , they're more likely to connect with each other and have their own ways of supporting each other.

And I mean, again, there's a whole other thing about toxicity with young women, but in, in the respective schools, I think, , they really should be thinking about how do we listen more to our young men? How do we try to understand them? How, how do we don't assume they're just sitting quietly in their room, don't assume that their relationships are healthy.

And that their influences are healthy because there are so many things out there. The ones we know about are bad enough. But what about the ones we don't know about as parents? Because we can't, , the, the internet and, , AI and deep fake and all the kinds of stuff that we are still learning about.

And I speak as a boomer here who knows nothing about any of that. , We have to work quite hard to catch up with the sorts of things that our children are exposed to.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: A hundred percent. A hundred percent. And I think there's a few things there isn't there? And what I liked about Adolescence is it looked at the role that everything had in society, , so the police were like the society section, and then parents, and then the kid themselves, and school. And I, and I kind of thought about that myself before we were talking, and I think you're really right.

I think for me, schools, , I'm always banging on about how it's broken, but one of the biggest things for me is in those formative years. So, so, and you are right by the way, around that period of time, girls do come towards like connection. They do go towards connection. And also, they are more socially accepted, more socially encouraged to express their feelings, boys

aren't we know that. So what happens is that time between say six and 14, that's where they're looking for male role models, right? That as a boy now, I said this at the top of the podcast, and I'll say it again today, we're just talking about boys. That's not because girls haven't got their own issues or that we can't talk about that we are just specifically talking about boys because of the rise of Adolescents and because this is something that we think goes unaddressed.

So back to that development period between those, they're looking for male role models. And it's really funny, I was talking to, after our recording of the last podcast, I was talking to my husband and I said, and this and this, and we said, and getting really passionate around the table. And he said, do you know one thing that really upsets me?

And Dave is the kind of guy who he does the ironing, he'll go and get Tampax for the older one. , He'll do anything in the house. We are definitely 50 50 parents. And he also, , he's built this house and apart by his own hand. So he is, , he's one of them that kind of covers all bases.

But what he said is Scouts now are mixed sex. And he said, I find that really hard because where is the space for just young men? Cadets is mixed. And , I think that has been for a long time. But he said, and for me, I was like, I think that's a business decision. He went, but it's the wrong business decision

Ashley. Guides and brownies are still girls. I said, and so it should be, but where is the space just to be a boy to mess about, to do all of those things that girls don't wanna put up with. They just don't, , do a Scouts for girls if that's what you wanna do, but don't, , we are taking away those opportunities for young guys to just be young guys.

And so I think that time, that six to 14 where we should have middle schools, like I'm a really. I really strongly believe we should have middle schools. And, and I know there is still some, but very few is that's the time that they're looking for those male role models. And they're not here, they're finding them online.

And one thing that we do know from research, well two things that I'll tell you from research is one, that if they haven't got a place at the table, they will go and find it. They will find where they fit in because we are human beings. We're supposed to live in tribes and that, and the second thing is that we know that boys align themselves to harmful peer behavior if that means they feel accepted.

Now they're both based on research. So we know that for sure. And Sarah, I'm gonna let you jump in 'cause she's biting at the bit. Yeah, she is.

Sarah Vogel: As ever yeah, I was gonna comment on what Dave said about the Scouts and so I had a conversation recently, quite briefly because I've been researching how can I bring in people into the schools that I'm involved with to support young men and to do some work with young men.

And one of the guys I spoke to is called Lee Chambers. And he has an organization called Male Ally, male Allies, I think. And I was chatting to him and he was saying that whenever he speaks to young men in schools that's exactly what comes out. So Dave's on the money there that , sports, now there's more space for women.

So they have mixed, , football mixed PE in some schools. And it seems like that is something, , that these spaces just for young men. Are important in, in helping them to kind of develop healthy relationships and healthy , connections and so on. Having that, having been said when I was a kid, we were, me and my brothers and various ones of our friends for, during that period we were in the Woodcraft folk, I dunno if you've ever heard of them, but they are a sort of non-religious group that was started by an ex-scoutmaster in the early twenties to help inner city children kind of understand the countryside more and so on.

But it was specifically for girls and boys. So we were in that kind of mixed environment. But I mean, some of the people that were in Woodcraft were also in scouts and were also in guides. And in some ways, I think that certainly gave me a healthy understanding of equalities because everybody piled in.

, We, from the youngest to the oldest child, they were involved in prep, preparing food cleaning up after everybody, picking litter. Even, even working with the , the latrines as we used to call them, , they would have a job to do. So even the six-year-olds felt they were making some, , participation in that bit of their society.

So it really was I think very, very useful for us. That having been said, , if, if young men are missing those places and they're finding less healthy places to be like online, like in gaming , the darker parts of the gaming sort of world, then , we need to really consider that.

And that's why I think that doing things for young men in schools is really important, is having them have a space where, , they can talk to somebody and be really listened to and really understood. And I mean, one of the things that's quite interesting is that I, I would advocate for they, for those spaces, I dunno what you think , but I would advocate for those spaces being run by men.

So I think it's a space for men to talk to young men. I think, I think it's important that they don't feel like, I mean, in the home I think it's a different matter. , I'm not saying that, , everybody needs to have a man in the home, , we're not going down that road. But what I will say is that, , they will find their role models and.

I think both of my brothers had male role models that they found in the absence of , a, a father figure. My dad wasn't around when we were kids. My parents separated. So yeah, quite interesting, really. But yes, I think that's a role for men. I really do. And much as I would love to be in that space and listening to young men, I don't think it's, don't think it's my job.

I think it's my job as a parent and my job potentially as a governor or someone that might have influence elsewhere to, to raise the issues, but not necessarily be involved in in resolving the issues. But you may feel differently. I dunno, that's kind of my instinct, really, that it's, it's a bit like , sexual harassment and sexual assault.

, We're trying to call upon men to call out other men to call out their brothers and their colleagues and their friends rather than leaving it for women to do that work. So yeah.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: Yeah, a hundred percent. I, and I think, I think there's a place for everything, but I think I do, there is lots of, , my mom was a single mom for, , a long time.

And then she met, she met who I call dad now. And he, , he was that influence. But I think, so it's not that we are saying that everybody, , you need a dad in the home, but what you, what young men do is while their, , where their brain is developing, they do need a role model.

Whether that's a granddad, an uncle, , whether that's a scout master or , a sports coach. It doesn't matter as long as there is space and there is that connection because just in, in that generation between kind of my son and, and my husband.

When I first met my husband, we were really young. We were 15. We kind of got serious at 17, but he couldn't use the washing machine. He's, he came from a very traditional family. And we were very intentional in, in kind of teaching both of our kids all of the things so that they could look after themselves, so we could future proof them.

It wasn't for me, it wasn't about , one does one job and , like I've got friends who do like pink jobs and blue jobs. Like, it wasn't around that. It was about let's just give them all of the skills. But what, what we have noticed is that, but for Dave, it was very much, you do the garden and the girls do the house, ?

And, and now because of both of our kids can do both, , it is just, it's, it's, for me, it's around giving them all the opportunities, but equally recognizing that girls have their struggles and they need their space and with safe adults and that boys need their space with safe male adults. , Of course they can still have access to, us as women, but of, but it's really important and particularly I think for,

having just generally, we know that research tells us that it, it takes one significant adult to turn a kid's life around. Now are we saying it has to be a man for a boy? No, it can be any significant adult, but what we are saying is that there is a lack of male mentors. There is a lack of spaces where young men can go and, and be themselves, but also, , I know some really, we have here a

men's group, and that's just men go and chat about anything that's coming up for them. Sometimes they might just go for a coffee, sometimes they might go because they're really struggling mentally and they have, , they're not therapists, but they have trained mental health practitioners that just, , talk through in a group setting so that they can feel heard and, and that's a safe space for them.

We have just, there's just started up a dad's club on a Saturday morning. They all go and have breakfast together, and that is just literally just for guys to hang out together. And I think that's really important. So just to go back to the school, because I think the way that Adolescent did it with, with each of the sections of society was really good.

And so I kind of want to do that with us. If we think about school, Sarah, and you've just highlighted some, , some fundamental things that are wrong with our education system. One of the things for me is that I feel like naturally boys need to risk take they naturally for their own development, for their brain development, for their physical development, they need to risk take.

And what we do is we sit them in a classroom for hours on a time. There is not that movement. There's not that physical movement. I don't know about you, but I know certainly the difference between boys and girls. Me raising mine is that my son always needed a run out like a Labrador puppy. Like he needed that physical exercise.

My daughter, not so much, she would sit colouring for hours. And I think in the school system, we are not allowing boys to take the risk and so therefore they're aligning themselves to these risk takers. They're aligning themselves to this risky behavior. And as a school, if we educated them on.

Social media now. I know we do. And but also gaming, like for me, fundamentally boys having access, anybody in honesty, having access to games where you can shoot, kill and rape women in a game hypothetically, that is still setting up a pathway in your brain. I don't need research to tell me that's not okay.

Sarah Vogel: Yeah. Interestingly, I've had quite a few conversations with my son about that because he was in the gaming industry. He's not now, he's gone back to Uni at 33. He's about to do a psychology degree. But yeah, both him and his partner are, are gamers as well. And I was saying to his partner, , what's it like as a woman gaming?

And she said, yeah, it's terribly misogynistic, hateful. , And you have to be really, really tough to cope with that. Yeah, so going back to the school thing, yeah, I mean, part of me was thinking when you were saying that about kind of boys and girls is to recognize that, , there are the extremes aren't there, where girls and boys are typical of, of their gender.

But then we've also got that kind of middle ground where, , for instance, my business partner, he couldn't bear the sport, he couldn't bear sport at school and he used to just play sport with the girls. He, he somehow negotiated that with the PE teachers. And he's my age, he's a boomer, and he managed to get to play the girls sport because he just didn't.

And, and my friend's son. He's just negotiated because he also hated it. He hated the roughness of it. He didn't wanna take a ball in the face. He used to get teased for not being good enough. He's about 16 now, and he negotiated with his school that sport can be mixed. So I think what we don't wanna do is we don't wanna let those kids who aren't necessarily classic , binary genders if you like, even if they're not

non-binary. Even, even if they're not, even if they wouldn't describe themselves as non-binary, is what I'm trying to say. So I might describe myself as entirely female, but I still might prefer to play football. And again, there might be a boy who's a hundred percent, masculine and identifies as male, but still doesn't like the, just doesn't like the sports stuff.

So I think, , I don't know. It's kind of confusing, isn't it? Cause we have to create a space that where everybody feels comfortable. And I think we have to, I suppose be careful not to over compensate for the gender binaries and, and then lose the minority of kids who might be in the middle and still kind of not really sure what they identify as, for example.

And I know that's another whole topic. So I was thinking about that. And yeah, just this idea of safe adults. I, I was exactly thinking that when you were talking, , that what we need is we need the adults that these people identify with and, and connect with to have those kinds of helpful messages about , what, what does masculinity mean?

I mean, that's, that's something that I think schools could explore in a conversational way. What do we mean by that these days? And then the same thing

about critical thinking. , That's another thing that doesn't necessarily involve gender. It doesn't necessarily involve anything other than thinking more critically about where your messages are coming from.

And who's behind those messages and what's their agenda, ? Because at quite a young age, what weirdly, and it was to do with the Woodcraft folk. 'Cause it happens that my auntie who is in London, but also was involved with Woodcraft folk groups in London, I remember when I was quite young, she said to me, remember that what you read in the paper isn't necessarily the truth.

That somebody is gonna benefit from you reading that, or somebody's paid for you to read that. And you need to, , find some wider sources. I mean, she didn't say it like that, but she, that was the message I got and I thought, that stuck with me. That stuck with me. And so yeah, I think , what we need to do really is we need to set ourselves up in schools and in families, I guess, to make sure that

our kids, whatever their gender that they're listened to and they feel understood and that they feel that there is a safe space for them to go to express their emotions. Plus we need to give them positive role models of all different descriptions so that they are able to identify and go, oh, they're like me.

So it's a bit like I often say, , to women when I'm working with women specifically with a more of a feminist agenda, that , , you kind of owe it to the young women who are younger than you, who are looking to you as an example of how to be a woman in society. , They're looking to you to give them that role model.

And, and I'd say that's true for any child. , They need to be able to see someone that they can identify with and someone that they can feel, or at least I know that I'm not on my own here in the world. At least I know that, there is somebody that I feel will understand me. Because I think, it is young boys that we're talking about. And , I feel that that is a, a real priority because it's gone too far, , and we've been thinking about this for years and years and years, and nothing's really happened. , If anything, it's kind of got worse for them in terms of their evidence.

I mean, because I'm a safeguarding governor, I think that, , I do prevent training every year for governors and prevent, if you don't know, is to do with preventing radicalization. So there's a government initiative that if anyone in any school spots the early, early, early signs of radicalization and they speak about that as political radicalization.

So it might be far right. It might be other extremist views that they get onto a program that helps to deradicalize them, and I've often thought, well, we should treat misogyny the same. We should be looking for the early signs of that and deradicalizing that, but not in a punitive way, in a way that understands where they get this message from and how we can help to counterbalance that message.

And I remember reading some research that there is, there was a de-radicalization program run in Germany by a German researcher who has identified the connections between far-right ideology and misogyny. And, , obviously those things at the extreme can lead to terrorism as well.

But at the every day, and I hate even saying this at the every day, it can kind of escalate things like sexual harassment sexual assault and so on. So, , I think we should be in schools. We should be treating it as seriously as we treat. , Any extremism because the outside of our awareness, there is lot of extremist views.

So yeah, so this idea of kind of positive role models of all descriptions, but particularly for boys, a positive revised version of what does masculinity mean So that these young men who are, , getting into the bodybuilding, , the bigorexia thing, that they're allowed to have different bodies as well.

I mean, there's a huge body positivity movement isn't there for women and young women though I dunno that it's been that successful with some young women, but. , There is a huge movement towards that. And there needs to be something that helps people see that, , their self-esteem is important, , that they're listened to, they're understood and , they're valued and that they feel heard.

And I think, , that for me, one of our primary human drivers is to feel seen and heard and understood. And I think, , that a lot of the work that I do with adults is about teaching them how to in leadership positions, how to make sure their teams feel seen, heard, and understood in whatever way.

But I think, , we need to get back right to bit basics, don't we, the children and make sure they do as well.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: A hundred percent. And I think one of the things, and I think that's really important what you, you've said there is yes, we do think there should be , spaces that boys can just be boys.

But it's really important that we recognize that, , my son would never have fitted into there and can he play football yeah, he can, but he wouldn't do it to any level 'cause he doesn't enjoy it, ? And so it's important that we have that array, but that there is space for everybody.

And I think what you've just said there, Sarah, is really important. It's, it's not about us going, boys have got to be masculine, or boys have got to have a nurturing side, or boys, , it's, it's about meeting them where they're at. I think from a school perspective, I was educating on where they're getting those messages and how reliable are those messages.

, When I, I constantly studied various different things, , to do with young people. And the first thing when I was on my neuroscience course a few years ago was they said, before we do anything, we're gonna teach you how to read a research paper and to, to check it's verified and to check that this is real because there's so much clickbait out there or research says, and then that's it.

And, and I think we don't do that with kids as much. So I think from a school point of view, I think for us being able to give them a space that they can learn and no judgment. , This is, these are the headlines, this is who's behind it. , All that kind of really giving them that education around critical thinking rather than just lecturing them.

But giving them that, giving them, , space to be able to talk. And , you made me think about, because I think as much as it's really lovely that there are groups, , not enough, but there are groups where people, where young men can go and talk. Sometimes I find as a counsellor, I get teens and some older teens who are male, who have specifically sought me out to speak to me as a woman.

And I'll, I will always say, , can I ask you, did you want a male counsellor? Why, , why did you come to me as a female therapist? And he said, because I don't wanna have to hold anything back. I don't wanna have to filter what I'm saying. So I think if, , I think if we can create, and yeah, it's a big ask, but if we can create spaces for everybody where if you feel that you want to, , have those male models that you are missing those male models, then we've got that for you.

But also, like you say, have the spectrum of various different opportunities, , and I think that's where, for me, as I think, so just to kind of recap before we finish as schools, I think if we can give and then messages and, and help them with critical

thinking and asking, , those, and also, yes, teach them about feminism, but if feminism for everybody, , and, and for me it's also around equality training, isn't it?

Which, we know, by the way, Sarah's nodding head really vigorously. Also, I think then as parents, what we need to do is invite them to the table. And I love the fact that you talk about sitting around the table. 'Cause I often talk to families around, if your kid is eating in their room, they haven't got a place at your table.

If they are not helping around the house, they don't know they're needed, therefore they don't belong. It's up to us as families, as parents, whatever that looks like, to claim our kids. And yes, that means putting in boundaries sometimes. And yes, that means no, you don't. You're not on your phone twenty-four seven and that's okay.

We don't always need to be their friend. We need to put that in because those boundaries we put in with them means that they hold those boundaries later with peers. And that's really important. I think having that seat around the table as a family is really, really important because how do you know them?

They're always in the room. How do you know what's happened today at school or college. I, I have a friend who has got a child at university and they only text apart from the odd holiday when they come home and I go and I said, do you know that when you speak to them, even if it's just a, a call, a video call, it lights up a part of their brain that a text can't reach.

And that is, , and for me, I know you're trying to give her space, but it's really, really important that you phone, , you hear the sound of the voice, you hear if the, , something's caught in the throat because they can't tell you something or they're worried or whatever. It's really important that we have those video calls so we can see the state of the bedroom behind them because maybe they're not looking after themselves.

And so I think for us to connect as families more, I think that, but I kind of wanna finish on the last bit for me, which is, what do you think we can do as a society, Sarah, to encourage our young men to handle big feelings, to be able to take risks safely and healthfully and so that they know where they belong.

Sarah Vogel: So just find it, it was a big question. Luckily, I was looking for my mute button, so I was able to think about it. Well, oh goodness. It is a really big question and I. I think probably harks back to what I said earlier is I think on the

whole, I think women work quite hard in the emotional , labour of families and everything else because of our traditionally horizontally segregated jobs that we tend to do.

, More women in primary schools, more women in childcare, more women in nurturing professions, et cetera. So I, I guess what we need to do is we need to bring our brothers, our husbands, we need to bring them in and , encourage more of what you said, , the Saturday club for men, , the, we need, we need to spread the words about tenderness and nurturing and so on.

Allow men to sort of come out, if you like, as , as kind of nurturing role models, as well as other sorts of role modelling and. So for me it is about being able to create some space for men as well as we are creating space for young men as well. Because I think, I mean this is, I don't wanna start a whole nother conversation, but I was just thinking about how sometimes women gate keep the emotional side of things and, , , it, it because, because of old fashioned views about the women's places in the home, , they don't like to give away that. They don't like to give away those things. And I think what we need to do is we need to think about what can we give away, but also how can we invite men into our emotional world and allow it to be for them as well?

Because I know that, I mean, my husband grew up with a very quiet dad and a very quiet grandfather who would never have spoken about trauma or isolation or emotions at all. And I think, , that's kind of his in, that's, that's more or less where he lives. But it doesn't stop me inviting him into the conversation.

And I think, , there's, there's jobs for all of us at all age groups with all kinds of men and, and, women, women and young, young women need to do the same. I think, , we need to allow space for that in our lives. Whilst also kind of encouraging our, our male relatives, friends, loved ones to play their part, to not leave it to us, but to call out certain things, to have time with their sons, their nephews, et cetera.

So I, I guess it's just us, all of us pulling together and thinking about ourselves as a team, as the village, as , as we know. In the village. We all need to have those roles. And yeah, so I think that's the thing. And I think also just keep pushing for schools to, 'cause schools are such an enormous part of a child, a child's experience.

And I think we know from some of the, I mean, I speak to people that I was at school with who said I had a horrible time at school. I hated school. I felt really bullied. I felt really isolated. And I was like, blind me. Didn't even know that, didn't know it at the time. So I think some people have such a horrible time that we have to recognize that they need to, , they need to find that space in school as well.

So I keep banging the drum, , I'm, I'm literally banging on that drum constantly in the small way that I can. In the same way that you are, , in your village, you are also encouraging that conversation.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: Yeah. Just so , the Village is the new Facebook community group that we've set up for people like us, people who are listening to the podcast.

, Whether you are a parent, a carer, an educator, a school governor, just people who care. , That that thing that we said at the beginning, that hour kids, that's the kind of thing, but it's a supportive group that if you are having a hard day, my God, come in and tell us and we'll all have your back, like, for sure.

Do what, what you said there, Sarah is, is so important, and I, and I kind of want to add to that by saying for me, I think when I look at that, what can we do as a society? Because it's very easy to go, well, , the games that that kids are playing should be banned by the government. Of course, we could say that, but it's not gonna happen anytime soon because they'll probably get a really big revenue.

But I think for me, if we can make, kind of masculinity. Okay. Like it's okay to be masculine again. I think that's really important. But that includes for me, around that emotional education. , Making the strengths around kindness. Like your brother, I, my God, I want to send your brother's friend a care package.

Do what I mean? That having that kindness, having that emotional awareness, being able to ask for help, seeing them as real strengths, that's still part of a healthy masculinity for me. That is healthy masculinity with, , along with accountability and stuff like that. So I think for sure we could do that with our young men.

I think the other thing is that I feel a lot of the time that our guys are going to unhealthy groups, , risk takers, things like that. They're aligning themselves with there because they feel like they belong. They, they, they're seeking that belong for

two reasons, because A, they've not got a connection, so let's connect in and B, because they've not got a purpose.

So let's give them a purpose. , That's kind of my big thing. And then I think what you said before is about challenging those online influences, yet educating them around the messages, the critical thinking. And also, I guess to kind of end, I feel like let the boys be many things. Let them be what they want.

One of our massive values here at the Resilient Kid is to meet them where they're at. And , if that is that your young person, you think where is the, where is their strong male role model? And . Then start with that conversation, , around the table. Start with the conversation of who do you admire?

Now that might be one of them might turn around and go, Beyonce. Why? Okay, why? Well, she's strong, she's powerful, she's black. I can see her. ? Amazing. That's fabulous. So who do we know in our community that can give you those strengths, , that can give you those characteristics that we can connect you with?

My eldest wanted to do law when she first started her A levels. And I was like, who do I know in my community that is successful, is strong, is young, because there's no point in, , giving her a role model that's like 60. So, and, and actually, uh, Afiya Amesu who is an amazing, amazing lawyer here in well in Birmingham, and, and I, we reached out, she's one of our TEDx speakers. She reached out and she was like, a hundred percent you can come with me, jump on a train. I'll see you on Wednesday. Come to my chambers. I'll take you to court for two days. , Things like that. We can do that for our, our young lads as well.

Like ask them who do they admire, because I think for one, when we know who they admire, we've got an insight into where, what they're thinking. Also, two, what would you want to see? Where's the gaps? I think that's what I'm trying to say is where is the gaps for our young people, irrespective of, , gender, sexuality, where is there gaps and how can we fill them?

Because if we don't fill them, if we are not having the conversations, who is? I think that's kind of what I think our conversation today kind of leads me to. Anything to add, Sarah, before we finish?

Sarah Vogel: No, a hundred percent agree with, if we are not in the conversation

with them, somebody will be. So, yeah. Agree with that completely. The other thing I was thinking was that we need to, I think as adults, as parents, I think we not, we need to be not afraid of who our children are, ? And it reminded me that when my daughter, she's 26 this year, but when she was in nursery she came home with a picture of her and two of her friends Rory and I can't remember the other guy, but two little boys, basically.

All of them, three, all of them wearing like tutu and waving wands perfectly happy. Not a problem. But I have, I have known, another, a friend of mine's child when he was about three, he, he had, in fact, we gave him Ella's Ariel dressing up outfit in complete with a long red wig. And he loved it, and he wore it all the time.

And his dad went mad about it. His dad didn't like it at all. And I, what I want to say is, let's not, let's not make our children wrong. If they don't necessarily, , if in exploring who they are, if, if whoever they are, meet them where they're at, don't be afraid of where they're at, , help them to see that that might be, I mean, one of my relatives they in secondary school first said they were lesbian.

Now identify as trans the age of 15 and, nobody's making a fuss about it because we think that there is, it's a period of exploration. It's a period of exploration for that child, that teenager. And I think if everybody started to get up in their feelings about it and clutching their pearls and saying, Ooh, , this is wrong, that's gonna have an impact on that child.

And, , it's, it's even the, the name they go by isn't the name they were given. And what was really funny is that I think our, my family adopted the new name a bit more quickly than the immediate family. And it's not from any negative association, but just kind of, it took them a little while to kind of catch up with using the new name.

So, yeah. So just to echo what you said, I, I absolutely agree. We have to meet children where they're at, understand them and even if they're doing things that we think are. Dangerous or risky or if they're in certain conversations with people we don't like, is not to make them wrong, but to continue to try and understand them.

Because if we start making our kids wrong, then they are gonna, they'll close down. That's it. The door will be shut. They won't come back and talk to you again. So that would be my final point is to make it as easy as possible for them to talk with you.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: Yeah, a hundred percent. And , yeah, I can only echo what Sarah is still said.

If, if we are not having that conversation, if we are not getting to find out who our kids are, somebody else will. And we do. That's not a veiled threat. That's just that we know that. And so have those conversations as difficult as sometimes they are. And what, what I will say is and it's the whole reason why I set up the village, to be honest.

But what I will say to you is it is no reflection on your parenting. What they choose, what they explore, who they are. It is not a reflection on us as parents. It is who they are. Meet them where they're at, and have those conversations. And what? Sometimes if you sit back and watch them and allow them to flourish in whatever way that is, it's a gift.

And some people don't get that to watch their kids grow. So I think have the conversations, have the debates. , I love a good debate with my kids around the table, but have the conversations. And one question I always go is, what can I do to support you with this? Now whether that is the young trans person that Sarah's talking about, whether that is they wanna try a new hobby, whether it is, they're really struggling emotionally asking that question, what can I do to support you with this?

It's a game changer. Sarah, thank you for joining us today. Another one, another good one, Sarah. I've got a little WhatsApp group and, and we literally message each other and I, I just can feel another podcast coming up. But thank you for today. I always love talking to you, obviously. I am racking my brains of how we can work together because I love this woman.

She's amazing. And so Sarah, thank you for joining us and have an amazing, amazing day.

Sarah Vogel: Thank you so much, I love you too. And yeah, I'd love us to do more together. I've just, our conversations are amazing. I'm so glad we found each other and yeah, fantastic. So you have a great time as well, and anyone who's listening, , I hope you found it helpful.

Ashley - The Resilient Kid: Yeah. And please check out Sarah.

I'm gonna put all her details in the show notes as we know. She works for an amazing, charity. She does volunteering at a charity. She is a school governor, but she has a business as well. , That talks about leadership and, and that can be in schools. It can be in businesses. But , if you align with Sarah's , values like I do, then you would wanna check her out, of course.

And if you are a company or a CEO, get her into your company because listen, how, how passionate she is. So imagine what she's like at a job. Thank you, Sarah. Take care. Lovely. And thank you for listening. If you want to recommend something that you would like us to discuss, if you want me and Sarah to discuss some at, drop me an email.

But , if there's something that you think that we've touched on today that you , I'd like to hear more about that hit reply or comment underneath the podcast or drop me a message either on the socials. Come and connect into the village. Take care everyone. Lots of love from both of us.