

## AI TRANSCRIPT FOR BRAAAINS PODCAST EPISODE 004 - CHILDREN'S BRAINS (BRAAAINSPodcast.COM)

00:00:09 - Sarah Taylor

Welcome to Braaains, a podcast exploring the inner workings of our brains and how film and television portray them. Hosted by me, a film and television editor, Sarah Taylor

00:00:16 - Heather Taylor

and by me, writer director Heather Taylor. Before we begin, we wanted to acknowledge that the lands from which we recorded this podcast are part of territories that long served as a gathering place for diverse indigenous peoples. And we are thankful as guests on this land to be able to live, work, and gather.

00:00:33 - Sarah Taylor

Here on today's episode, we'll be talking about children's brains. We're going to talk to child behavior specialist Aynsley Graham about how children's brains develop and the importance of media literacy. But first, we're going to talk to my daughter

00:00:43 - Heather Taylor

and my niece, Charlotte

00:00:46 - Sarah Taylor

About being a kid and how she tries to have a healthy brain.

00:00:49 - Heather Taylor

So, Charlote, I heard that you want to talk about brains. Yeah.

00:00:54 - Sarah Taylor

Can you tell everybody how old you are and what grades you're in?

00:00:57 - Charlotte

I'm six and I'm in kindergarten, but I'm actually almost going to be in grade one.

00:01:04 - Sarah Taylor

What is your best thing about kindergarten.

00:01:07 - Charlotte

That you can do? Like station times? Because sometimes you can have free choice and you can have iPads.

00:01:18 - Sarah Taylor

I didn't even know you had iPads in school.

00:01:19 - Heather Taylor

That sounds exciting. So what is the thing that you would like to do the most when you get older?

00:01:27 - Charlotte

Maybe reading some more chapter books and doing more writing.

00:01:33 - Sarah Taylor

Would you like to be a writer like Auntie Heather?

00:01:36 - Charlotte

Yes.

00:01:37 - Heather Taylor

So why do you think it's important to talk about our brains and how they work?

00:01:41 - Charlotte

Because you should make your brain healthy to know how to think well.

00:01:48 - Sarah Taylor

What kind of things would you do to make your brain healthy?

00:01:51 - Charlotte

You need to eat a lot of food for. You need to learn, you need to have more vegetables.

00:02:00 - Heather Taylor

What are the things you like to do?

00:02:02 - Charlotte

I like to do snakes and ladders and even I like doing more crafts.

00:02:11 - Sarah Taylor

Do you have a special craft person you like to craft with?

00:02:14 - Charlotte

Yes.

00:02:14 - Sarah Taylor

Who's that?

00:02:15 - Charlotte

Graham.

00:02:16 - Sarah Taylor

Graham's a very good crafter.

00:02:18 - Charlotte

Yes.

00:02:19 - Heather Taylor

You also do dancing, right?

00:02:21 - Aynsley Graham

Yes.

00:02:22 - Heather Taylor

What kind of dance you do?

00:02:23 - Charlotte

So I usually do hip hop and jazz and then musical theater. And then my favorite one is usually the hip hop because my dance teacher said I'm really good at hip hop. So I'm going to usually do hip hop more than dance and jazz and belly.

00:02:52 - Heather Taylor

So how does you feel when you dance? Like, how does it make your body feel? How does it make your brain feel when you move your body?

00:03:00 - Charlotte

I feel, like, really happy once I move around and move.

00:03:06 - Heather Taylor

What kind of thing? Charlotte do you do like when you get mad or sad? What are some things that help you feel better?

00:03:11 - Charlotte

Sometimes I stay in the corner and then when I want to come upstairs or see mom, I usually come up when feel mad anymore.

00:03:28 - Sarah Taylor

So you take a little bit of time by yourself.

00:03:30 - Heather Taylor

Yeah, that's a good idea.

00:03:32 - Sarah Taylor

I think I heard you earlier today screaming into a pillow.

00:03:35 - Charlotte

Yes, because I was mad and I wanted to let my emotions out.

00:03:41 - Sarah Taylor

And then I came and gave you a big hug.

00:03:42 - Aynsley Graham  
Right.

00:03:43 - Sarah Taylor  
I asked you if I could have a hug.

00:03:44 - Charlotte  
Yes.

00:03:45 - Heather Taylor  
Sometimes feelings just feel really big, don't they?

00:03:48 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah, I get them too. I was crying in the car. You saw that.

00:03:51 - Charlotte  
Yeah.

00:03:52 - Sarah Taylor  
Emotions come out of mum all the time, right?

00:03:55 - Heather Taylor  
We are a family that feels big.

00:03:57 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:03:57 - Heather Taylor  
And that's good.

00:03:58 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah. It's good to feel those feelings. What's something that mum does that's kind of funny in the car for you? When you start to feel frustrated? When we're in the car, I say, you can say stuff, but only in the safety of the container of the car. What do you get to do in the car?

00:04:12 - Charlotte  
Usually if I'm really mad at something, but not like you guys. Usually mom lets me say swears, but only in the car.

00:04:23 - Sarah Taylor  
So what were you swearing at the other day? What was making you really mad?

00:04:27 - Charlotte  
Covid.

00:04:28 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah. And sometimes it's good to get all that energy out, right? Yeah, but not when we're not. We don't like to swear at people, but situations. Yeah, that's me.

00:04:40 - Charlotte

What happens inside your head when I read a book? I feel like my brain is getting more funness out of reading the book. Because I feel really happy when I read the book. And usually I feel like when I read a book, I want to have more books.

00:05:00 - Heather Taylor

What I could read is like learning new things. Your favorite thing? Like learning new things and trying new things.

00:05:07 - Charlotte

Yeah. If you try things, your brain could be more smarter.

00:05:11 - Sarah Taylor

What's your favorite movie right now?

00:05:13 - Charlotte

It's usually enchanted right now, because usually whenever I watch new movies. I love the new movies.

00:05:23 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah. They become your new favorite?

00:05:25 - Charlotte

Yes.

00:05:26 - Heather Taylor

How many times have you watched it in one day?

00:05:29 - Charlotte

I only watched it one time. No, two times actually.

00:05:34 - Sarah Taylor

Auntie Heather's watched it more than you. I have.

00:05:37 - Heather Taylor

I'm rather obsessed. Know when I watch that movie, there is like the woman Louisa, who has the really strong muscles. I kind of feel like she represents me. She's the oldest daughter. She has to hold everything up. And that's how I felt a lot of times when I was little and growing up. So when I hear her story, when she tells her story, I'm like, I kind of feel like that lady on screen, so it kind of makes me feel like I get her the most.

00:06:06 - Sarah Taylor

Who do you feel like when you watch that movie?

00:06:08 - Charlotte

I usually like the girl who. It's like the one who controls the water. So whenever she gets mad, there's a storm cloud over her, and whenever she's so happy, there's, like, a rainbow up on her head.

00:06:22 - Sarah Taylor

And you like that one the best?

00:06:24 - Charlotte

Yeah.

00:06:24 - Sarah Taylor

And why do you like that one the best?

00:06:25 - Charlotte

Because I love rainbows. And I love rainy days because usually I like stepping in puddles with my rainboots.

00:06:36 - Sarah Taylor

We talk a lot about emotions at our house, right?

00:06:39 - Charlotte

Yeah.

00:06:39 - Sarah Taylor

And so it was kind of neat that in that movie, you could see what her emotions were. Nobody had to guess, right? So sometimes mom has to guess. Oh, are you feeling cranky today? Are you feeling sad today? Do you need a hug?

00:06:52 - Charlotte

Usually if I'm mad, I don't really want to have a hug. I just want to let my madness out, go away. And then usually I say sorry if I did something mean, which is very nice. Yes. If we have mistakes, we say sorry.

00:07:10 - Sarah Taylor

Damn, that's a really good thing to do.

00:07:12 - Heather Taylor

That's a good idea.

00:07:13 - Sarah Taylor

If you had advice for grownups about being happy, what would you tell grownups?

00:07:17 - Charlotte

I would tell grownups, let your mad and sad emotions out and maybe read a book. And then that's how you could really be happy.

00:07:29 - Sarah Taylor

That's really good advice.

00:07:30 - Heather Taylor

That's great advice. I like that.

00:07:33 - Sarah Taylor

Well, Charlotte, I'm glad that you're the you that you are. Thanks for being my daughter. I really appreciate you and I love you.

00:07:41 - Heather Taylor

Thank you for being my niece. I love that you're my niece.

00:07:45 - Sarah Taylor

And thanks for being on our podcast.

00:07:47 - Charlotte

Bye bye.

00:07:48 - Heather Taylor

Bye. I think it's time for our interview with Aynsley Graham. So a quick reminder to our listeners that this interview should not be taken as medical advice. And it is for informational purposes only because everyone's brain is different. Please consult your healthcare professional if you have any questions. And just a warning to our listeners, this conversation will have discussions about residential schools and suicide. And now, Aynsley Graham.

00:08:20 - Aynsley Graham

Hello, Sarah and Heather. And thank you so much for having me here.

00:08:22 - Sarah Taylor

Thanks for being here.

00:08:24 - Aynsley Graham

So I am. I'm 36. I always include my age. I know we have, like, weird things about ages in this culture, but I think it's important. And then maybe you know why I make, like, references to the. So I am 36. I am married. To a wonderful woman named Elise. And we have a six year old boy named James, and I just have the one because it turns out I really like to work for me. Even though I love children, sometimes people are surprised. And I'm like, I do love children, but I spend all day with my kids. So a lot of kids in my life, and I live here in St. Albert. And I got into child behavior kind of, actually, because it was a bit of like a family line of work. My mum was a. You would call her a social worker, but she did child protection work for about 40 years.

00:09:08 - Sarah Taylor

Wow.

00:09:08 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah, she just retired last year, actually. And that's kind of like the most extreme social work. It's like Batman level social work. And then my dad was a child and youth care counselor, so my mum would part of her job, not her whole job, would be to apprehend children who needed protection and put them into care. And then my dad worked in institutionalized care, taking care of those said children. So I kind of grew up with lots of conversations about behavior in my home, lots of diversity in my life. I was kind of very aware that when we talk later on about neurotypical development versus atypical development or neurodiversity, that was kind of something that's always been a part of my life because of what my parents did for a living.

00:09:50 - Heather Taylor

Let's start off talking a little bit about how children's brains are developing and what that really means. So, for instance, what can they do? What they can't, can they not do at certain ages and kind of why. I know this is very broad, but I'd love to go into that first, just understand how children's brains are working and developing.

00:10:10 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah, that's a great place to start. It's going to be scary because I'm going to start with in the beginning, which is too far back, but there's a reason I'm going to say this. So we haven't really known that children's brains develop differently than adults and work differently than adults until about 100 years ago. So it wasn't until about 1936 when Piaget theorist wrote this theory that was like, hold on, guys. What if children's brains actually work different than grown up brains? And this theory was so new that Einstein himself was like, it was a good theory. So that whole idea of how do brains work differently is actually relatively very new, because when we look at time and how information is passed through generations of people, it takes kind of a while to dispel some of those myths. So one of the things that we're learning about brain development is that a lot of the things that we assume to be true about children's behavior and just human behavior is not true. So some of those examples would be for children under the age of seven. And again, this is directly looking from that. Piaget's work is that under the age of seven, their brain isn't actually capable of understanding certain concepts. It doesn't matter how many times you explain it to them, they don't have the actual structures in their brain, specifically in their frontal lobe, to even be able to understand what you're trying to communicate. So a good example of this is at the age of five, children go through this big jump where they figure out that if you pour, just as an example, if you pour the same amount of liquid into two different shapes, glasses, it's the same amount of liquid.

00:11:51 - Sarah Taylor

Oh, interesting.

00:11:53 - Aynsley Graham

This is magic to a five year old. This is the same as like. And then I made the Empire State building disappear. Mind blown. And the reason why it's blown is that they don't have something



called concrete operational thinking. So, under the age of seven, and if you have children listening, this is not going to be a family friendly chat, only because I'm going to tell you that Santa's not real. And usually children figure that out naturally by the age of seven. And the reason why is that we transition from magical thinking into, actually, the world has consistent laws of reality that make some things impossible. But under the age of seven, they don't really know that. So water going to two different containers is magic, but in the same turn, when you say to them, oh, my God, honey, you can't jump off the roof with a bedsheet as a parachute. You're going to break your legs. And that kid's going to be surprised because why not? So, for them, when we talk about consequenceing children under the age of seven, that's hilarious. No, they don't understand a consequence because they still think that somebody can fly around the world in one night with magical reindeer.

00:13:02 - Sarah Taylor  
Right.

00:13:04 - Aynsley Graham  
And it doesn't matter how hard you try to teach them that they can't do it simply because their brain hasn't developed all of the different parts. It needs to be able to do that task.

00:13:14 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:13:15 - Aynsley Graham  
So when we look at that development, that's what we're now beginning to understand, is that it doesn't matter how hard you consequence that child, their brain just is not ready to do that thing yet.

00:13:26 - Heather Taylor  
What are some other area like times that there's a jump or other things that maybe parents struggle with in terms of behavior or consequence that they may be trying to apply to their children, that children may not be ready for.

00:13:40 - Aynsley Graham  
Oh, so many things. So the biggest one is that. So many things.

00:13:43 - Heather Taylor  
Sorry.

00:13:44 - Aynsley Graham  
We always think that our kids can do more than they can, and that's mostly because kids are really good at faking it until they get.

00:13:50 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:13:50 - Aynsley Graham

So when we look at language development, for example, there's something called fast mapping and what that idea is. And you guys actually, you do this as well. When you read books. You know when you read a book and you see a word that you haven't read before, but you're like, I kind of know what it means because of the context of the sentence. And then have you ever turned around and tried to use that new word in a sentence with somebody and they look at you and they're like, that's not quite right.

00:14:16 - Heather Taylor

My everyday life, you mean. Yeah.

00:14:19 - Aynsley Graham

And you're like, oh, based on that person's face, maybe I should look up what that word means. So that's how children learn all language. So for them, they're going to use words and you're going to say, oh, my God, you know what that means? They sure don't.

00:14:33 - Sarah Taylor

I have 100% had this experience with charlote where I'll be like, oh, that's a big word. And then like a few days later, mom. Well, even just the other day, she's like, what does future mean? I was like, good question. But she would use the word all the time. But she was like, but what does it mean?

00:14:50 - Aynsley Graham

Yes, that's a perfect example. So if you're like, oh, we're going to do that in the future. And she's nodding along, no, I don't actually have any idea what that means.

00:14:56 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah, how many times have I said that to her? Something about the future. And then, yeah, it was just yesterday. Well, what does the future mean?

00:15:05 - Aynsley Graham

What does future mean? That's a perfect example. So again, we think that they're so much more capable than they really are. And so a really good guideline is, well, actually, I'm going to make it even more complicated. And then you get into neurodiversity. So being able to say, I could write you a list and say, five year olds should be able to do this, but that's not really helpful because does that five year old have adhd? Does that five year old have autism? Was that five year old raised in a war torn country and probably have some PTSD, maybe some malnutrition what is that story of? That child's life is going to depict their developmental abilities. So we do have some guidelines for jump in capabilities, but we want to look rather than age, we want to look at skill levels. So, for example, can your child have a conversation with you? So we shouldn't really be looking at consequences if a child's not able to have a conversation with you about what their behavior was. So what that translates into is anybody under two consequences ain't going to really work.

00:16:10 - Sarah Taylor  
Right?

00:16:11 - Aynsley Graham  
Because a two year old can't really say, oh, I know that I hit you, and when I hit you, it hurts your feelings. Yeah, but you might have a seven year old who's nonverbal. And so processing that consequence is also going to be different.

00:16:23 - Heather Taylor  
Right.

00:16:23 - Aynsley Graham  
So we're looking for big markers of can they talk? Is a big skill, and then we're looking at things like, do they have that concrete, operational understanding? Can that child connect consequences with actions? So if you say not just about their own behavior, but just about. If you're reading a book, can you read a book? This is called inferencing and it's adorable when children can't do it. So you read a book about a dog and he's eating all these hot dogs, and at the end of the book the dog has a big belly and you say, hey, why does the dog have a big belly? And most children are going to say, because he ate all those hot dogs. Perfect. So you're understanding consequences and gleaming information, but if your little buddy turns to you and goes, maybe he's pregnant. Oh, that's not great. So imagine living your life where things are just random and nothing's connected.

00:17:15 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah, it'd be very frustrating.

00:17:18 - Aynsley Graham  
It'd be very frustrating. You'd be very confused.

00:17:20 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:17:20 - Aynsley Graham  
So we're looking for those big leaps in being able to connect things, and they usually happen at the age of four, the age of seven, the age of nine. And then in adolescence, we start working on something called executive functioning. And that's a huge jump, which when we talk about media, media is when children are really not just learning executive functioning skills, but they're also figuring out their gender, they're figuring out social skills, and that's when media is really going to come into play because that's kind of how they're learning those things. Yeah, but those are kind of your big jumps. It's four, seven, nine and twelve. And then you actually get another big jump at 23.

00:18:04 - Heather Taylor  
Wait, sorry, what happens at 23? I know what this is about. Children. But I need to know. Well, what did I miss?

00:18:10 - Aynsley Graham

What did you miss? So our brains aren't finished developing that frontal lobe, and our frontal lobe is, like, basically how we do anything that takes any kind of thought. And that frontal lobe doesn't finish developing till 25.

00:18:22 - Heather Taylor

Wow.

00:18:23 - Aynsley Graham

So this is why if you go to university, you do things like use every dish in the house and then have to wash them in your bathtub. Yes. Okay, so not just me then.

00:18:34 - Heather Taylor

It was my roommate, but yeah, we soaked them in the bathtub because we had a roommate who refuse.

00:18:39 - Sarah Taylor

Who just.

00:18:39 - Heather Taylor

We'd take turns.

00:18:40 - Aynsley Graham

I don't know.

00:18:41 - Heather Taylor

I just do your own dishes. But we decided we'd take turns on a household because that was a good choice. That is not a good choice. And then we had run roommate who would never do them, and then the others would refuse to do it. And then it became like, at one time, we actually put dishes on one of their beds to try to get them to do them. And I'm like, okay, but we have to put a plastic bag down because I don't think it's fair to make the bed wet.

00:19:05 - Aynsley Graham

Okay, so how old were you? This is such a great example. How old were you?

00:19:08 - Heather Taylor

I would have been 20.

00:19:11 - Aynsley Graham

Okay, perfect. So this is like a rainbow of just skill deficits.

00:19:17 - Heather Taylor

I mean, I feel like my whole life is a series of deficits, but yes.

00:19:21 - Aynsley Graham

No, I said rainbow.

00:19:23 - Heather Taylor

Oh, sorry. A rainbow.

00:19:25 - Aynsley Graham

It's a spectacular display of skill deficits. So you have skill deficits of. I don't even know how to organize my chores among people. Right. So there's just that deficit of, like, how do I do the chores every day? Then there's the skill deficit of how do I communicate that to the people I live with? Then there's a deficit of, now I have a conflict with the people I live with. How do I solve it? Is it put the dishes in their bed? Is that it?

00:19:52 - Heather Taylor

I was following with my roommate, but, yes. I didn't stand up and say, I don't think this is a good choice. I was like, okay, if we're going to do this, we're just not going to be mean about it.

00:20:02 - Aynsley Graham

Right? It seems like a reasonable answer to conflict. But the dirty dishes leaking into your mattress.

00:20:08 - Heather Taylor

No, that's too far.

00:20:10 - Aynsley Graham

Right? As an adult woman, obviously you're like, that's. Oh, my God. You just do the dishes. It's not that hard. But when you're 20, it's really hard. When do I do the dishes? Do I do my homework first? Do I go out and have fun first. Also, I just don't want to do the dishes. How do I motivate myself to do the dishes? So those are all things that people in their twenties in their early 20s are figuring out. And it doesn't have to just do with figuring out life. It has to do with skill development in your brain. So for me, that executive functioning in my 20s really had to do with being able to understand how time worked. So I would think, oh, I'll come home and do the dishes. They'll take me five minutes.

00:20:49 - Heather Taylor

That's not how time works.

00:20:50 - Aynsley Graham

No, that's not how time works. And then I would run out of time and be like, oh, my God, where'd all the time go? I was late for everything. I was never organized. That's not a character flaw. That's a skill deficit of my executive functioning that was finishing up developing in my early 20s.

00:21:07 - Sarah Taylor

Right.

00:21:07 - Aynsley Graham

Which is why I'm not saying kids, even though it's so hard, young adults make some really terrible choices, and we probably shouldn't give them credit cards.

00:21:17 - Heather Taylor

Yes.

00:21:18 - Aynsley Graham

So other skills that go with it. Executive functioning, that I call them skills, but most people don't recognize them as skills, are things like impulse control. Right. Which, again, when you're in your early twenties and your frontal lobe isn't finished developing, you probably don't have great impulse control. So that credit card. Oh, my God. Now we can go to Mexico with the girls. Oh, my God. Yeah. Solution to my problem. Right? If we were all hobbits, they say we all know what hobbits. Right. Hobbits aren't really grown ups until they're 30.

00:21:50 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah. Which is probably reality of what we as humans in our current day and age.

00:21:56 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah. Well, that's what all of our research about brain development is showing us, is that until you're 25, things are going to be really, really hard for you. Not because you're not trying, not because you're not smart, not because you're not dedicated, but simply because those parts of our brain that are in charge of executive functioning things, impulse control, behavior inhibition, time, mental flexibility, our communication skills, our interpersonal skills, all of that just isn't finished being built yet.

00:22:21 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah, I think just knowing that having that knowledge, like hearing you say that for somebody who's already obviously gone through their 20s, makes me think, okay, I can give myself some grace for the things that maybe I did that weren't great. But also, if you have young people in your life to just understand, like, oh, their brain is still growing. Let's take it easy on certain areas. They still have to obviously learn their consequences of wrong actions. But I think, yeah, knowledge is power in a lot of cases.

00:22:49 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah, I think you're right. I think those. Forgiving yourself. Right. Of why was it so hard?

00:22:54 - Heather Taylor

There's been so much conversation around what is appropriate to learn about. So I know we're talking about behaviors and we're talking about how brains can process information, but I think that's part of this, this idea of when is it appropriate for children to learn about things that aren't what they have experienced at home. So it could be things around sexuality and race and gender. We have this huge conversation right now about turning red and female menstruation. Oh, my goodness. Why are we talking about this? And I'm like, we all should be talking about this.

00:23:23 - Sarah Taylor

My opinion.

00:23:24 - Aynsley Graham  
Because.

00:23:24 - Sarah Taylor  
Agreed.

00:23:24 - Heather Taylor  
Otherwise, it's a surprise, surprise for me. Mental health, those kind of things. So how do we talk about these subjects in an age appropriate way instead of, I think, what feels like this banning of these conversations altogether.

00:23:37 - Aynsley Graham  
Yeah, that's a really good question, actually. It's interesting that you brought up turning red because I turned it off, and that was the first movie I have turned off for my six year old. Yeah. What a loaded statement to open up this.

00:23:50 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah, go tell us more.

00:23:51 - Aynsley Graham  
Unpack conversation. So when we're talking about, is it appropriate? There's not really any subject that's not appropriate for a child because they live in this world. However, the way that you explain it has to be developmentally appropriate. So there's no subject that's really off limits. But it's a matter of how do you explain it so that they can understand it. And the way that you do that is that you make it relevant to their world because you know how dogs. Oh, also, I compare a lot of children and dog stuff, just to warn you, some people don't like that.

00:24:27 - Heather Taylor  
They're like, oh, I don't like that.

00:24:27 - Aynsley Graham  
I'm like, yeah, they're pretty similar. I'm not really a dog person, but I think, Sarah, you've got a puppy, right?

00:24:33 - Sarah Taylor  
I have three dogs. So, yes.

00:24:34 - Aynsley Graham  
Okay.

00:24:35 - Sarah Taylor  
So many dogs. So many dogs.

00:24:36 - Heather Taylor  
So many dogs.

00:24:37 - Aynsley Graham

So you know how your dog can't speak English, but you know how they understand some words very, very clearly. So what are the words that they understand?

00:24:45 - Sarah Taylor

Sit. Their name, stay sometime. What about walk?

00:24:49 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah, perfect. So they know what a walk is because it has to do with their immediate life. If you said to that dog, let's go to the bank sorry. They wouldn't know. They'd be like, what's a bank? However, if you took them to the bank every single day and then you said, let's go to the bank, the dog would be like, yeah, let's go to the bank. I love going to the bank. And when you take that dog to the bank, what the dog would know of the bank is, it's a big place. There's lots of people that smile and greet me. Cool. What you're not going to say to that dog is, oh, we're going to the bank right now to deposit my check in a bank. It's an institution going to take their money. The dog doesn't need to know that. So the same kind of applies to how we explain things to children. So what does that child. Yes, of course. That child could absolutely know what a bank is, but how is that bank relatable to them? And that's really the part where we look at appropriateness, because when we explain things that aren't within that child's world context, it's going to be overwhelming and confusing for them. So a good example. Oh, my God, I love my parents so much. They're wonderful parents. Wonderful parents. Just amazing. Definitely some of my issues with anxiety, for sure have to do with my parents over explaining stuff to me.

00:26:02 - Sarah Taylor

Okay.

00:26:03 - Aynsley Graham

So that is a real thing for sure, is that when we give children too much information about things that they don't understand or have no control over, it can really stress their little brains out because they're thinking, am I supposed to do something about this? So do you remember children of the 90s learning about the ozone layer and how there's a hole in it?

00:26:21 - Heather Taylor

Yes, I've written many poems about that.

00:26:26 - Aynsley Graham

And how stressed out were you because you were like, is this on me? And it's not that you didn't need that information, you did, but it needed to be tempered with. And what is my job in this?

00:26:39 - Heather Taylor

Yeah, right.

00:26:40 - Aynsley Graham

Rather than here's a bunch of information that you don't really understand because it's actually a little more complicated that I'm making it. And also, you have no role in this, but just hold it in your.



00:26:46 - Sarah Taylor  
Brain, please get real nervous about it.

00:26:49 - Aynsley Graham  
So we want to make sure that developmental, can their brain, first of all, even understand what we're trying to say to them.

00:26:55 - Heather Taylor  
Right.

00:26:56 - Aynsley Graham  
So we talked before about that operational condition. If you're under seven, there's going to be some things that that person's not going to get. And a good example of that is explaining residential schools we have to explain certain things, but when we explain it, like, residential schools happened a long time ago, and this is why they happened. And then we found all we didn't find. We uncovered all of these bodies, what that child has heard. First of all, they have no idea what a long time ago is.

00:27:24 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:27:25 - Aynsley Graham  
What does that mean? Also, it wasn't that long ago, but again, that's complicated. But for that child, what's a long time ago? They have absolutely zero grasp of time. Your little one is five, and she doesn't know what the future is.

00:27:35 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:27:37 - Aynsley Graham  
So no idea of time, no idea of numbers. They don't know what 215 looks like.

00:27:42 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:27:43 - Aynsley Graham  
At all. Ask her how many kids are in her kindergarten class. 78. Like, no idea. We want to talk about residential schools, but we need to talk about it in a way that's within their world context. And then we also need to make sure that they have the brain development, that brain capability to really grasp what we're even.

00:28:07 - Heather Taylor  
How would. Well, how would you approach it then, at that age where they don't have concept of time or numbers or just that they existed?

00:28:17 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah. I've talked to Charlotte about residential schools. Probably too much. Maybe. But I did have to reiterate a bunch of times, no, the nuns aren't going to come and get you. She had lots of questions, and I just let her ask all the questions and tried to explain it the best I could. And I read there's books that are, I think, at her level. But it is a heavy thing.

00:28:42 - Aynsley Graham

It's a heavy thing. Can you actually tell me, Sarah, that's actually a really good example. So what kind of questions was she asking?

00:28:47 - Sarah Taylor

Are they going to come and take me? And then she was like, are they going to come take me because I'm not white? So that was a big part of it, to understand, to explain being indigenous, being a person of color, it brought on a whole extra level of talking about race. But a lot of it was like, they're not going to take me, right? They're not going to come and get me.

00:29:07 - Aynsley Graham

And what a beautiful. That's a beautiful example of what we were just talking about, which is that child being like, what do you want me to do with this information?

00:29:13 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:29:14 - Aynsley Graham

Right? She's thinking, are you telling me this because somebody might show up and try to take me? Should you give me a weapon of some kind?

00:29:20 - Sarah Taylor

Can you prepare me for this?

00:29:23 - Aynsley Graham

What is the actionable item from this conversation?

00:29:26 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah, why are you telling me this, mom?

00:29:27 - Aynsley Graham

Jeez. Stop. That's a perfect example of like, okay, does this have to do with me? So she immediately found that connection. Well, I'm not white. Is that why you're telling me this? Yeah, I go to school. Am I at risk? And then what did you say? Did you say like, I'm just telling you this so that you're informed. What was your motivation for my motivation?

00:29:44 - Sarah Taylor

Well, because we were talking about Orange shirt day and we talk about indigenous culture and being on indigenous land. We talk a lot about that stuff because that's a lot of the projects I work on. So she sees me working on indigenous projects and then, yeah, it was orange shirt day. So

we're talking about what is orange shirt day? And we have the book about the orange shirt, which I can't remember the name off top of my head. So yeah, we were just talking about what that means and why it is something that we need to be aware of. And like the whole, I don't think she now talking to you. I don't know if she'd grasped the concept or understood the concept of understanding what our history is in Canada, but maybe she doesn't know what history is because she didn't know what future was. So there's that.

00:30:28 - Aynsley Graham

Yes. Every time I start a story with my son, I always start with before electricity. That's a good. Yeah, and then he has to say, so there's no tv, right, but they had switches at Nintendo. No, that runs on electricity. Oh, I see the problem. Okay, let's list things that run on electricity because you're right, they really just don't understand that sequence of time. Right. They can't really imagine.

00:30:52 - Sarah Taylor

There's a lot of people and I'm going to clump myself into this category of like, wow, I've learned so much in my thirty s. I had my kid later in life, I feel like I have so much more information than I was given as a kid. And I want to make sure she knows all the things so that she understands consent and she understands this and she doesn't have this and there's this and this. So I'm probably over sharing or over informing her of all the things that our society is doing wrong before she even gets to live in society. I don't know. I think maybe it's a good discussion to have on, like how do we talk about sexuality, talk about gender, talk about race, talk about residential schools, talk about these big things that kids should know about, I feel like. But so that they are not getting terrified that somebody's going to come steal like we don't want to terrify my child, either.

00:31:42 - Aynsley Graham

And just to make you feel better, Sarah, just so you know, I've also had those moments with my son. I literally, like, I don't know. He said something about, like, do ships sink sometimes? And I was like, yeah, it was bedtime. And then I told him about the Titanic, and he just started crying, and I was like, oh, my God. And then they all died. Good night. Have a good sleep. Have a good sleep. They froze to death in the ocean. They're like, okay, and we'll go on.

00:32:06 - Heather Taylor

That boat ride next week.

00:32:09 - Sarah Taylor

Never again.

00:32:10 - Aynsley Graham

Exactly. So I want you, instead of thinking about describing facts to your child, I want you to think instead that their mind is like a library and that books are either pieces of information, like facts, or they're experiences that they've had, and that the books, as they grow up, just start kind of piling up randomly in this empty library. And so your job is to actually build bookshelves for those children in their mind so that they know how to organize the information that they have

and their own experiences, and that whatever bookshelves we build will depend on how someone organizes the same piece of information, which is why you, me, and Heather can all have the same piece of information. But we're going to think about it differently because we might organize it differently.

00:33:04 - Heather Taylor

In our mind and relate it to different things. So I might relate a fact to a different experience than you may relate it to, for instance.

00:33:10 - Aynsley Graham

That's exactly right. Yes. This is.

00:33:13 - Sarah Taylor

Wow.

00:33:13 - Aynsley Graham

What an incredibly loaded example I'm going to give you right now. Out of the blue, people like JK Rowling, who are very transphobic. Part of what's happening there that you're going to see that's very common in that way of thinking, is that most women who are transphobic, the way JK is, have actually related trans women in the same bookshelf as men who are dangerous and harm women. So for them, transgender people are not on the bookshelf of marginalized people. It's on the bookshelf of you are a threat. And that has to do mostly with their own personal experiences. Does that make any sense? That's a heavy example.

00:33:54 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah. No, that totally makes sense, though. No, I don't agree with what it makes sense.

00:33:58 - Aynsley Graham

No. And that's because for you, you probably don't even have that bookshelf in your mind, right? You don't have a bookshelf of scary things that are dangerous towards you that have to do with different types of people.

00:34:07 - Sarah Taylor

I'm sure there is. And I'm sure I've had to debunk that book, take that bookshelf down and reorder it as I've learned more about stuff in life. Right.

00:34:15 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah. And we do do that. We tear bookshelves down and go, actually don't believe that. So when we look at teaching children, yes, we have to teach them those facts, but first we have to make sure that they have a bookshelf to put it on.

00:34:27 - Heather Taylor

Right.

00:34:28 - Aynsley Graham

So when we talk about residential schools, what we're really talking about is genocide. So when

your little one says to you, oh, my God, are they going to come get me? And you say, well, no, because you're not indigenous. What we're really talking about is genocide. But she can't really understand genocide. Not because it's not developmentally appropriate. It totally is, but because she doesn't know what culture is. So the place where we need to start this conversation is, do you know what culture is?

00:34:55 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah. Which is interesting because we talk. Yeah, because she does know what culture is. Well, maybe not the word culture, but she understands other people's traditions because we've talked a lot about that. And in our journey of residential school discussions, we talked know indigenous people weren't allowed to sing their songs or do the dances that they did. The people that came to Canada wanted to take that away. So there's some ways that we've discussed.

00:35:22 - Aynsley Graham

That, and that's perfect, because what you're doing there is that you're building the bookshelf. So the bookshelf is we have different ways of living, and it's usually based on, honestly, where we actually live geographically. So when we talk about. How do you explain this? It's things like watching. So did you guys watch?

00:35:40 - Heather Taylor

Yes.

00:35:41 - Aynsley Graham

Oh, nailed it. Nailed it. Who does not want that house? Do we all want to live in that Encanto house? Of course. But just you walk in and it has this, like, open atrium. My son was like, oh, my God, this is gorgeous. Why doesn't our house look like that? And I said, well, why not? And he says, well, because it snows here. I said, that's right. So what your house looks like will depend on where you live and the weather. Who you live with is going to depend on how you build your house. He wants that big house because he wants all of our friends and family to come live with us at a big house.

00:36:10 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:36:10 - Aynsley Graham

And I've had to say, in our culture, have you noticed that we don't live with extended family members?

00:36:15 - Sarah Taylor

It.

00:36:16 - Aynsley Graham

So it's explaining that people. Culture isn't just traditions, it's how we live, that everybody has a map that tells them how to live, and culture is that map. And once we have those bookshelves made, then we can put other books on that shelf, and one of them will be genocide. It's not just Canada, but this thing happens where one culture wants all the power and then they want to get

rid of another culture. And that's what we tried to do to indigenous people. Right. But we need that foundation first.

00:36:50 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah, totally. And even just you saying it's so interesting, maybe this is like, I don't know, tells you about me, but I haven't taken the time to think about explaining what our culture is currently. You know what I mean? Like, we have a culture, but I don't think we do. And I don't know if that sounds ridiculous, but to explain what our culture is and to have ownership to our.

00:37:11 - Aynsley Graham

Culture, what you're talking about is actually addressing ethnocentrism.

00:37:15 - Sarah Taylor

Yes.

00:37:16 - Aynsley Graham

So what ends up happening is that when we don't explain what it looks like, then is culture is just what other people have that makes them different than us. And that's not what culture is.

00:37:23 - Sarah Taylor

No, not at all.

00:37:24 - Aynsley Graham

So we want to call attention. Before we talk about differences in culture, we have to actually talk about sameness.

00:37:30 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:37:31 - Aynsley Graham

What is the same across cultures? We all have houses. What do our houses need to do? They need to protect us from the weather. And that's how they're all the same. And you're right, we don't, because we are so ethnocentric, because we're the hegemonic culture. We're the culture in charge. We don't see our culture. We think it's just the way it is. Just the way it is ridiculous. Which is so ridiculous. And that's how we now are falling into ethnocentrism. And ethnocentrism leads to prejudice and discrimination, which then leads to racism.

00:38:05 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:38:06 - Aynsley Graham

So we need to start. If you want to teach your kids to be antiracist, the first thing you need to do is talk about culture and to draw attention that our culture is culture. And it's not the best. We don't do things because it's the best way we do things because this is the way we do them. And we're not really better than anybody. We're just different.

00:38:26 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah. Well, I'm learning a lot.

00:38:30 - Aynsley Graham

This is good.

00:38:34 - Heather Taylor

Okay, wait. I'm going to go back, though. I want to ask you because I'm curious, because you said when I first asked the question, and I think it's been fantastic. And thank you for going down this road, because I think this is really important, because I think the way that we think about things as children lay the foundation for how we think about as adults, and then we have less bookcases to take down.

00:38:54 - Aynsley Graham

Absolutely.

00:38:55 - Heather Taylor

Start in a way that lays a good foundation. But you said that you turned off turning red. I did, and I'm really curious. No, and that's fine. And I'm curious, why did you make that choice, if you don't mind saying?

00:39:09 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah, so it has nothing to do with periods. Well, my son knows what a period is. Actually, my son really wanted to know what a vagina was. We really had to have a conversation because for him, he doesn't see vaginas. And I do kind of understand this cultural thing that happens where vaginas. No wonder they're so mysterious, right? He was like, what is it, though? Oh. And I described it to him and he was like, but what is it? Is it a butt? And I'm like, it's not a butt. Women don't have two butts. And I don't recommend this, but I ended up just being like, I'm just going to make it out of playdoh for you, buddy, because he could not. Oh, sorry. That's another brain development thing is that really young children can't imagine what something is. That's abstract thinking. So when you know a vagina is a bunch of folds. Obviously, I didn't quite describe it that way, but he was like, what are you talking about? He was so confused. So which this one. Do I have to use visual? So we've had that conversation. He knows what a period is. I also made that out of lethal, so that wasn't why I turned it off. The reason why I turned it off is that a really strong theme running throughout the show was that when a child reaches teenage years, they start to form an identity that oftentimes is in contrast to a parent. And that relationship with a parent will shift and change. For my little guy, I know that that's kind of come up before and it's very upsetting to him. So he'll say things to me like, my wife thinks it's funny. I mean, this is such a classic dad joke, but she'll say, like, well, till you're 18 and then you're going to move out of the house and get a job. And my little guy will say, but I don't have to, right? And he says things to me like, but we're always going to cuddle, right? So for him, any idea that our relationship would change is very upsetting for him. He's losing his teeth right now. And for him, yes, he's excited, but he's also scared, right? Because he's saying to me, my teeth are coming out. These are my permanent teeth. Am I a grown up now? Next year's grade one. So for him, it wasn't the period message. He was confused about. Why is she being mean to her mum now?

00:41:21 - Heather Taylor  
Right?

00:41:22 - Aynsley Graham

And I couldn't explain that to him because it's not really part of his life. There's no context for him. It wasn't relevant to him in any way because it's not his lived experience right now. And when he's eleven or twelve, it'll be a great resource. But right now it really has nothing to do with him. So it's just information I'm going to give him and he's going to be like, oh, no, should I be worried about becoming 13 and turning into an asshole?

00:41:47 - Sarah Taylor

You're like, I might be worried.

00:41:49 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah, I'm worried, honey, you don't have to worry about that right now. So I'm not going to tell him about it.

00:41:56 - Sarah Taylor

I think that that's really interesting and a really great thing that you shared that because you know your child and you're like, I see distress. This is something that's coming up often. I am going to pause and say, this is not right right now. And I think that's a huge thing is us just acknowledging where our kids are at and what's good for somebody else's kid doesn't mean it's going to be good for my kid, right?

00:42:18 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah, for him, the movie was great. And it's not that it was inappropriate, it wasn't what he needed right now.

00:42:28 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah, right? Yeah, that's great.

00:42:31 - Aynsley Graham

And I do try. When it comes to media, we obviously talk endlessly about it, but that understanding, check. So for him, we love talking about history. He knows all the greek myths and he's been really into watching egyptian documentaries, which is way beyond his understanding. And I'm like, sometimes I'll stop and I'll be like, are you enjoying, like, do you understand what they're saying? And he said to me, not really, but I like looking at the stuff. That's great. Okay, whatever, no problem. And then I showed him, we watched all these documentaries and then I showed him this CGI rendering of one of the egyptian cities thinking, oh, he'll think that this is cool. He did not. And he started crying. Oh, no. And he got really sad. And I said, oh, my God, what's wrong? And he said, well, that's not how it really was. And I was like, well, it's like a pretty good. So in my grown up thinking, I'm like, no, buddy. They did a lot of research on this. And I said, oh, no, I'm sorry. Why are you upset? And he said to me, they weren't real people. Those are real people. And then he got mad, and he said to me, you broke my brain. I know. Which was too much. You showed me too many things.



00:43:43 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:43:44 - Aynsley Graham  
It was just a story before.

00:43:46 - Heather Taylor  
Yeah.

00:43:47 - Aynsley Graham  
And now that you've made this real, I'm really overwhelmed.

00:43:51 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:43:52 - Aynsley Graham  
So even when you talk about keeping your pulse on your kid, even if it's something that. No, we watched this last week. It changes so quickly, and their understanding changes. So maybe he didn't know that last week. And now a little part of his brain has developed, and now he's like, oh, shit, I can understand more things. So even though it can kind of look the same, your child's development, as it changes, will change how they understand that.

00:44:15 - Sarah Taylor  
Totally. It makes me bring up the topic of media literacy for kids and why that's important. And I know in a previous conversation we had, you talked about how explaining to a child, like, this is a movie. This is make believe. This is how people make a movie. If you want to kind of touch on that, like, how we can explain to our children what media is and how you can use it as a learning tool as well.

00:44:38 - Aynsley Graham  
Yeah. So my wife is in television. So obviously we just naturally have a lot of conversations about how tv is made. But one of the things that I would really encourage parents to do is when we talk about that bookshelf idea, I want you to build a bookshelf in your child's mind that tv and film is art. So it's not just make believe. We're going to put it in the same bookshelf as this is somebody's art. And so with that concept comes, we don't ever want to kind of argue with a child. If they ever say to you, is that real? So a good example is you go to Disneyland, and little one sees Snow white walking around, and the little one goes, oh, that's not Snow White. That's just somebody in a costume. I don't want you to be the parent that says, no, that is Snow White. Nope. The reason why is that child is trying to figure it out. They're trying to get to that concrete operational, thinking of like, wait a minute, that's a person. And so we don't want to give them conflicting messages. So when they say, oh, those are the Muppets. What's a muppet? You don't have to say, oh, they're furry little creatures. Be like, oh, it's a puppet. Want to see how it works?

00:45:46 - Sarah Taylor  
Yeah.

00:45:47 - Aynsley Graham

Immediately. Because what they're trying to do is they're trying to see behind the scenes. They're trying to understand, what am I looking at here? So I really, really encourage parents to say, this is somebody's art, and this was made by grownups. Let's watch a video about the grownups that made this piece of art. And you can find so much of that on YouTube. Right? Show them. If they really love Elsa, show them the video of Idina Menzel and Kristen Bell singing along with their cartoon counterpart. It's not going to break their brain. It's not. They might not understand it. They might be really confused and be, huh. It's really weird. Right. But we want to start by saying, this is how somebody made.

00:46:35 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:46:36 - Aynsley Graham

And that does a whole bunch of you. How do you deal with it, Sarah, with your little one, if you don't mind me asking?

00:46:42 - Sarah Taylor

Well, she sees me. I talk about making movies and making tv shows, and she sits in the edit suite with me and sees me looking at all the different clips. And sometimes she'll be like, put this one here, mom. And so she kind of gets that I'm building something in my computer, and then I'll play it for her.

00:46:57 - Aynsley Graham

Beautiful.

00:46:58 - Sarah Taylor

And actually, we were out once at a winter festival in the city, and one of my films was playing, which I didn't know, and I walked in, and then Charlotte's like, mommy, that's your movie. So she saw it in a different place and made the connection that that was the thing I was making in my computer that is now being displayed on a screen outside.

00:47:18 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah. I love it. Okay. Beautiful. And the way that you've shown her is like, look, you can take different pieces of the story and put them together like Lego.

00:47:25 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:47:25 - Aynsley Graham

Rather than, this is somebody's life, which children really do think, and it's all one piece of film.

00:47:31 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:47:32 - Aynsley Graham

That's a beautiful concept. Other things that I would focus on are things like not only how a film is made, but also that this is somebody's story. And stories don't always make sense. So instead of saying, oh, that's fake, either show them exactly how it's done, or sometimes when people behave really poorly in media, and this is kind of what we touched on last time, but it's a big idea, is that people behave poorly because it makes a good story.

00:47:59 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:47:59 - Aynsley Graham

So when a child says, why is he doing that? Don't brush it off and say, oh, he's a bad guy. Sit down with them and say, why do you think he's doing that? And then you can say, sometimes in a show we have characters do things, not because it makes any sense, but we kind of need the story to move along because so much of our story construction is functional. Right. It's not really accurate of human behavior. This is the horror movie thing of, like, why does she run up the stairs instead of out the door? There would be no.

00:48:32 - Heather Taylor

Yeah, it's very frustrating sometimes. Yeah, make it make sense. Come on.

00:48:36 - Aynsley Graham

It's very frustrating. And I feel like CSI, which I never really watch, and they have the long hair, and they're like, I'll just brush my long hair out of the way while I collect these hair samples. And you're like, yeah, that's.

00:48:50 - Sarah Taylor

You're collecting your own hair samples.

00:48:52 - Aynsley Graham

Pretty much, yeah. Or like when I learned to box and they're like, okay, you're doing this superhero punch. No one punches like that because everyone can see you go to punch. They. But that's how Wonder Woman punches.

00:49:04 - Heather Taylor

Right, sorry. I want to go back to CSI. You know that because of CSI, it led to a whole bunch of people training to be CSI because they thought it looked so cool.

00:49:14 - Sarah Taylor

And it's not like that.

00:49:15 - Heather Taylor

But it's not like that in real life.

00:49:16 - Aynsley Graham

But it's not good at all. No, but that is calling to that representation, right. Of that children are

learning so much from media because of. And it's not that it's a good or bad thing. That's just how our brains learn. And so, yes, we want to be aware of what's being portrayed, but really, we want to have conversations with children so that they understand what they're watching.

00:49:37 - Heather Taylor

Right. I'm going to say this as a creator myself, and for, hopefully, other creators listening to this, or even just parents who are like, how do I make sure my kids are watching the right things? How are they influencing them? And how do we create, I don't know, a better space or better representation in what we're making that will help kids understand the world in a more kind of diverse and nuanced way?

00:50:00 - Aynsley Graham

How do you do that in your job? Because you're a writer, right?

00:50:04 - Sarah Taylor

Yes.

00:50:05 - Heather Taylor

So I rely on a lot of my own learned experiences and knowing that it's not going to represent all people, but will represent my specific experience. And then in experiences that I don't know, I interview people and talk to people directly who have learned experiences to understand their process of thinking and how their experiences were. The best of all is to have the right people in the room who've had those experiences.

00:50:28 - Aynsley Graham

So I'm going to use that kind of as my template to answer your huge, overwhelming question. So the Disney movies are pretty crazy, super racist, and very heteronormative. However, they're also widely accessible. So I would say rather than banning your child, I mean, there are a few that I'm like, it is not worth it. But for the most part, your child's probably going to watch them. And so we can use that as a way of opening up that discussion. So a good way of doing that, when you say, oh, I like to check with other people, is explaining to a child, this isn't our story to tell. So we love Moana in this house and we've talked a lot about, but Moana isn't our story because that's not our culture.

00:51:07 - Heather Taylor

Yes.

00:51:08 - Aynsley Graham

And so Disney has to go talk to that culture and say, hey, can you help us write this story because it's about your culture. And so part of that process was, for me as an adult before we watched that movie, I went to go look it up and say, how does this culture feel about this film? Because I don't want to show that to my son and say, oh, this is really accurate, and then go look it up and have this whole group of people advocating being like, please don't show your kids this. This is not who we are. Right. So as a parent, I would say when you go, let your child watch something, do a quick search and say the people that this show is representing, how do

they feel about this show? Rather than how do you feel about it? Because you don't have really the qualifications to evaluate that representation.

00:51:54 - Sarah Taylor

Yes. Okay.

00:51:55 - Aynsley Graham

I want you to watch for something called legitimizing myths. And that is, what are the ideas that are hidden inside of this movie that's driving the behavior of the. Oh, what a huge task.

00:52:10 - Sarah Taylor

Thanks, Ainsley.

00:52:12 - Aynsley Graham

What a huge task. So when you're watching it, and this is Heather, I'm not going to try to pick on you, but I totally want to slam you right now. A lot of writing for film is just lazy.

00:52:22 - Heather Taylor

Oh, I agree.

00:52:23 - Aynsley Graham

Okay.

00:52:25 - Heather Taylor

I try not to be myself, but no, it's like, oh, this is how people are. And you're like, are they?

00:52:30 - Aynsley Graham

We're just modeling. And what we're all doing, we're just reproducing social scripts, sexual scripts, which is that idea of, like, he is kind of abusive to me, so he loves me. Right. We have so much conflict, but that's actually passion. You're just reproducing the same gender stereotypes, the same social scripts, the same sexual scripts from a hegemonic culture over and over and over again. And then what ends up happening is that we say, oh, that's just how people are, which is that heteronormative continuum of what those interactions look like. And the reality is that that's not the way it is. That's simply the way that people are continuing to reproduce representations of who we are.

00:53:09 - Heather Taylor

Right.

00:53:10 - Aynsley Graham

And so I want you to stop and ask yourself, what is the underlying thing happening here? So really easy things to catch are two women in competition over a man. How do we create conflict? So you're looking for those little things where you're like, do I love that? Again, it doesn't mean that your child can't watch those things, but you have to explain to them, do you think that's the way it is? Somebody wrote this story. Why do you think they would write that?

00:53:34 - Sarah Taylor

I like this a lot. I really do. It's a lot to think about and it's hard. But I feel like this is like, I don't know, this is really important.

00:53:44 - Heather Taylor

My follow up would be, just, as.

00:53:45 - Aynsley Graham

Creators, how do we do better to do better? Talk to people. Talk to people like me. Reaching outside of your profession and doing some collaboration. So this is. Oh, my God, what a dark example. But I have to tell it to you, because I just found this out. There's this building in New York. Oh, Heather, don't you live in New York?

00:54:04 - Sarah Taylor

Sometimes I do.

00:54:06 - Heather Taylor

Which one is this building? Very tall is the same building.

00:54:12 - Aynsley Graham

Maybe you know it. It's this, like, piece of architecture, and you walk up it and it's called the vessel.

00:54:21 - Heather Taylor

Yes, I know. The darkness you're going to talk about.

00:54:23 - Sarah Taylor

Yes.

00:54:24 - Aynsley Graham

We don't even have to get into that, really, except that these architects were like, we're going to build this amazing thing. And then they had all this money and they were just like, we're amazing architecture. And none of them asked a social worker. And if they had, the social worker would have immediately said, oh, yeah, someone's going to jump off that thing. Because anytime you build something really high, people are going to jump off of it. But what ended up happening is that they kind of didn't. So they kept within their own worldview and their own experience, and they didn't reach out to other people with other knowledge, and they ended up building a very dangerous piece of architecture. Right. And so I see that happening with film is that when we stay in our little silos, we can end up building something that's quite dangerous. And you're building it for art, you're building it to challenge things, but reaching out and talking to other professions, and then we just kind of all get a little smarter. If we have a better understanding, not only of our unconscious bias, how come it's always from the neurotypical perspective?

00:55:31 - Heather Taylor

Yes.

00:55:32 - Aynsley Graham

Right. I'm always the other. I'm always the person that doesn't belong. So even things like that, that's called something, the hidden curriculum, which is, what are we teaching when we don't mean to be teaching anything? So when they wrote that, they didn't mean to teach you that, but it's something that you're going to glean from it anyway. And the best example, that cycle that you're talking about of reproducing stereotypes, the best example that I have is Greece. So there's a few things happening there. One, it's the 70s doing the I'm watching it in the 90s. So right off the bat, I'm like, what am I watching? But Greece is such a good example of adults portraying adolescence and what they think adolescents are. And then teens watching it and being like, should I be doing that? Is that what I'm supposed to be? Those people are so old. Those people are like 30. Right. And then those teenagers grow up and think, oh, I have to behave this way. Euphoria is doing this right now.

00:56:32 - Sarah Taylor

I was just going to say euphoria.

00:56:33 - Aynsley Graham

Yeah. Yes. This is what adults think you are. And then you grow up thinking that you should be that and that you're less than if you're not. And then you grow up and then do you just make euphoria? So I'm sure that the people making Euphoria really watched grief a lot because it's that same reproduction of teenagers are just adults.

00:56:51 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah.

00:56:52 - Aynsley Graham

Right. And what we're not getting is teenagers making films.

00:56:56 - Sarah Taylor

I think this is a great time to ask you, how can people find you and get this information? Because I know you do lots of workshops, you work with school boards, you do lots of amazing things, and I think people will find you very useful.

00:57:10 - Aynsley Graham

I hope so. I like to be useful. So they can find me just through my website, which is just my name, ainsleygram.com. They can find me on Instagram, which I hate. I really struggle with social media, but I know that it's a thing. And so I have just decided to embrace it by drawing little mice.

00:57:26 - Sarah Taylor

I know, they're so cute. I love them.

00:57:28 - Aynsley Graham

Oh, thank you. I just do. My little mice are on my social media. But yeah, you can just send me an email. I always offer a free consult to parents.

00:57:36 - Heather Taylor

Are there other places that people should kind of look to in terms of resources, in terms of child development that they could also look into or deep dive themselves into?

00:57:45 - Aynsley Graham

Absolutely. And I think you guys had said that a few resources can go up on your site. So, yes, I have those resources. If you want any of the things that we're talking about today, like how to explain racism, I have worksheets for you. Not worksheets, resources. They have cartoons. They're not scary. But in addition to that, I highly recommend a few things. The first thing is checking out a website called the Brain story is a fantastic website talking about brain development in children, talking about addictions, talking about adhd, talking about trauma. They also have really beautiful, short, well put together videos. The brain story is completely free. All of the resources are free. They also offer a free course. The other people that I would recommend are kind of like, they're the giants whose shoulders we stand on. So people like Gordon Newfeld, who wrote a book called hold on to your kids is a really great place to start. The other authors that I would suggest is Gabor mate, and the other one that I would suggest is Bruce Perry. So Gabor mate and Gordon Newfeld are writing more about brain development and what we would call gentle parenting, but I like to call it developmental parenting, which is how do we use science to parent better? What? I am going to warn you, they are both men and they are both older men. Heads up. And the reason why I'm giving you a heads up is that there kind of is a little bit of mommy blaming and shaming I find in their writing. But I think that that's a generational thing because they really are the people that pave the way for people like me. The other person, Bruce Perry, who is kind of our leading child psychiatrist in the United States, he does a lot of work on trauma and how trauma affects the brain and on prenatal exposure to trauma and how that affects brain development in utero. Bruce Perry is like, I would probably leave my wife for him I'm a huge fangirl and I'm pretty in love with him because I just love his messaging. If you can look up any, he's got a beautiful YouTube video called roots of empathy, which is a great place to start. And he's going to explain to parents why it's not your fault that everything is so hard. I find he really counteracts some of that, I guess, mom guilt that maybe some of those other earlier authors can kind of generate in you and Bruce Perry is going to be like, it's not your fault. You're set up to fail, which is great. And then to put a woman in there because that's also really important. I really like Brennan Brown. I like her because she's more of a philosopher, like a modern day philosopher, but she talks about behavior and it really allows us to gain a greater insight into our own behavior. So I would start with her. The other video that I would recommend is her video on blamers and why people blame. And then the other video that she does really well is about empathy. What is empathy and what's the difference? Okay. The other one who right now he's just really big on Instagram is Mr. Chaz, I believe his name is. He's an educator from the States. He's an early learning educator. And he is fantastic because he's BIPOC, which is something that is not often represented in this profession. And he talks specifically to BIPOC parents and some of the parenting myths that tend to be more prominent in those cultures. And he's also a man in early learning.

01:00:50 - Heather Taylor

Thank you.



01:00:51 - Sarah Taylor  
Yes.

01:00:51 - Heather Taylor

Thank you so much for giving us so much of your time and your brain. There are many other things that we wanted to talk to you about that I know we won't have time for in this episode. And I think hopefully we'll be able to have you come back again and talk a little bit more about things like neurodiversity and trauma, because I think those are really important, especially when we're looking at children. Because as adults dealing with neurodiversity and trauma, it would be good to know kind of from a childhood perspective and the impact of that and what we can do to help mitigate some of the issues that you can have as you become an adult.

01:01:25 - Aynsley Graham

Absolutely. And I would love to come back. Can I leave us on a hopeful note?

01:01:30 - Sarah Taylor

Yes, please.

01:01:30 - Aynsley Graham

Resources. Okay. If you're reading a resource that says we need to be worried about the kids, don't read that resource. We do not need to be worried about our children, of all the generations, thousands and thousands of generations of parents, we are doing the best job. We have the most knowledge, the most education, the most support, and we are raising the most high functioning, loving, connected little people that humanity will have ever seen before. So there's lots of scary things happening right now in the world, but truly, this is the best. And all of the people, all of our ancestors that came before have worked hard so that we can be in this place. So we don't need to be ringing that alarm bell anymore. We are doing the work that gave me goosebumps.

01:02:14 - Sarah Taylor

Thank you.

01:02:15 - Aynsley Graham

Oh, good. Nothing's broken. We're building beautiful things.

01:02:17 - Sarah Taylor

Oh, thank you so much. That's a great way to end.

01:02:20 - Heather Taylor

I love that. Well, thank you.

01:02:21 - Sarah Taylor

Thank you.

01:02:22 - Aynsley Graham

Bye bye. Bye.

01:02:27 - Sarah Taylor

Well, Heather Taylor, I don't know, opened my mind on different ways of looking at how to share things with Charlotte. And I think it's exciting, but a little like, also like, oh, she told me that the kids are fine, so I'm going to take that with me. As I go on my day, I.

01:02:45 - Heather Taylor

Always kind of think of it, we're all doing the best we can with the resources we have available.

01:02:49 - Sarah Taylor

That's right. And I feel like I've gotten a lot more resources after our conversation with Ainsley. So that is amazing. Let's talk about what's awesome.

01:02:57 - Heather Taylor

I'm going to go first. So when we recorded this, I'm back in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. I got to see my niece for the first time in a year and a half. We've hugged for the first time in, what was it, two and a half years? I don't even know how long. It makes me sad, but we hugged and it was amazing. But what was really exciting is that Charlotte really wants to be a writer, as we heard earlier. And so we are going to go and have a coffee date because it's her spring break and we're going to have a coffee date and we are going to think of ideas for stories. Now, when we were talking about it, she got really excited about Krampus at Christmas and her eyes went really wide and it made me think about just the importance of storytelling in children. And so when I used to live in England, I volunteered for an organization called the Ministry of Stories, and it is an offshoot of something called eight two six Valencia. It was founded by Dave Eggers and Minervay Calgary, and they basically created this space because they wanted to support underresourced students, ages six to 18 to explore their creative and writing. Skills and help teachers inspire their children and their teachers inspire their students to write. So what's really cool about these spaces is not only do you create these amazing workshops and work with amazing, often writers or just people who are in the neighborhood that are volunteering, but also there's a really cool store at the front, and you often have to go through a secret door to get to the back. And so at eight two six Valencia, the original store was a pirate store store. The store that we had was the ministry of. The Ministry of stories had the monster shop at the front so you could buy monster things. So I have currently, like, a can of a slight unease, which is kind of how I feel like a lot of the time in my life. So I have that with me wherever I go. And then also in Brooklyn, they have the superhero supply store, which is super dope. And so when you go and buy really cool things from these places that are really fun, it actually goes back to the charity itself. So not only can your children be involved in some of these amazing programs, talking about literacy, encouraging storytelling, but you can actually help donate to it. But I'd also say take those inspiration from these places and allow you to have time with your children to create.

01:05:26 - Sarah Taylor

Stories, too, I think. I didn't know that you actually had worked at one of these or volunteer or whatever it was that you did. But I remember hearing about this years ago and thinking it was, like, the coolest thing ever. And I think it's really cool that you did that when you were in London. That's awesome.

01:05:41 - Heather Taylor

Yeah, I actually did the social media plan, and I ran the social channels for a long time, and basically I had to do, like, a tone guide. So I'm like, well, it's like, part Nanny McPhee and Winston Churchill was the tone.

01:05:58 - Sarah Taylor

Yeah. That's so cool. That's awesome. I don't have anything as exciting. Well, no, it's exciting, but as world changing. But it's life changing for me is that I got to drive to the airport for the first time in, like, two years, which was emotional. I didn't realize how emotional it would be. So I drove to the airport to pick up Heather to bring her to my mom's house, and I got to give her a hug. And that was really special because, again, just, like, she hadn't hugged Charlotte, I haven't given her a hug in over two years. And so it was really special. And I love airports. This is, some people who know me know that I love going to airports. I love picking people up at the airport, and I haven't been able to experience the airport love in a long time, so that was my special, awesome thing for this week. Thank you so much for listening to today's episode of brains.

01:06:50 - Heather Taylor

Braaaains is hosted and produced by Heather and Sarah Taylor and mixed and mastered by Tony Bao. Our theme song is by our little brother, Deppisch, and our graphics were created by perpetual notion.

01:07:01 - Sarah Taylor

If you like what you hear, please rate and review us and tell your friends to tune in.

01:07:05 - Heather Taylor

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01:07:21 - Sarah Taylor

Until next time, I'm your host, Sarah Taylor.

01:07:23 - Heather Taylor

And I'm your host, Heather Taylor.

01:07:25 - Aynsley Graham

Bye Bye!