

## **The Peregrine Centre Rural Mental Health Podcast**

Episode 25. Miniseries: Working with Trauma Part 2

### **Speaker Key:**

DR Dayle Raftery

RS Rebecca Sng

TH Therapist

DA Dave

KI Kira

SU Sue

00:00:00

Intro Hello. I'm Dr Rebecca Sng, director of The Peregrine Centre. As we begin this episode of The Peregrine Rural Mental Health podcast, please join me in stopping to consider the land beneath your feet, wherever you might be listening from today. Let's take a moment together to acknowledge the traditional owners of that land. We pay our deepest respects to the elders of the past, those of the present, and the emerging elders of tomorrow. The Peregrine Rural Mental Health podcast is brought to you as part of our rural mental health partnership with New South Wales Health.

DR Hello, and welcome back to The Peregrine Rural Mental Health Podcast. Today we're picking up with part two of our trauma roleplay. I'm Dayle Raftery and I'm joined by Rebecca Sng. If you haven't listened to part one, I recommend you pause this and check it out, as we'll be picking right back up in the middle of the family session, and we wouldn't want you to be confused. Rebecca, we're about to jump in and hear about what happens when there's an argument in this family. What do you prompt listeners to look out for?

RS We're about to do what we call a sequence. A sequence is simply a step-by-step of what's happening when there's an incident of some sort, and usually that incident is a fight of some sort. And you're particularly interested in what each of the family members are doing, because often the argument is between two people, but you want to know what everybody's doing. And the other thing you're looking out for is, why does this argument keep happening? Why does it not fully resolve? Why does it become a cycle?

DR Okay, let's jump in.

00:01:49

TH There's a lot to unpack there, but I'm wondering if we could, just to help me understand a little bit more about what's happening at home, if we could do what we call a sequence, which is a step-by-step, blow-by-blow description, probably very similar to cricket commentary, Dave, telling us everything that happens.

I'm wondering if we can pick a sequence of events starting from when it was very

calm and then going all the way back to when it was calm again. And I'm wondering if specifically we could talk about the kind of conflict you had mentioned, Dave, where maybe you're trying to get across a message and the volume's going up, and then Kira mentioned sometimes she finds that quite a lot. Can you guys think of a sequence like that? Something that was not too long ago, so that you can remember the details of it.

DA I seem to recall some end of year exams that were coming up, and she was supposed to be studying, and she took off on the bikes with her friends. She said she was going to study. She'd come past the café on the way home from school and she said she was going home to study, and then spotted her on the bikes up the street with friends. And then when she got home, I was pretty cranky about it.

00:03:36

TH Let me start with the very beginning. Kira, do you know what Dave is talking about?

KI Yes.

TH Tell me, walk me through the very beginning. You told Dave you were going to go home and study. Did you intend to go home and study?

KI Yes. I don't like it but I know I have to do it. I wasn't really looking forward to it, but on my way home I ran into Emily next door and she was heading out, and so I was like, all right, it'll be good. I can have a bit of a break after school. I'll go and do some tracks with her for a bit and then I'll come home and I'll open my books. Exercise is good for you, right?

TH Yes, for sure. So the intention was to head out with Emily for a bit and come home.

KI Yes.

TH Did you know that Dave had seen you?

KI Yes. On the bikes or before?

TH Yes, on the bikes.

00:04:36

KI Oh, no.

TH Okay. At that time when you decided to hang out with Emily, did Sue or Dave cross your mind?

KI Not really, because I knew that neither of them would be home for a while because I knew that they would be staying back at the café.

TH So you came in, and then what happened?

KI I came into home.

TH Came into home.

KI And then straightaway Dave starts yelling at me for being out, and I didn't even have a chance to put my stuff away or put my bike away properly, and he's off.

TH Do you remember what he said?

KI Not exactly, but it was probably some version of the same stuff he always says to me. It's like, you're wasting your time, you're going to fail your exams, you're never going to make it in life, what are you even doing. You're disappointing us, you're disappointing your mother. It's all this stuff. The minute I walk in the door that's what I get. Can I have a chance to open my books?

TH Is that what you said?

00:05:51

KI I don't anymore.

TH Okay. So he yelled at you, and then what happened?

KI Then I just stormed off to my room and slammed my door.

TH Okay. And where were you, Sue, at this time?

SU I was there when Kira came home.

TH And did Dave explain to you why he was annoyed with Kira at that time?

SU Yes. I was at the café when Kira rode past, and Dave stormed into the kitchen of the café and was quite furious. I tried to get him to calm down, because in my mind I knew Kira was going to study at some point. The BMXing is really good for her. Having a friend is really good for her. Having friends is really important. To me, it wasn't that big a deal. When Dave yelled at her I was quite frustrated, so I did come up and just make sure she was all right.

TH Okay. You knocked at her door.

SU Yes.

TH Do you remember what mum said, Kira?

00:06:58

KI I think she just asked to come in, and I said that she could come in, and I think she apologised for Dave, which is what usually she's the one apologising for Dave other than Dave actually apologising. And yes, just was sitting with me. But I was really angry. I probably wasn't saying very nice things.

TH About Dave?

KI Yes.

TH Okay. And to mum as well?

KI To mum.

TH Okay. And were you angry with mum as well?

KI Maybe a little bit, because like she just said, she knows that the BMX is good for

me and that hanging out with Emily is good for me...

DA Yes, but that's not the thing either. It's not the whole thing. It's not just the BMX. They're missing something here. It's the fact that she lied as well, and it's not the first time.

KI I didn't lie.

DA Yes you did.

KI I was going to study.

DA You told me you were going home to study and then you were out on your bikes.

00:08:03

SU Dave.

DA And it's not the first time, where she says that she's going to do one thing and then she does the complete opposite.

TH I see. Dave, if I can get this right, you feel like, I'm going to use the word betrayed. Is that too strong a word?

DA I just don't like being lied to. I grew up in a... We just didn't lie to our parents. Of course we did, and we got away with it when we did, but we heard about it.

KI What am I meant to do then?

DA But we heard about it, so don't do it. I copped it and so should...

TH Was does it feel like when you feel like you've been lied to, Dave?

DA It feels shit. It feels like she doesn't respect me or she doesn't appreciate what I'm doing for her or what I'm doing in this family. That's what it feels like. Should I just keep my mouth shut and just let things go?

TH I see.

DA I want to play a part, but then I ask questions or I suggest stuff that she should be doing, and she agrees or she says she agrees or she says she's going to go do something, but then she doesn't.

00:09:40

TH What's it like when Sue's up talking to Kira in her bedroom and you're downstairs? How are you feeling at that time?

DA What, in general or...

TH Or in this particular incident. You know that Sue's gone up to talk to Kira.

DA Yes. It's usually the same thing. It's a bit of good cop bad cop going on.

TH Are you the bad cop?

DA I'm the bad cop. The loud one. And then she'll go in and apologise for me and then things might be all right for a day or two or for however long, and then things will build up and it might happen again.

TH I see.

DA It hasn't been just once. It's been a few times. Let's not kid ourselves here.

TH That's an interesting thing to me. It sounds like, Sue, when you went up to speak to Kira, Kira said she was still pretty angry. How did things actually calm down, even temporarily, as Dave said?

SU How did he calm down?

TH No, how did things resolve, I suppose.

SU It's a similar situation most of the time. Kira's right, I do apologise for Dave. I know his intentions are good, I know he doesn't mean anything by it. He's a good man. He really is. But I understand that it can look scary, but I know nothing would ever happen. I do apologise to Kira, but then I do get her to maybe have a think about next time maybe talk about what you're going to do.

00:11:35

I understand you want to be on the BMXs, and I agree, but maybe just let us know that you're going to do that and do some study. I have no issues with her going off and... She's 16. I want her to experience life outside of school, not just all school, school, school. I know school's important, I know Dave thinks it's important. Then I usually will get Kira to come down when she's calmer. And we come down and I get Kira to apologise for lying to Dave.

TH Is that what happened in this incident, Kira, you apologised?

KI Yes.

TH So you calm down, you came downstairs talked to Dave and you apologised.

KI Yes. I said sorry for going bike riding. It's annoying because I'm not lying. I didn't intentionally lie about this. I was going to go home to study and then I ran into Emily, and I thought what harm would spending some time with her do? I'm not lying.

TH It sounds like you apologised to calm things down again.

KI Yes.

00:12:56

TH Not necessarily because you were feeling really a lot of remorse.

KI No. I know why he's upset. I understand that if I say something and do something else, that really irritates him, and I get that. I get annoyed when people do that, too. But I don't think it's fair to start yelling at me the minute I walk in the door, before I've even had a chance to show that now I am going to study.

TH I'm wondering just something you said before, Kira. You said sometimes when Dave yells it reminds me of Luke, my dad.

KI Yes.

TH Tell me a little bit about what that feels like to be yelled at by Luke.

KI I was really little, so I don't remember heaps, but...

TH Do you remember what it felt like in your body?

KI Didn't feel good.

TH Didn't feel good.

KI Yes. I felt really scared. And in some ways it was like I didn't know what dad I was going to get, because some days he was good, some days he would play with me. I remember that sometimes. And then some days he wouldn't even look at me, and some days he would be really, really angry and I didn't know what I'd done.

00:14:35

TH Is that what you thought? That you'd done something?

KI Yes. Why else would he be yelling?

TH Why else would Luke be yelling?

SU When we got back together after we'd separated, Luke had really hurt his back. He was a truck driver. He had a really bad back injury. The unfortunate situation was he became addicted to painkillers, so that increased that temperamental thing that he had.

TH Unpredictable.

SU Yes, unpredictable thing that he had, and he became very withdrawn, but then when he wasn't he would sometimes be angry. It wasn't what Kira did. The addiction to the painkillers just put him in a horrible frame of mind, I think. It was difficult to be around him.

TH Right. And, Kira, you use the word scary sometimes. It was scary.

KI Yes.

TH Meaning heart racing kind of scary? Is that what you mean?

KI Yes. I remember just feeling sick. Just like a big rock in my tummy.

00:16:08

TH How does it feel when Dave yells at you?

KI It's a bit the same, but I think now I also just get really angry because I feel like no matter what I do he's going to be mad. That makes me really angry.

TH Why do you think that makes you angry?

KI Because I've tried, and he doesn't let me make mistakes and he doesn't let me have a chance to try to do the right thing, and I just feel like no matter what I do I'm doing the wrong thing and it's... How else am I meant to feel?

TH You feel stuck.

KI Yes.

TH Okay. That sounds like there's quite a bit to talk about in what happens, and we can probably go over that in the weeks to come. But it sounds like one thing that's playing a part is Dave's intention to just correct Kira, or to show her what's okay and not okay, is also bringing up some stuff from the past. Is that a fair statement?

KI Yes.

TH Okay.

DR All right, we've reached the end of the sequence in that we have some sort of resolution in the family, although you can hear that maybe it's not entirely resolved.

RS I would say it's heavily not resolved, but that's very common.

00:17:43

DR Yes. One thing that was on my mind as we listened was, there were a lot of bids for the therapist to take sides. How did you experience that?

RS That is how it usually goes.

DR Yes.

RS And you can understand why. Of course when people are recounting what happened, they usually are trying to recount why they did the things that they did. And I might just say about this sequence, a little bit tricky for our poor actors because I did put them a bit on the spot, and so in a normal sequence you may talk a little bit more about the actions in a more stripped back way at the beginning. What happened, then what happened next, who said what, and then come back and say what did you mean by or how did it feel when. We didn't do that. We truncated everything together.

But you can already see that there is two different ways of seeing this. More than two, but at least two. And there's a sense of I did nothing wrong or I did something really bad. They're the two sides. And of course the answer is neither of those things. Yes, maybe you could have done something differently and maybe there's something to be learnt from here, but also you're not a terrible kid and you didn't mean to tell Dave he's a crappy father and you don't want him, which is how he might have heard it, in a funny way.

00:19:19

DR Yes.

RS I guess one of the things we're looking for in a sequence is all the ways in which... Many of you would know I run a thing called Black Box Parenting. All the ways in which a black box can get in the way, so that we try to communicate a particular message and actually what is heard or received is really quite different from what we're trying to put out there.

And in this particular case I think there are lots of examples of that. One is I think Dave trying to communicate, 'Hey, knuckle under, you'll regret it later. You need to study, take this seriously'. And Kira, I'll ask you, how do you think Kira interprets

that?

DR As if she's not doing enough. She's not allowed to have fun. There's no wriggle room for her.

RS Yes, and I think that's such a good point that she's not doing enough. She said before, I don't know how to make them happy, or I'm being a bad kid, basically. And then Sue's reading it as Dave you're being too harsh, and there's a very important dynamic that's important not to miss, which is Sue's coming in trying to comfort Kira, maybe partly influenced by the guilt about previous experiences.

And so she's trying to make the peace and comfort Kira and say to Kira, you're okay, you're not a bad kid. All good things, but they also, seen differently, could be seen as not supporting Dave. Dave, you're the problem, you're the one who's being unreasonable. And so there is a sense in which there's a breaking of the co-parenting team in doing that.

00:21:04

I think the other thing that we sometimes think about in this dynamic in the bid for sides is this thing called triangles, which is from Bowen Family Therapy, and the concept is basically that there are patterns which are incredibly stable in families. They in fact stabilise families. One of the very classic patterns is this triangle of two people ganging up against another person. And sometimes what they do is basically become closer by saying things about the other person that are not very complimentary.

DR Yes, I think we see the push and the pull that comes with that.

RS Right, yes. And we don't know exactly what got said up in Kira's room.

DR No, it was a bit vague.

RS It was a bit vague and it may well be that when Kira says I said things that weren't very nice, Sue was also colluding with those things, which would make sense. She's trying to calm Kira down. And that makes them nice and close, but it pushes Dave out. Cuts off from Dave and that's what I was trying to get at with Dave when I kept saying, what does it feel like when they're up there chatting and you're downstairs by yourself?

DR And you're downstairs, yes.

00:22:23

RS I didn't quite get there, but that's what I was interested in. Did he feel somehow cut off? And the important thing about triangles is that they stabilise the family.

DR Strongest shape.

RS Strongest shape. Much better than a two-pronged tripod is a three-pronged tripod. And when you try to shift those patterns sometimes families experience that as destabilising, and in fact will fight you on it.

DR And in the context of trauma, you've got people who are desperately trying to remain stable.



RS Yes, good point.

DR So even if their patterns are not that pleasant, it's familiar. It's stable. They know the sequence. They know how it's going to play out.

RS Yes, I think we said last episode this obsession with safety and security, and triangles are a really good way to make it secure.

DR Yes.

RS The other thing that I guess I would say is Kira said something quite interesting to me. She said when I was young with Luke, I used to get yelled at and I found it very scary, and when Dave yells, I find it scary, but it also pisses me off. And that is a really good sign. That sounds weird to say that.

00:23:35

DR It does a bit.

RS So what do I mean by that? I mean that oftentimes anger is a sign of protest. It's saying, hey, that's not right. And there's something about Kira that says this is not okay. For me to be scared by the people that I live with is not okay with me. And maybe I don't know how to articulate it, maybe I'm going about communicating that in a not very helpful way, but I think it's not okay for me to live in a house where a man makes me scared. That's a great sign.

DR Yes, coming back to what you said in the last episode, she's learnt that lesson. Somewhere foundationally, Kira knows that she deserves safety and to not feel scared in her home.

RS So true, yes, and that's a turnoff we didn't take, but how did she learn that. Who taught her that or who was most supportive of that side of her that demands the things that she knows she ought to receive? That's a whole other neighbourhood we can explore later on.

DR One thing that also came to my mind was Dave got a little bit frustrated, and for a lot of people thinking about working with more than one person in the room, that sort of outburst can feel a bit whoa.

00:24:52

RS Yes, it's funny isn't it, because I love family therapy so much. I think it's so powerful and effective and I always try and convince people to do it, and they often say to me, what if they have a fight? And they don't just mean a little bit of a hotspot, but a big fight, and I think that's a funny thing to be worried about because of course there are some families where a fight might lead to something unsafe, and that's a fair enough thing to worry about, but usually that's not what they're worried about.

They're worried about somehow that'll be a bad therapy session when the family have a fight. Number one thing I would say is this family fights all the time. This family's middle name is fighting at the moment, otherwise they probably wouldn't be coming to see you. It's important to say that you're not somehow causing this young person damage by somehow having a high-conflict

conversation, because that's their life at the moment.

But besides that, when people have a conflict, if you can keep it below that red zone unsafe vibe, you get to see a playing out of the dynamics that are happening in the household.

But also I think you get to see people's strength of feeling, and in this particular case, I think Dave, very understandably, was like wait a minute, this isn't all my fault and I'm not going to let you all put it on me. And that is legitimate and thank goodness people speak up for themselves in that way. And in family therapy we do try and make sure that we're not putting something entirely on people, and if Dave hadn't spoken up I probably would've gone to Dave pretty soon after that.

But it also then has a chance of having that little spark of conflict and then going on to have a useful conversation with the help of the facilitation of the therapist, and that is often revolutionary to families. When we start to go, they often feel like, oh, I'm in a bit of a rut, almost like riding the roller-coaster. Once the track goes, that's when we drop off the cliff. And actually trying to understand there's an issue to be discussed here where people have a legitimate different point of view, and if we did it without going into the red zone, we'll get somewhere that we may never have got before.

00:27:32

DR It's almost an opportunity to change the sequence in the midst of doing the sequence.

RS Yes, and people who are interested in family therapy, that's the next thing we talk about is, the deviation amplification, which is when we go a bit off track how can we keep going off track instead of going into the rut of the same old conversation.

But it think particularly in trauma, people are triggered by when people start to get unhappy. Maybe distress is okay, but this kind of kicking up or looking a bit annoyed, because often that could have led to unsafe situations in the past. And then people feel quite triggered. When they feel triggered they do things that are fight, flight, freeze, fawn, whatever. Those kinds of things which come from the reacting brain.

When their reacting brain is on their thinking brain goes off, and then they're not resolving the issue or problem solving together or whatever, or even really listening and connecting. What you're trying to do is keep the issue at hand whilst not going into the red zone.

00:28:43

DR Yes, delicate.

RS Yes, and people say how do you avoid going into the red zone? There are a few things. Obviously if you ride on the edge of red zone, you might want to take a break or you want to change the subject or whatever. But in this case, what I've done is really just validate the emotion, so to really understand where Dave's coming from, and then that makes him less pissed off, which we all feel less

pissed off if we feel heard. What I've tried to do is really understand where Dave's coming from.

DR Okay. We'll jump in again and hear more from this family.

TH I'm going to ask some questions about closeness now in terms of relationship. I might start with you, Sue. Out of ten, how close is the closest you've ever been to Kira? And I don't mean how much do you love her, because obviously you absolutely do, I just mean how close have you felt with her. Out of ten, what's the maximum score?

SU Throughout her life are you talking about?

TH Throughout her life, yes.

SU I'd say probably the closest I've felt to her is probably now or close to now, maybe not so much when she was younger. But I'd maybe say an eight if ten was the most.

00:30:19

TH So about an eight now.

SU Yes.

TH And that's the maximum?

SU Yes.

TH And you said when she was younger, like a baby I guess, would that have been less than an eight?

SU Maybe not a baby because it did just feel like her and I sometimes, because Luke was away a lot driving. But probably when Luke wasn't around anymore, that was the least close. Now I think about with the baby, yes, of course. She was beautiful. I loved her very much. Still do.

TH Would that have been more than an eight?

SU Yes, maybe. Now that you bring up her being a baby.

TH Okay. And what would you like it to be? Because ten out of ten some people say, now she's 16, maybe it's not going to be a ten out of ten.

SU Sure. What would I like it to be now?

00:31:19

TH Yes. In the near future.

SU Yes, close to a ten absolutely.

TH Okay. All right. I'm going to ask Dave in a minute the same question about closeness. What do you think he's going to say?

SU Close to Kira? How close he feels?

TH Yes. How do you think he's going to rate their closeness right now?

SU Right now? I think maybe a six.

TH Okay, six. What do you think he would like it to be?

SU I would really hope he'd like it to be close to a ten.

TH Okay. Do you think he would?

SU Do I think he would want it to be a ten?

TH Yes.

SU I would hope that he would want it to be a ten. I want him to love my daughter as much as he loves me.

TH Sure. But we're not talking about love necessarily, if you remember that. That's important.

00:32:12

SU Closeness.

TH We're talking about closeness.

SU Sure. Maybe he wouldn't want it to be a ten then.

TH Maybe we should ask him.

SU Yes.

TH How did Sue go there, Dave? Did she get in the ballpark?

DA Yes, I'd say the ballpark definitely.

TH How would you rate it, closeness to Kira right now?

DA About five.

TH About five.

DA Yes. You said six, didn't you?

TH And what would you like it to be? What do you think is something that you would like it to be?

00:32:52

DA I think ten's a bit too much to ask for, but eight or nine. Nine, I reckon. I'd like her to be able to come to me if she needed anything. I don't feel that that's the case. I think she knows that I care about her, but I don't think she feels comfortable to ask me for things. I think we were much closer, for me anyway, when we first got together when she was younger, and as she's gotten older I feel like we drifted apart a bit.

TH Okay. If I asked you maybe when she was 11-ish, how close you would have been to 11-year-old Kira, what would you have rated it?

DA It was just different because they're younger and all spending more time together, the three of us. For me it definitely felt closer. I'd say it'd be like more

of an eight. I feel like it can't stay like that, but as you get older, the closeness, however you want to describe it. The way I see it I want to feel like she can ask me for stuff, or maybe ask me for advice that she may have wanted to ask her dad if he was still around.

TH Okay, so you were an eight, now you think you're about a five, but you wouldn't mind being...

DA Yes. Again, it was a bit different because younger and that and the relationship was new. Yes, different things.

TH But there is a part of you that would like to be an eight or a nine again.

DA Absolutely, yes. Absolutely.

00:34:55

TH Okay, great.

DR That's a really interesting tool that you've used there, that rating of closeness. And I really enjoyed it because you hear some unexpected things.

RS The classic set of questions is three questions for each dyad, and that is rating closeness. It's very important to differentiate closeness and love. Closeness now, closeness as high as it's ever been and closeness in the future. And you're right, we often hear some new things. What struck you as new?

DR The one that really stands out me, and if I throw my mind back to being Kira, it was when Dave said he wanted a closer relationship.

RS And I think we said last episode there's this interesting dynamic in stepparents or blended families, and some stepfathers are more interested in being fathers than others, if that makes sense, and vice-versa of course with others.

DR Sure.

RS But this idea about how much do I see myself in a parenting role and how much do I want to be close to this young person or child, that's not a given and it's good to ask about it because sometimes people in blended families actually the answer is, well I'm happy with a six. And that's fine, but you need to know about that.

In this particular case you've got this nice example from Dave where he says, actually I'm pretty interested in being very close with Kira. I do think it is particularly poignant because of Kira's experiences with Luke, and not just that Luke was scary, but he was unpredictable and emotionally unavailable at times.

00:36:41

And so the closeness with Luke certainly in that period where he was suffering from addiction probably was quite difficult. And so this kind of father figure offering to be much closer with her is both wonderful, but also probably quite scary because obviously when you have a good thing then you could lose it.

DR You could lose it, yes.

RS I would also say it's interesting. The bodily reaction to being close to people, and Kira said sometimes when Luke was yelling at her she would be scared, and I said what does that feel like in the body. We got a little bit of body stuff. I feel a bit sick or I've got a stone in my stomach. Sometimes it is very hard for children to describe exactly what it's like in their body, and that's partly a function of their developmental stage when the experience was going on, and how ill-defined the self was at the time in which they were experiencing those very tricky things.

And of course, kids are limited by their vocab and their brains developing and all that kind of stuff, but it is important, I think, to say with this invitation to closeness there is the lens of safety and security, so I may well want to accept that invitation, but there's this question of is that going to be a safe invitation to accept.

DR Yes. The other thing that's coming to my mind with this is this idea of the relationship disruption that has occurred particularly through Kira's life, and also for Sue to a certain extent. And if we think about the idea of not talking about things in order to not upset people, this is maybe a point where I think they all express a desire to be closer to each other, but that's probably never explicitly stated.

00:38:31

RS Correct, yes. It's a nice little tool in trying to get to that idea of, hey, we all have a common goal and that common goal is, in this particularly case, to be closer.

DR Okay. We have a few more minutes of the session that we'll listen to, and we'll meet you at the end.

TH Okay, Kira, I might ask you about Dave. He said that at some time in the past you were closer. He put it at about an eight. How would you rate it?

KI In the past?

TH In the past.

KI I think when Dave first came into our family we were really close. It was a weird time and I think he... Yes, I would say an eight.

TH And right now, what would you put it at?

KI Maybe a four or a five right now.

TH Okay. And in the future what do you think you would like?

00:39:38

KI I don't think I would go a ten. I don't know. Maybe an eight or a nine would be nice. It would be nice to not fight all the time.

TH Okay, right. What about with mum. How would you rate it in the past? What's the closest you've ever been to mum?

KI I don't know. It's tricky. I think maybe the closest would be maybe about an eight or a nine when I was really little.

TH And now?

KI Now I would probably say a seven right now.

TH Okay, and what do you think you'd like it to be?

KI I think I'd like it to be at least a nine.

TH Okay. Pretty similar to mum. What about Sue and Dave?

KI Their closeness right now?

TH Yes. How would you rate their closeness?

KI Depends, has Dave just yelled at me?

TH So you think that affects it?

KI I think so.

00:40:50

TH It makes them less close?

KI Yes.

TH That's interesting. Okay. Would you say that's true, Dave, that you perhaps feel less close when you're having a difference of opinion about how to parent Kira?

DA Yes, I think that's obvious. It definitely has an effect on things, no two ways about it.

TH Okay. Sorry I cut you off, Kira. Out of ten what would you?

KI On a good day I would probably maybe say a nine for them.

TH Okay, that's pretty high. Dave, what would you rate closeness between you and Sue?

DA At any given time?

TH Yes, I guess generally an average at the moment.

DA I'd say it's pretty good.

TH Out of ten how much is pretty good?

DA Eight and a half, nine.

00:41:55

TH Eight and a half or nine.

DA Yes. Aiming high, but maybe less than, a little.

TH Sue, what would you say?

SU I would agree with that. Eight and a half, nine.

TH And you're pretty happy with that, it looks like, in terms of the facial expressions [overtalking].

SU I think so. Yes, I think I am happy. I just think that those times, like Kira's been talking about it, it would be nice to not feel less close to him because of that.

TH Let me ask you this question. Out of ten, how much do you think you parent as a team?

KI Zero.

TH Okay, Kira says zero.

SU Okay, that's a bit harsh, Kira.

TH Okay.

SU Look, as a team I think... Do you want to go first, Dave?

TH That's a tricky one, it looks like.

00:42:51

DA Yes. Look, there are definitely differences there. I can see Sue's perspective about wanting Kira to get out and about and have fun and all of that as well, but I'm looking at the longer-term bigger picture kind of thing.

TH Out of ten, what would you put it? Parenting out of ten.

DA Six.

TH Six. Sue?

SU I was going to say five, but let's go with six. That's better.

DA Yes, I was almost going to say five.

TH Five and a half.

SU Let's go with six.

TH So you feel that you're an eight and a half, nine close, but you're not necessarily parenting as a team that well. Is that fair to say?

SU Yes, I agree.

DA Yes.

00:43:44

TH What I can see after this conversation, and we might end it there, what I can see is lots of these relationships people would like them to be a little bit more close in the future. And the other thing is that you guys are interested in maybe parenting a bit more as a team. Is that right, Sue and Dave?

SU Yes, I would agree.

TH Okay. And then the other thing which I noticed in talking to you guys is, there are really standard normal stuff about parents worrying about the future and all that stuff, but there's also the trickiness of the past and how that's playing a part in what's going on in the present.



- SU Yes.
- DA Yes.
- TH Okay. Are we happy to leave it there, and we can then pick the conversation back up next time we meet?
- DA Sure.
- SU Yes.
- TH Any final questions that anyone wanted to add, any important things people wanted to add in?
- SU No, I can't think of anything.
- DA No.
- 00:44:39
- TH Okay. Kira, you said at the beginning I'm here because people told me I had to be here.
- KI Yes.
- TH Is there any sense in which you feel like maybe coming here might be helpful to you in any way?
- KI Maybe.
- TH So there's a bit of a question mark about that.
- KI Yes.
- TH Great. I think that's pretty good. Okay, great to meet you all and I'll see you next time.
- DA No worries.
- SU All right, thank you.
- DR Okay, that was our whole session and it's quite a nice way to end the session with a little bit of hope for change. One thing that's on my mind is, if we think about the impact point, Sue mentioned the suicide, but we actually didn't spend a whole lot of time talking about it or the fallout of that. Why?
- 00:45:33
- RS Because you don't have to in some ways, and because it's a first session is the short answer, but also I think sometimes, as I said before in part one of this series, sometimes you want to drive into town and drive straight to that impact site where the meteor hit, and you all stand around and you talk about the meteorite and you miss all sorts of really important effects that it has had. Maybe the meteor smashed the only factory in town and now everybody's unemployed or somebody died there, but that guy was the one who, I don't know, was...
- DR Was the postie.

RS He was the postie, yes. All sorts of things that have affected the outskirts of town that you won't get to see if you go straight to the site, and often people find it hard to move away from the site once they're there, if that makes sense.

Also, I think Kira said, I'm only here because someone told me to come, and that to me is not an invitation to come and see the impact site. That's like maybe I'll get to know you a little bit. And so one of the things I'm trying to do in the first session is to prove to Kira that maybe to keep coming might be a useful thing. And there are a couple of things I said like, if there was another way to do this would you be interested? Those kinds of things. I did ask her at the end and she was a little bit like, maybe.

DR You got a maybe.

RS Yes, and maybe is great. I was very happy with maybe and that is a real goal for me, yes.

00:47:07

DR Okay. I think one thing is interesting, and we've been touching it on as we go, but I think there have actually been a lot of moments of change through this session, and they were very small. There was no grand intervention, there was no... You're a very skilled clinician, Rebecca...

RS Thanks, Dayle.

DR But there was no incredible ground-breaking work, but just little small questions and reflections that actually I think had a big impact.

RS Yes, exactly. And I think that's a good thing to take away, which is when you're working with people who have experienced trauma, I think people think in their mind this idea about catharsis or if you tell me the story of what happened to me and you cry and you get it out, somehow that will fix it. That is not necessarily true, and in fact in many cases it's not true, but lots of different ways in which you can say, oh, the fact that this tree died because of the impact site way over town, that's related.

So instead of thinking of your town as the cursed town where all this terrible stuff is happening, maybe you're just thinking your town is like something bad happened here and it's had a lot of effects, and we can start to plant new trees and all that kind of stuff.

DR I think it's really powerful, and that connection of the past and how it informs the present. And you mentioned Black Box before and things getting garbled in each person's black box.

00:48:34

RS And I think it's particularly true in attachment trauma. The disruptions of attachments or the early relationships. I think I was saying to you the other day, Dayle, I feel like relationships are the engine of recovery in trauma, and if you do have disruption in your attachment, then your attachment machinery can be a little bit tricky.

And so this invitation by Dave, hey, come be close to me, might not be picked up as easily as someone who hasn't been through those traumas. And so that kind of a catch-22 where you are needing relationship, but relationship is the scariest of all the things, is what makes complex trauma so challenging. But that's why I really believe in having more than one person in the room, because I do think that building of relationships can be so powerful in the recovery journey.

DR Yes, absolutely. If there were things that you might suggest, I'm thinking this is a family that is a little bit disrupted for good reason, and they're using some strategies that are maybe not super helpful. I'm wondering, are there other strategies that we might be able to suggest to them to try?

RS Yes, that's a really classic question. We think, oh, how can we replace these strategies? I think the question is you have to work with the family to generate those strategies, and I know that sounds like a bit of a throwaway remark, but you'll never know what comes out of these conversations, and if that's vegan baking every Sunday, I may not know that before I get to know the family better.

00:50:23

But I do think you make a good point, which is reprocessing of the trauma or having to expose a person to the traumatic narrative, that's one kind of work, but if people don't feel qualified to do that kind of work, or they don't feel like it's appropriate, there's also other kind of work. And one of the really obvious places to start is, what coping strategies is the family using now and are there other coping strategies that would be in some way healthier or cause less difficulties? Also, does the family understand them to be coping strategies and not personality flaws or disobedient behaviour or any of those kinds of things.

DR Yes, what is the function of the behaviour?

RS Yes, and what a good basic to remind ourselves of, yes. And I guess if there's one thing I wanted people to take away from this two-part episode is, you do have basics which probably are useful to a family who's been through trauma, and they are getting to know them, understanding the functions of their behaviour, understanding how they relate to each other and understanding how you can connect them to each other. All of those things are really helpful in the recovery from trauma.

DR Wonderful. Okay, that brings us to the end of this podcast series. We really hope that you have enjoyed it, and keep an eye out for our panel discussion. We have a group of people who work with trauma in some capacity to give us their thoughts on this family and things they might be thinking about. This podcast and all of our other podcasts can be found on our portal, The Peregrine Portal, and we'll see you next time.

00:52:10

Outro I hope you found today's episode helpful. You'll find specially selected resources on this topic on our digital learning platform. To join the platform for free or to suggest questions or topics for further episodes, please visit our website [theperegrinecentre.com.au](http://theperegrinecentre.com.au).



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