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## Context to the nugget conversation

David speaks about the few things we need to bear in mind as we help build the Interpersonal muscle with the kids. He underscores a couple of themes. Firstly, he suggests that we should avoid labeling a child. Instead, he suggests that we should provide feedback on a certain element of behavior. Secondly, he urges us to legitimize the feeling of a child rather than brushing it aside with a positive pep talk.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Switching frames as a parent, David, I have a 12-year-old girl and an eight-year-old boy. As I am going through this conversation I am wondering, what is it that as a parent I can do to a), stoke that mindset and b), you know, you talk about running this interpersonal dynamics course at Stanford, what would the equivalent of that course look for a 10-year-old? What are the kinds of things that we as parents need to bear in mind to develop to help kids build these interpersonal skills as they grow?

David Bradford (DB): Well, there is books and it is a field called PET, Parent Effectiveness Training, which has very similar concepts. The one thing with kids you don't label them, you focus on behavior, you don't label them. So, let me give you an example. When I was, I guess, 10, 9 no 10 or 12 years old, I still remember the instances. There were several times my mother said, well, David the trouble is you are just lazy. Turned out to be a very destructive comment as I said that's who I am. And I said to myself, gee, if I don't work hard, I am going to end up on the streets. And I saw myself as a lazy person and I had to overcome it. Well, anybody who knows me knows I am constantly working. So, that was a label and when we label kids, they take it in as who they are. Now, if she would have said, you are having a hard time getting your homework done on time, that's a behavior. Then we could have done something. So, I think we have to be careful about labeling. The other thing is we have to legitimize their feelings. So, I have a story in which I am not proud about but I think is very revealing. When my son was about 4-years-old, 5-years-old, he went down a slide and hit the back of his head and the edge of the slide and he was crying. I rushed over and I said, oh Geoffrey you are not hurt and with tears running down his face he said, how do you know how I feel, only I know how I feel and he had me, he was right. What I should have said was, I am upset that you are hurt, but I was delegitimizing his feelings. And we delegitimize it all the time, we say, oh, you shouldn't be angry, you shouldn't, your older sister shouldn't be mad at your... your older daughter shouldn't be mad at her brother just because he is now getting more attention. Well, she is mad, she is envious, that's the way it is.

DJ: I was reading a book, yeah, apologies. I was reading a book called Toxic Positivity, where it talks about this notion of not being present to the emotion that's emerging, but really quickly brushing it off with a positive emotion.

DB: Yes, yes.

DJ: You ought to be feeling this kind of thing.

DB: Yes, what you are feeling is what you are feeling, I may not like that I am feeling that way but I am feeling it. So, I think as a parent can we focus on behavior, legitimize their feelings and can we also be open to our own feedback? Can we say am I doing something that's causing a problem.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I must confess that I have made several mistakes in the realm of not legitimizing feelings, whether it is my feelings or people around me, including the kids. I really found the book Toxic Positivity of value where the author Whitney Goodman speaks about this whole happiness and positive psychology movement and goes on to say that if we don't spend adequate time in some of the negative emotions, then we could end up leading unhealthy lives and end up bottling up some of those feelings that can have a different manifestation subsequently. I realized that I used to make the mistake of brushing aside negative emotions in me and my kids and of late have become more present to this tendency and working on this as an area of my personal development.

Thank you for listening.

## End of nugget transcription

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- 97.02 David Bradford - Healthy feedback - not crossing the net
- 97.03 David Bradford - Idea to behavioural change
- 97.04 David Bradford - Building an emotional vocabulary
- 97.05 David Bradford - Deepening the trust in a relationship
- 97.06 David Bradford - Nuances in giving good feedback
- 97.07 David Bradford - Leaning into the messiness to move forward
- 97.08 David Bradford - Repair and restoration of relationships
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- 97.10 David Bradford - Helping kids learn interpersonal skills
- 97.11 David Bradford - Displaying the right kind of vulnerability

### About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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