**Essential Parenting Tips for New Dads S4|EP114**

You speak about the foundational elements that every father needs to focus on when building his relationship with his children. I mean that, I think you've spoken to a couple of them, but what would a summary of those foundational elements be? You need to be the man that you want your son to become. You need to be the man you want your daughter to marry.

So there's a very strong element of looking in the mirror and working on our own stuff. How do we encourage boys to embrace their sensitivity and their gentleness and bring that to the party as well? And how do we actually put that together with this tough boy and this gentle heart? To answer your question, men need to model that. They need to model standing up and taking responsibility, being protective, doing everything they can to provide some model strength and warrior spirit, but also model vulnerability and care and sensitivity and love.

What would be your fireside chat? What would you be saying to a new dad as they're approaching parenthood about their role and about their journey into fatherhood? Welcome to Sense by Meg Fora, the podcast that's brought to you by ParentSense, the app that takes guesswork out of parenting. If you're a new parent, then you are in good company. Your host Meg Fora is a well-known OT, infant specialist, and the author of eight parenting books.

Each week, we're going to spend time with new moms and dads just like you to chat about the week's wins, the challenges, and the questions of the moment. Subscribe to the podcast, download the ParentSense app, and catch Meg here every week to make the most of that first year of your little one's life. And now, meet your host.

Welcome back, moms and dads. I am Meg Fora, and this is Sense by Meg Fora. And I am absolutely delighted that you've joined me this week.

As you know, every week, we get together and we discuss the joys and the challenges of early parenting, everything from pregnancy through to preschool. And many times, I'll have a fellow mom or dad on with me. And sometimes, I will actually be interviewed myself.

But some of my favorite episodes are when I get a real subject matter expert in to come and explore an area of parenting with me and with you and to share a little bit of their wisdom on it. And today is just such a day. I am really delighted to welcome Craig Wilkinson to join me today.

Craig and I have worked together actually over many years, speaking together on platforms like the BabySense seminars and the Big Baby Meetup and other events. And he, in some respects, is kind of the father of fatherhood in South Africa, because he speaks on all things to do with dads, fathers, and everything in between that happens between fathers and their children and also, I guess, marriages as well. So, lovely to have you on board, Craig.

Thank you so much for joining us. Thanks, Meg. It's great to be with you.

Yeah, super. So, I guess what my purpose is, but certainly for our audience, it would be great to hear a little bit about your journey. Obviously, I know that you're a father and that'll come into your story.

But how was it that you developed such a deep focus and a deep passion on coming alongside dads and fatherhood? Well, my experience was I was a single dad for many years and just began to see the importance of fathers in their children's lives. And we live in a country, South Africa, where a lot of fathers are absent and disengaged. I became known as sort of the pops amongst my children's friends, because I was very fortunate to have a beautiful relationship with my son and my daughter.

My daughter is now 27, my son's 30, but really began to see just the impact of fathers, they had on their children's lives and the terrible impact that a lack of fatherhood had on people. And if you really begin to study it and look at the stats, the correlation between almost every social ill and fatherlessness is undeniable. And that goes to prison sentences, it goes to early childhood pregnancies, it goes to the whole range of things.

So, fathers play a crucial role. And mothers are generally present. Of course, you get moms that aren't, but generally moms are there and present.

But dads, there seems to be an issue with dads globally. I mean, the one study showed that only 10% of men have an excellent relationship with their fathers. This is the one study.

30% was a little bit indifferent. 30% was non-existent and 30% was a bad relationship. So, the father-daughter, and how many films have we seen where the whole theme of the film is either a woman or a man whose life's a complete mess, they trace it back to a dad wound.

So, I became very passionate about that because of being a single dad and just seeing the impact of it and then realizing how much my kids needed their father. And that applies globally. Yeah, absolutely.

And the word globally just pulls me back to my time when I lived in New York City. And at that time, it was the early 90s and Mayor Giuliani had just got in and it was really a rough area. And particularly areas like the Bronx and Harlem and so on was really, really dangerous and there was an enormous amount of crime.

And it was mainly perpetrated by men. And I can remember reading a piece of research, which was so fascinating. And they found that women in these communities tended to do really, really well in life.

They kind of rose above, they had careers, they were the most likely to get themselves out of the slums, into corporate. And the men tended to go towards gangsterism and crime. And this was kind of being analyzed by these researchers.

And they said that a big piece of the reason is that men and women, children were growing up in a household where the women role models were actually amounting to something, getting themselves out. And the men role models just weren't. And so, when they were kind of looking around for a role model, the only people who were really rising up and who were wealthy were people who were criminals.

And it is just so important. And certainly, I mean, that doesn't just, you know, I mean, it doesn't just mean that boys are not necessarily going to, you know, succeed if they don't have strong men role models, but girls also really need their dads, don't they? Oh, they do. You know, I look at, you know, as I said, I've got a boy and a girl, and it's just beautiful to see boys and girls need both moms and dads in their lives.

That's it. I mean, absolutely. And there's a time when a boy needs a dad more than a mom, because he's entering into his manhood and experimenting with testosterone.

As a man, I can't model to my daughter how to be a woman. My wife needs to, her mom needs to do that. As a mom, you cannot model to a boy how to be a man because you're not a man.

So, I mean, both moms and dads are both crucial in their lives. And if I look at the relationship I had with my daughter, you know, I used to live in Nice. And when I used to come home from work, my son used to come barreling out the driveway, grab me a bristle, you know.

And my daughter would sometimes too, but we had this little game game. She would sometimes stay inside the house and wait for me to find her. So, I'd come into the house and say, where's my beautiful girl? You know, she must have been 10, 12 at the time.

And I'd hear this giggling. And she'd be sitting in the lounge or the dining room or the bedroom or something, you know, pretending to be indifferent. And I'd walk through the house looking for her.

Where is she? Then I'd find her in the room and I'd say, oh, there's my beautiful girl. And I'd run over to her. You know, Meg, what it was, it was a love affair.

She wanted me to pursue her heart. She wanted me, she wanted to know that her dad, the most important man in her life, found her beautiful enough to just, and loved enough to go and pursue her heart. And there's that romance.

There's that sort of divine, pure romance between a father and daughter, which sets the tone between, for the kind of man that her daughter, the daughter's going to look for. So, you almost immunize her against, you know, going for the first snotty-nosed teenager that comes on the scene, because she knows she's worth it. She knows she's loved.

She's worthy. She's worth pursuing, you know. And so, there's that element that a father brings to a daughter as well.

That's why promiscuity and teenage pregnancies are much higher in girls who haven't had a good male role model, you know, be a biological father or stepfather. So, the impact of fathers on both boys and girls is enormous. When it comes to boys, I often use the analogy of a motor car.

Motor cars are a beautiful gift to humanity. We use them every day to get from A to B. But they're also dangerous, you know. There are many thousands of people killed in motor cars every year.

And you need to learn how to drive a car properly. And in order to do that, you need someone who's driven the car to teach you. And boys, masculinity is the same.

It's a beautiful gift, but it's also dangerous. Because of the testosterone and the greater physical strength and the greater desire for power, you know. Unless you have a man who knows the rules of the road, knows that when a woman says no, no means no.

Knows how to respect, how to love, how to care. And that older male role model teaches the younger, imparts to the younger boy how to utilize their masculine strength and drivers and testosterone in a way that's societally acceptable. And in a way that's, you know, masculinity is a sacred trust.

It's strong. It's got testosterone. It's got drivers.

It's a sacred trust. What do you do with that? And men need to teach boys how to do that properly. And that's the role of a father.

So it's incredible. I mean, you're speaking to two very precious aspects of a father. And that is, you know, his strength and his steel and his metal that he can, you know, lead.

But then the gentleness and the lovingness, which are the two sides that are just so, so important. You often, you speak about the foundational elements that every father needs to focus on when building his relationship with his children. I mean, that I think you've spoken to a couple of them, but what would those, a summary of those foundational elements be? Well, the most important for me is that fatherhood's a parallel journey.

And I'll tell you what I mean by that is that you need to be the man that you want your son to become. You need to be the man you want your daughter to marry. So there's a very strong element of looking in the mirror and working on our own stuff.

No man and no woman arrives at adulthood completely whole and unwounded by the passage of life, whether it's from a parent. And so being a father is the greatest inspiration to get your life right. Got anger issues? Deal with those anger issues.

You know, whatever your issues are, deal with them so that you can impart to your children what they need. So that one foundational element is get your own life right. You know, when my daughter Blythe was two, just over two, she had to have an operation on her heart.

And, you know, I tell this story often. And the day came for the op and she was petrified. And I said to the doc, please, can I come into surgery with her just until she's asleep, you know, to alleviate her fears.

And they kindly let me. So I carried her into the theatre. We put the gas mask over her face.

She fell asleep in my arms, handed over. Operation was a great success. It was a catheter instead of an open heart.

But a month later, we were at my house with a bunch of friends standing outside. And one of my friends looked at Blythe and she was standing next to me, holding on to my leg. He said, Blythe, I believe you were in hospital recently.

And she looked up at him and she said, Yes, my heart was broken, she said. But my daddy fixed it. And I tell you, Meg, it was just such a, she gave me the gift of seeing myself through her eyes.

And that made me realize that I did hold her heart in my hands in many ways, and how I pitched up as a man. And I had to ask myself, am I that man? And in many ways, I was, but in many ways, I wasn't, you know, I mean, so the way I live my life has a massive impact. The way I treat women, their mother models to them the value of woman, you know.

So get your life right, live right. The second foundational thing is time. You know, the greatest gift we can give our children is time.

And not just time in their presence, time being present with it. Not on a cell phone, not watching a YouTube clip, time listening, hearing, tuning in, you know, that's, you know, quality time happens when you're busy spending quantity time. You know, you try and squeeze in 10 minutes, you know, I mean, you can't, it's forced.

You got to hang out. And when you hang out, you've got to be completely in the moment present, which is such a massive challenge. Go camping, go hiking, you know, go, I'd say to dads, make dates with your daughter and make dates with your son, with just you and him or you and her, you do what they want to do.

And you just hang out. I mean, those are the most precious, beautiful times you'll ever have. You'll never regret this.

And you'll look back at with such fondness, and so will they because you've dedicated the time to be fully engaged with them. Those for me are the two foundational elements. Yeah, I love that.

And you know, that time thing is such a, it's such a precious commodity. We've all got very little of it. I mean, that's the reality.

And you know, there are a couple of ways that I think parents can focus in on that. I mean, one of, for me, one of the most precious ways to actually do that is when you are in a car with your child, because we're always doing lifts. And I always had a rule in my cars, I'll do your lifts, but you need to show me the respect of never having a cell phone in your hand while you're in my car.

And the reason is that if I'm going to actually take the time to do it, I'm not going to farm you out to, you know, public transport for somebody else to pick you up, then you need to give me the respect of actually having conversation with me. Now, sometimes the kids would get in the car and they would not want to talk because they've had a long day at school. They're actually fairly grumpy and they're teenagers.

So, you know, you'd obviously have the first question, how was your day, and then you'd get a grunt. And I learned how to just be quiet and wait for them to talk. And it was just one of the most powerful things.

So sometimes those times are not even carving it out, but just being more, you know, conscious about it and intentional. Very much so. I mean, recently, my daughter lives in New Zealand and she was here for a while.

And when she went back, she just said, Dad, I miss you so much. And she said, you know, I just miss going to the grocery store with you. I just, you know, doing the mundane things together.

Yeah. Yeah, I did that. Precious, you know, as long as you, as you say in the car engaged, you're there, there's no distractions.

It's beautiful. It's really good. And you know, that window closes, you know, they get older and it's gone before you know it.

But the bank of memories you build in those early childhood years is absolutely crucial to establishing a beautiful relationship. And, you know, I say to dads too, the greater the relationship you establish in early years, the greater influence you'll have over them in their supposedly rebellious teenage years, you know, because you've always been there and they love you and they treasure your time together and they treasure what you have to say to them. So when it comes to those teenage years where they're looking at their peers and they're getting influenced, you are still the most important relationship in their lives because you've established it from day one.

Yeah, absolutely. So you've spoken actually a number of times already about your children's hearts and I mean, very, you know, kind of concrete, your daughter's heart surgery, but you also in a lot of your work have spoken about answering the deepest questions of your children's hearts. What are those questions that children really need answered and how does a father get involved then? Do you even have the answers? This episode is brought to us by ParentSense, the all-in-one baby and parenting app that helps you make the most of your baby's first year.

Don't you wish someone would just tell you everything you need to know about caring for your baby? When to feed them, how to wean them and why they won't sleep? ParentSense app is like having a baby expert on your phone guiding you to parent with confidence. Get a flexible routine, daily tips and advice personalized for you and your little one. Download ParentSense app now from your app store and take the guesswork out of parenting.

What are those questions that children really need answered and how does a father get involved then? Do you even have the answers? Well, I mean, it's not rocket science. I mean, look, kids don't come with a manual and every kid's different. You can be a great parent and have a rebellious kid and you can be a horrible parent and have a fantastic kid.

I mean, so there's no absolute guarantees, but there are things you can do. I mean, both boys and girls have on their question, their hearts questions like, who am I, dad? Help me to discover who I am. A father's role is not to write the script for his children's heart.

It's to help unlock the script that's already written on their hearts by seeing them, by knowing them, by helping them to discover the uniqueness of who they are, which means not stamping your desires for their life on them, but facilitating them discovering who they are. So the big question, who am I, dad? Fathers play a massive role in establishing the identity of their daughter and their son. Secondly, am I loved? Every kid needs to be loved deeply and we need to be lavish as fathers in showing that love.

And that love is shown in time, in words, in touch, in feel. The question on a boy's heart, which may differ slightly from a girl, although there's always overlap, boys want to know that they've got what it takes. There's a lot of pressure on men to be the man, to be able to protect, to be able to provide.

And so there's this burning question on a boy's heart, do I have what it takes? Am I enough? And he brings it to his dad, 100%. And the dad needs to affirm to his son, son, you are enough. Whatever height you have, whatever gifts and talents you have, it's enough, man.

You're the man. You don't have to play the man to be the man. You are the man.

And he needs to validate that in his son and give him an opportunity to show. I never forget Luke with power tools. When I used to do DIY with power tools, Luke used to stand there almost celebrating.

He wanted to get his hands on that drill. Not so much my daughter. And so the day that I let Luke have the drill, he just came alive.

He swelled. And I'm giving him the message, son, you've got what it takes, man. You can handle this drill.

And if he grows up like this, he'll never have to prove himself in bad ways. The question on a girl's heart for her dad, also, do I have what it takes? Am I competent? Can I be a leader? Absolutely. You affirm it.

My precious girl, you can be whatever you desire. That's a strong message. But the message is, am I worth pursuing? Am I lovely? A woman has a real desire to, I mean, women bring, apart from competence and leadership and all those things, they bring a grace and a beauty.

And every daughter needs to know from her father, you're beautiful. You've got a grace and you've got something to bring to this world that makes the world so much a better place. So these are very deep questions on a child's heart that we as fathers need to answer.

Yeah, really amazing. It makes me think that, you know, it's really hard. And I mean, we spoke about this just before we started our podcast, but it's really weighed on my mind.

And I know for moms of sons, it weighs on their hearts that it's really hard to raise a boy nowadays because the world hasn't quite defined what a good and powerful man looks like. Because men have been so, in many respects, you know, kind of taken down a peg in the last few years and criticized. And I mean, I was recently on a hike with one of my closest friends.

She's a mom of two boys. And she turned to me and she said to me, as a mom of girls, you just, you know, it's your girls that are creating havoc for my boys. And, you know, she really had it.

She lashed me. And I looked at her and I said, listen, I have a son as well. I am a boy mom too.

But I really felt her pain. She was angry and she could take it out on me because we were super, super close. And so obviously there was zero offense or anything, but I really felt the pain that moms feel around how do I raise these men to be strong, but gentle, you know, how do they have a role? I mean, what are your thoughts on that now? Look, you've hit the nail on the head.

This is a massive global issue, more in the Western world than the rest, I'll be honest, because we've gone a bit nuts in our definition of masculinity and femininity. And even if there's a difference, which there is, there's a clear difference. And it's a beautiful difference.

Look, men need to wear two faces. They need to wear the warrior face. And the warrior face is strong, resolute, stoic, suck it up, make it happen.

Don't cry because it's not appropriate now. But that's only half the story. The other side is the lover face.

And I'm not talking romantic love. I'm talking about nurturing, caring, gentle, the ability to be vulnerable, the willingness to be vulnerable, to ask for help, to nurture, you know. And the backlash to men abusing authority and power has been let's feminize men.

Let's take away the strong, stoic leader, make decisions, you know. Let's take that away. Let's emasculate that.

And so we have a generation of men growing up that are quite coddled. And that's why they respond to people like Andrew Tate, you know, who bring up powerful, strong macho masculinity, because there's a gap in our society. People are not being taught that.

They're not being allowed to be wild. Boys want to be wild, you know. You look at the research.

Young boys are 10 times more likely to engage in self-organized sport than young girls. They want to be wild. And the kind of sport they do, they play stingers when they throw balls at each other and hurt each other.

I want to be wild. They want to be hooligans. You know, there's a design of words to be.

So we need to encourage that, but harness it. You know, you don't fix that by taking it away. You fix that by saying, fantastic, man, be competitive, be wild, you know, climb that tree, dude.

But here's how you do it in a way that's appropriate. Men want to be the initiators normally, you know. And funny enough, in a dating situation, a boy wants to be the one who asks a girl out.

And a girl wants to be the one being pursued. I mean, that's how we're wired. But now boys are so tentative because they've been taught the girl's going to take offense and maybe that's sexual harassment.

You know, so they're so confused and so backfooted that they're stuck in the zone. I've written a book, a booklet called The Six Pack of Masculine Virtues, which is exactly that. It teaches boys how to be a real man.

But being a real man is not being a macho man. Being a real man is being strong and growing your strength. Grow your strength physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

Grow, but use it well. Use it for good. Use it to serve and to love.

And you're right. There's a massive, massive, massive need in today's world for boys to be taught how to be men. Yeah, absolutely.

You know, you used a word right at the beginning of that conversation. I hope I heard the word right, coddled. You did use the word coddled.

And you know, I mean, it's something that I see increasingly with parents in this generation of this kind of overprotection and removal of all risk. And it's come actually a lot from your very litigious countries like America and the UK where, you know, there must be no risk because, you know, and I can remember, I mean, I'm going to go back like 20 years when we went to America and James, my son, was five years old at the time and we were on a trip. And my husband, and this sounds terrible, and my son both went into a shopping center barefoot.

Now, we'd come out of Africa, we'd come out of the desert, we'd actually spent a month in Namibia. And so for them, that was like, you know, they're going to just, you know, go and go into the shops and they just happen to get out the car barefoot. And my friend looked at me and she said, it's illegal, you cannot walk in public barefoot.

And obviously there was reasons because of escalators and stuff like that. But it's been taken to the extreme now where kids can't climb trees, they can't go in jungle gyms, you know, everything has to be, there has to be no risk taken at all. And, you know, I think that, you know, coddling of boys and girls actually, you know, is a real issue because children need to take risks, healthy physical risks, and they need to break bones and get dirty.

And, you know, it's one of the things that I really, it's something that I really do plug at is that, you know, parents, like, take your hands off a little bit and let them take those risks. And if they get hurt, you know, it's okay. Yeah.

Well, it's not, it's more than okay, it's necessary. You know, if you take the germ example, if you had to raise a kid in a hermetically sealed bubble, protecting them from every germ, the second you take them out of that bubble, they would get a bacterial infection and die. Because the immune system has not developed what it takes.

And we're doing the same with character. We're protecting kids from offense and risk. And so what happens is they don't, they develop a wishbone instead of a spine, a backbone, as they say, you know, and we 100% need to get the backbone back.

Because, you know, let's be honest, life is tough. Life is brutal. You know, life doesn't play by your rules.

And if we don't allow our kids to bump their heads and break, they're not going to develop the character they need to do well in the world. Yeah, absolutely, completely. So we've spoken a little bit about that kind of focus on developing strength and allowing our boys to take the risks and to encourage them to explore that side.

But there's a flip side. And I'm very fortunate to have seen that in my husband. And I know that you've been a dad like that, where he's sensitive and really loving and caring.

And he's a super safe space for my kids. So how do we encourage that in our boys? How do we encourage boys to embrace their sensitivity and their gentleness and, you know, bring that to the party as well? And how do we actually put that together with this tough boy and this gentle heart? Well, the beautiful thing is they're not mutually exclusive, you know, it's the warrior poet. It's the it's the my son did jujitsu a while back, and in fact, he won the South African under 18 championship.

And one of the one of the sort of things that they do, they live by was I'll never start a fight, but I'll finish one if I have to, you know, it's it's the it's the ability to be very strong, but never ever, ever abuse it only use it for good. Walk away from a fight, you don't need to do that. So it's encouraging strength and resilience.

And but it's also encouraging empathy and love. You know, they say the best generals are those who hate war. They want peace, but they realize to maintain peace, you need a strong army.

The reason you have a strong army is to maintain peace. The reason you have a strong way is not so that you can conquer. And so you teach boys to to be strong and resolute and but to conquer themselves, to not need to do that to prove themselves.

What is that beautiful saying? It says rather be a warrior in a garden than a gardener in a war. So, you know, you want boys to nurture the garden of life, but you want them to have the capacity to be warriors if needed. And the reason you want that capacity is because the world the world is not safe and the world is difficult and it does come with battles.

So you need strong people, men and women, but you need them to use their strength to avoid ever having to have a war or fight. So, look, to answer your question, men need to model it. They need to model it.

They need to model standing up and taking responsibility, being protective, being, you know, doing everything they can to provide, you know, some model strength and warrior spirit, but also model vulnerability and care and sensitivity and love. I talk in my book about the lap of grace and every father needs to have the lap of grace, you know, where a child can come and be completely emotionally safe. They can cry, they can sob, they can pour their hearts out and dad will hold them and love them and hold them in that space.

So the only way for a father to really do that is to model both of them and to develop himself in both of those facets. Very interesting. So I've got two last questions and one is for mums.

So, and on behalf of mums, there will definitely be mums in our audience who either are single mums, have chosen that path or are mums who have chosen the path of having a single sex marriage where there isn't a male role model involved or where there is a father involved and he does not model this for them, you know, where unfortunately this has not been what he has seen and so therefore he is not showing any of this. What do you say to that woman? Where does she find this role model for her boy child and how does she make sure that she kind of propagates a successful transfer of all these amazing soft skills that you're talking about to the next generation in the context of not having a functional father figure in her child's life? And that's such a pertinent question because the ranks of what you've described now is growing. Sadly, it's growing hugely, you know.

So recruit good men into the lives of your children, simple as that, you know. It can be an uncle, a grandfather, an older brother, it can be a coach and also find activities that have men in it that can model this. So, Cub Scouts, fantastic, you know.

Sports, fantastic, you know. Coaches, fantastic. And if your son's not athletic, you know, a chess club or, you know, just find situations where there are men.

I think one of the mistakes that moms make is they try and be the dad and you can't be the dad. I mean, as a mom, you can teach your son virtually everything. I mean, you can model strength, resilience, you can model leadership.

The one thing you cannot model is manhood and masculinity. So, it's just one aspect, you know. I mean, single moms raise amazing kids.

I mean, they're completely capable of doing it. But find men, just find men that you can let your son be exposed to because they want that. They cry out for that, you know.

There's certain things that I can never teach my daughter, you know. Certain things that my son's mom can never teach him that I need to do that. So, it's just a matter of recruiting that village, that network of people that... And, you know, the coddling thing you mentioned earlier, we have... And I think moms have this tendency more than dads, to be honest, to be the helicopter mom, to come in and to curate everything, you know, to make sure that everything's safe, you know.

And I think moms need to learn to step back a little from that and put their sons in a place, obviously not recklessly, but where they can have access to and where they withdraw. You know, we do these conversations for men and it's fascinating. Women appreciate them tremendously, but they always want to be involved.

They always want to be the fly on the wall, you know. It's a woman's thing. I think women are very relationally driven and they're very protective.

And I mean, those are both beautiful qualities, but there does come a time, and it's hard for a mom to do that, to just withdraw. You know, psychologists talk about the two very necessary separations that need to happen in the life of a son and a mom. I mean, the first nine months of a child's life is spent literally one with mom, in the womb, you know.

I mean, you can't be closer. But then there has to be a healthy physical separation, a birth, where the child comes out of the mother and is now a separate human being. And then for a while, the child's very, very nursed and nurtured by mom.

And that bond, that emotional bond, is incredibly close. And it's incredibly close for mom and child. But there has to then come another moving on, another progression, where there's a bit of an emotional moving on from, especially a son and daughter, where the mom lets go.

And it's not a break, and it's not a negative thing, it's a positive thing. It's the next step in becoming that independent human being that can find their own way in life. And that applies to girls and boys, but very much to boys.

Yeah, it's very interesting. Look, I mean, I come with the mom's hat on. And I definitely was a mom who allowed my children to take risks, because I really didn't have a choice.

Actually, my husband is a massive risk taker. He's, you know, he's a sensory seeker. So he would be out there doing all sorts of things with my kids.

But I had very heightened anxiety, because I was terrified about my children's safety. And that's a whole other podcast on its own. But at one point in our marriage, we actually saw a marriage counselor, or it wasn't about marriage counselor, it was more just around relationship stuff, you know, with the kids as well.

And she articulated for him, she said, Look, can you ask Meg, when you're into one of these situations, can you ask her if she can, you know, not relax a bit, but if you can go down the road instead of just going down the road. And so you know, we kind of had this conversation and whatever happened. Anyway, about a couple months later, we're going along and we are driving through a game farm, you know, safari game farm.

And there was a massive and I'm talking like a six metre python, it was like utterly enormous. And it was had wrapped itself all the way around and into and around a termite mound. And of course, Philip just slammed on the brakes and immediately thing was right, Ken, everybody out, come, we're gonna go and have a look at this python.

And he wants to take all the kids up to go and look at the python. Now, I absolutely freaked. And in that moment, he did the best thing ever.

And he'd never done it before. He said, Okay, everybody wait. And he said to me, you tell me when you're comfortable.

So he was going to do it, he was going to take my kids right up to go and practically touch the python, because the python was, it was not going to be terribly dangerous. And they tend to go away. They're not, it's not like they were a black mamba or another snake that was, you know, but, but anyway, and eventually, you know, I kind of, I settled and I said, Okay, everyone can just get out and just stand this far away.

And eventually, I was okay with them actually going and, you know, it was a it was a great dance and a real moment in our marriage where like, actually, he had respected my anxiety. And but he hadn't backed down on the fact that the kids were going to go and have this incredible real close up experience of this python. And I think that's often what it's like, is that as a woman, as a mom, you actually, your protection, your instinct is so high.

And, you know, you, you, it's debilitating to see your children put at risk. And, you know, and yet the dad has to, yes, push the boundaries and make sure that but you know, and you have to navigate it as a couple, I guess. And it's beautiful, Meg, isn't it? I mean, that's the beautiful dance between the masculine and the feminine.

I mean, imagine if you didn't have that, you know, we'd probably lose a lot more kids too. When I think about the number of times my children's life was in danger. I have to take a deep breath.

That's why insurance companies must prefer women to men, because women are a lot more sensible, unlikely to do, but you need both, you know, and that's, that's an absolutely beautiful thing. So I mean, there he got your permission. You know, if you have a look at the serious dysfunction in men, in dads and moms, obviously, there's an overlap.

The dad's dysfunction would tend towards being absent and disengaged. And the mom's dysfunction would tend towards being over involved. And so we need to get a balance between those two.

Absolutely. Yeah, I love that. So I'd like to finish off with a question around new dads.

So I asked a question for the moms who were single moms or parenting on their own. And now I want to ask a question for new dads and moms, please do share this episode with your husbands and your partners, because it really is powerful for men to hear. So if you were a new dad, and I guess your son will at some point, probably in the next 10 years, become a dad himself, what would be your fireside chat? What would you be saying to a new dad as they're approaching parenthood about their role and about their journey into fatherhood? A number of things, you know, the first thing you'd say is, because men are anxious about do I have what it takes to be a good dad.

So the first thing is to lay the fears and say, you can be an outstanding father, you can, no doubt, you know, you've had the ability to make a child, you can be an outstanding, don't worry. Number two, get help, work on it, you know, do the research, do the studies, men, men, classically don't ask for help, we wing it, you know. So get help, find resources.

And there are many, I mean, the reason I wrote the first books I did was because there was so little resources for that. But there's more and more resource now, you know, the third thing I'd say is work on yourself. This is an opportunity to look in the mirror, every one of us has wounds, we have issues, you know, baggage, unpack the baggage, deal with yourself, you know, get introspective, don't become a nasal gazing, you know, hippie, but certainly just, you know, work on yourself as a father.

And fourthly, realize that you are the most important man in their lives, without a doubt, you're the most important, you're your son's first hero, your daughter's first romance, take it very seriously, and dedicate the time it takes to do that. The first thing probably I'd say to them is, you know, guard your relationship with your wife, because it's as you know, Meg, it's a tough time. And, and it can in some ways be tougher for men.

And that sounds weird. Because emotionally and physiologically, women go through, as you know, I mean, you guys are a hell of a lot. I mean, your body gets out of shape, and your hormones got crazy in his postnatal.

I mean, but where it's hard for fathers is they, they can be excluded from the club, you know, so so so a newborn mom and baby are just this like unit of love, even though there's sleeplessness and mess in it. But for a father, you can feel a bit sort of, you know, what is my role, you know, in my wife's not mine anymore. You know, those breasts don't belong to me anymore.

They belong to my child. And so work on your relationship with your wife, by communicating before birth, during birth, immediately after birth. Understand her feelings where she's at, let her understand yours, and build a network and just be aware, you know, have a really strong awareness you want to, you know, in the early years have have built a network so that you can still remain connected to your wife.

So you can have time alone with her to build that romance. And also be loving. You know, a lot of men, you know, we tend to be very sexually driven.

A lot of men are sort of worried, well, when can I next get intimate? And the reality is, often, the primary role of the man is to is to so love his wife that she feels desirable again, because, you know, maybe you'll you don't feel desirable after birth, you know, with all the stuff that you don't, you know, and sex is often the last thing on your mind. But as a husband, be loving, nurturing, caring, affirming, complimentary, you know, in a sincere way. So to, to, to be the person that makes your wife feel a beautiful woman, because she is, you know, so those are the kind of bits of advice I would give, you know, in a very summarized nutshell.

I absolutely love that. And I mean, it really does. And I hope dads don't feel daunted by this.

But it does accentuate just how incredibly vital you are in this whole thing. It's not just you're, you're somebody's hero, your son's hero, you are your daughter's first romance. And you are the person that will bring your wife back to who she was, who she was before make her feel like something outside of just being a mom, which is what we feel we do feel that you know, we are utterly consumed.

Your body is not your own. And it doesn't look like it used to, I mean, your hormones all over the place, your emotions. I mean, it's a crazy, crazy time.

And so I think also with dads, it's a time of selflessness. It's a time where you need to realize, well, it's my turn to give now for a while, you know, I'm going to need to be the giver. And but but it's absolutely worth every second, you know, I mean, the rewards are enormous, you know, both in your marriage relationship, and also as a child, you know, I mean, it's such a beautiful position, my son just turned 30, you know, last year, and he phoned me, he lives in New Zealand, he said, Dad, the greatest thing that I could do on my 30th is be with you.

And he said, Can we can we meet in France. And so we met in France. And we hired a camper van.

And we drove around France, watch a bit of rugby. But we spent his 30th birthday, just him and I under the Tuscan sun, you know, in a camper van. And that's what he wanted more than being with mates and friends.

He wanted to be with his dad. And I mean, the reward, if you get it right with your kids, is they become lifelong soulmates in many ways. But but you never want to stifle them.

You never want to expect or demand from them. It's something that needs to come from them in their adulthood. And it's just being there for them over, over and over and over.

And you said it at the beginning, there's no such time as quality of quantity, quality time, it's quantity time, you've got to have lots and lots of time in order for those quality moments to come through. And when you've got those quality moments coming through, you know, you reap the rewards later. So just amazing nuggets, Craig, I have loved our chat.

I know that everybody else who's listening will have really loved, you know, and taken away something. And I'm sure people are going to want to get hold of you. So can you just mention the titles of your books and where people can find you? Sure.

So Craig and craigwilco.com, please feel free to drop a mail. The website is craigwilco.com. And you can find the books, there's an online course for dads. There's a book called Dad, how to be the father your children need.

And there's a book called It's a Dad. And it's every man's guide to pregnancy, birth and early days of fatherhood. Those are the books out there at the moment.

Excellent. And you've got one coming up that is for boys. And that's the six pack book.

Yeah, so there is a six pack workbook for boys, which is currently out and it's also available as an online course. Fantastic book, a lot of schools use it for teenage boys. And the book that's about to come out is called Dangerous but Good.

It's for men, you know, it's to say men, you need to be dangerous, powerful, strong, resolute, stoic, but you need to be good, gentle, loving, caring. And I'm excited about that book, because it really is the voice of the father that many men never had. Love it.

Absolutely awesome. Well, thank you for your time and for sharing so freely. And yeah, we'll connect again for sure.

Fantastic. Keep up your fantastic work. Thank you very much.

Thanks to everyone who joined us. We will see you the same time next week. Until then, download Parents Sense app and take the guesswork out of parenting.