



The Heartful Parent
PODCAST
— WITH CHRISTY KEATING —

BONUS | My Child is Shy. How Can I Help Her Feel More Confident?

[00:00:00] Hello, Heartful Parent family. It is time for this week's bonus episode of the podcast. These little bonus episodes are my gift to you because as you've heard me say, inevitably, time and time again, we were never meant to parent alone. And I know that all of us, myself included, have so many questions about parenting.

In the work that I do and the many hats that I wear, one of my very favorite things is getting and answering questions from parents and getting to support you. Yeah, you, on your journey. So each week I'm taking one real question from a listener or a subscriber to my newsletter and I'm diving in. So on that note, here we go with this week's question.

Welcome everyone. I am so happy to have you back for. Another bonus episode of the Heartful Parent Podcast. Yes, I am joining you once again to answer a question directly from one of you right directly from a reader of my newsletter who sent this question in and it's such a good one. It's such a good one.

And I can hear this parents pain. And concern and worry and the question and my guess is that many of you are going to relate to this one. So here's what this parent sent me. How can I help my daughter, who is very shy and unable to speak first with another child navigate going to her new secondary school, where she does not know anybody and help her be willing to make new friends.

Oh, this is such a big one. It is so scary to send our kids. off into the world to send them to places where they don't know anybody and to hope that they are going to be okay. And I think our worry gets heightened if we do have a child who is particularly shy or reserved or introverted. So I love this question because like I said, I can hear the pain in this parent's question, the fear and the worry and the desire to support this.

Daughter in the best way they can. I want to start by acknowledging, of course, we want our children to have a lovely, healthy, vibrant social life and to have friends who they can rely on, who they can eat lunch with, who they can spend time with. I don't know a single parent who doesn't want that for their children, who wants them to have, you know, a robust set of friends.

I think for a number of different reasons, COVID, cell phones, and so many other things, it's actually become harder for our kids to learn how to socialize [00:03:00] with one another. But what I'm reading in this question is that we've got a kiddo. Who is probably an introvert who, you know, I, when I hear that is very shy, I generally not always, but generally would assume that that kiddo is an introvert. And you know, introverts and extroverts, their brains work a bit differently.

And there are, there is a such thing as an ambivert, which is somebody who's kind of in between. I actually, believe it or not, I am somewhat in between. And in fact, have been identified in one of those personality tests as an introvert. I think most people who meet me would say I'm an extrovert, but that's not really the question.

What I am today. Question is, who is our child? What we see happen is if we are parenting a child who's an introvert and we are extroverted, We get super worried about them. And if we are parenting a child who's an introvert, and we are introverted, we also get super worried about them, right? Because we are looking at our own challenges if we were introverted and projecting those onto our child.

And if we're an extrovert, we're like, wow, this is easy to go out and meet friends. What's wrong with my kid? Right? So I want to start by really sort of inviting us to not just accept our children for whoever they are, but to treasure them, to celebrate them and to let them know that however it is that they are moving through the world is okay.

That applies to a lot of different things, right. Introverted, extroverted. Straight, LGBTQ. Phenomenal athlete, phenomenal student. Whatever the sort of dividing line is or the differentiation, our children deserve to feel that they aren't just accepted. They aren't just tolerated, but that they are actually treasured and that they are celebrated.

And it's when we approach our children from that mindset that we can actually support them in the best way. And we can maybe lean in with curiosity and ask them what they would like from us. Now, when it comes to kiddos who are more introverted, the work that I rely on is the work of a woman by the name of Susan Cain.

She wrote a really powerful book called Quiet, the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking. That's one for adults. And then she also wrote a book called Quiet Power, the secret strengths of introverts. And this is a guide for kids and teens. So, I would start by getting the book, Quiet Power, for your kiddo and the book, Quiet for Yourself.



Now, a number of months ago, I had the great privilege of interviewing Susan Cain for a local event here in [00:06:00] Seattle, and she shared some really incredible wisdom from that event, but I'm going to turn you to some of the things that she said, and this is actually these are tips for parents of an introverted child.

that comes from her book, *Quiet*. So full credit to Susan Cain here. But she starts with that idea that we need to treasure our kids. And then she talks about, you know, if you're, if you have a kiddo who is reluctant to try new things or to meet new people, to the extent possible, expose them to new experiences gradually.

So you can do that with younger kids. You know, if you've got a kid who's already going into secondary school, that might be a little bit harder and they kind of do just have to go to school. Right. But if we can also help her explore other new things in spaces where she can sort of inch her way into comfort and inch her way into competence.

That can help build her ability in other new situations. Okay? Now, here's the third really interesting thing that Susan Cain says. If your child is shy, don't let her hear you call her that. Because if she repeatedly hears you say that she's shy, she will experience that nervousness as something that is unchangeable.

Oh, I'm shy. I guess I'll always be shy. As opposed to thinking about it as an emotion. That she can learn to control. So we want to help our children understand that shyness is just another emotion and that we can give them regulation techniques to help them manage it. Right? We can give them ways to take deep breaths, to build some confidence.

You know, to help them sort of overcome that, not to say they'll never have, you know, experience shyness again, but if they see it as something that is manageable, and we've given them the skills to do that, then they can step more fully into it. Susan also mentions as a side note that when kids hear us call them shy, they know that we're not giving them a compliment. Right?

We're not saying, Oh, my kid is so smart. She's so clever. Right? What we're saying is. She's shy and there's something wrong with that. So if you've been doing that, maybe don't keep doing it. Change your vocabulary. And when we change our vocabulary, we really can help change people's perspectives. Okay. If you are an introvert, Susan also says, try not to project your own history onto your child.

I mentioned this a little bit. Right? That if you're an introvert raising an introvert, you have your own fears. And that's because you bring your own baggage, your own history to the



mix. And it can be really easy to [00:09:00] assume that it will cause your child pain. And it might not cause your child pain. Your child might actually be very comfortable with who she is and comfortable in her skin.

And if so, let her do that. Let her be that. Okay? Next thing, if you've got a kiddo who's highly sensitive, and this can often go with kids who are introverts. So, you know, they might be more sensitive to lights, sounds, emotional experiences, new situations, you know, the way a fabric feels on them. They might be known as what's called an orchid child.

And that is, you know, really comes from some new research that is being done out there in the world. And it sort of says, and there's in fact a book called, you know, the orchid and the dandelion. There's this idea that some kids are dandelions, many of them, that you put them in any environment and they're going to be fine.

They like, they'll thrive. They've got it. Some kids are orchids, and they do wilt more easily, but when we put them in an environment that feels nurturing to them, and we help nurture them, they can actually do better than dandelion children. Susan notes that those kiddos are often healthier, have better grades, and enjoy stronger relationships.

Okay, so this might be something to think about if you, in fact, have that highly sensitive kiddo. And then the other thing to remember if you're raising an introverted child is to just acknowledge or explore the idea that introverted kids often have the capacity to, to develop a great passion. Right? So pay attention to what is fueling her and look for ways to cultivate and help grow that curiosity or that passion.

So for this parent who asked the question, whose child was starting at a new secondary school, helping find places within that school where she's passionate about something that can be a really lovely place to connect with other kids and build friendships that come sort of more naturally than maybe sitting next to somebody in class.

So those are some tips that, like I said, come from Susan. I would like to add one, though, and that is, let's try to work from the assumption that our children will find their path in the world and figure out a way to thrive. Especially if we create that nurturing environment that Susan talked about. Your child going to a new secondary school or a new school or a new activity or a new whatever, fill in the blank, might actually be scarier for us than it is for them.

And so, you know, you can empathize with your kiddo. You can help skill build. [00:12:00] If you are more worried or nervous than they are, it may not be helpful to them. I wager it



will not be helpful to them. So manage your own emotions, manage your own fears, and let your shy kiddo go forth and conquer the world because she just might do that.

All right. I hope that was helpful to any of you who are raising those shy introverted kiddos. Like I said, I highly recommend that you check out the books. *Quiet*. and *Quiet Power, The Secret Strengths of Introverts*, as a way of boosting you up, feeling better about who your kid is, and helping your kid feel better about who they are.

On that note, I will say goodbye. I'll see you next Friday with another question from you. Cheers, everybody! All right, listeners, thanks so much for coming along with me for this week's bonus episode. If you would like your question answered, drop me an email at christy@theheartfulparent.com. I'd love to hear from you.

You can also go to my website at theheartfulparent.com and sign up for my newsletter where you receive the inside scoop on everything Heartful Parent and it's delivered weekly to your inbox. Better yet, if you would like more answers to the parenting questions challenging you, and or you would just like to support my work here at the Heartful Parent, there is no better way to do that than to join the Heartful Parent Academy.

Inside the Academy, you get direct access to me, me, to get all your questions answered at least three times a month. And the more members, the more access I will offer. So use coupon code **PODCAST**. To try out your first month for only \$7. You can find the join link on my website. I feel so incredibly grateful that you let me into your lives every week and now twice a week.

And I'm also so grateful to those who support the work that I'm doing. I truly cannot do this without you. Thanks so much. Cheers, everyone. I will see you next week.

