

BCL ep307 Raising Sturdy Girls: Building Resilience with Keith McCurdy

Well, it's time to dive into another inspiring episode of Base Camp Live. We're calling it the Live Sturdy with Keith McCurdy series. Today, we're tackling a crucial topic, how to raise sturdy girls in a world that often pulls them in every direction.

Keith McCurdy is back to guide us through his consistent and compelling message about building resilience into the next generation. And I am thrilled to also be joined by my daughter, Hannah. As a K-12 classical Christian educated graduate, Hannah brings firsthand insights into the unique challenges and opportunities that girls are facing today.

So join us as we explore how our homes, our schools, and our churches can work in harmony to raise strong, grounded young women who thrive in any season of life. It's a meaningful and practical conversation you won't want to miss on this episode of Base Camp Live. Mountains, we all face them as we seek to influence the next generation.

Get equipped to conquer the challenges, summit the peak, and shape exceptionally thoughtful, compassionate, and flourishing human beings. We call it ancient future education for raising the next generation. Welcome to Base Camp Live.

Now your host, Davies Owens. Welcome to another episode of Base Camp Live. Davies Owens here.

So grateful as always that you made a decision to hit that play button. There are a lot of things that compete for our times these days. A lot of podcasts, a lot of just general life going on.

And it is my encouragement to encourage you. I know the importance of the work that we're doing every day of raising the next generation. I don't think there is more important work.

In fact, I'm of late fond of the idea that really in some many ways the last best hope for our civilization is the work that we do every day partnering with our homes and churches to raise the next generation. It is really our future, and it's tougher than ever to do so. And so I'm grateful for your partnership.

You're walking this journey with us along the way. And in this particular episode, especially grateful to have Keith McCurdy back. Keith is no stranger.

At some point, we just need to call him a co-host. He is here at least once a month doing a segment in this Live Sturdy with Keith McCurdy as we're calling it now. And there's a lot of what Keith has to say that's just so relevant to raising children in the modern world, especially in a very therapeutic, emotionally driven world where kids are often put on prescriptions and given probably not the best advice when they're, I think, really just more basic biblical principles that Keith really brings to life that probably are many things that our grandmothers would have said

in days of old.

Keith's got a lot to offer. He's in the trenches every day working with families and children and parents. He's been at it for over 30 years in the area of mental health.

He sees literally thousands of individuals and families. And from that perspective, I think, really offers us a lot of insights on how to navigate these modern moments that we're in. Keith is truly a professional master of arts and education specialist with a degree from James Madison University.

He's the president and CEO of Total Life Counseling. And he's licensed in the state of Virginia as a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist. So basecamp.live.com, the website, is a great place to go and click on that search bar.

And you can look up other episodes on Keith McCurdy. A while back, we did one on basically raising sturdy boys. We called it Boys to Men.

And I had a number of you listeners wrote in and said, hey, that's great, but what about the girls? And I thought, you know, that's a really good point. Of course, we need to talk about how to raise sturdy girls. So in this episode, Keith, along with my daughter, Hannah, join us for this conversation.

And look forward to you hearing that. Before we jump into it, I want a quick shout out to David Bosnell, head of school at Redeemer Classical Academy in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, as well as Justin Hughes, head of school and his team at Christ Classical Academy in Tallahassee, Florida. Thank you both for being a part of the Basecamp Live family, for listening and being a part of Zipcast as well.

We really appreciate it and are grateful for so many of you around the country and around the world that listen to Basecamp Live. On this episode, I want to say a special thank you to our sponsors, Classical Academic Press, America's Christian Credit Union, Wilson Hill Academy, Life Architects Coaching, the Classic Learning Test, and Gordon College. Those great partners have a lot of resources.

You can check out our partner page on our website. They are great folks who work as well alongside of us, just finding great resources to make sure that we are successful as schools and as parents and raising the next generation. So without further ado, here's my conversation with Keith McCurdy.

Welcome to Basecamp Live. Excited to be back with Keith McCurdy. How are you, Keith? Oh, doing great.

I hope you are. Yeah, we just, there's always so much to talk about and we're going to jump into talk, but I thought so appropriate to bring Hannah along. Hannah, my daughter, who's been on Basecamp many a time.

Hello, everyone. So good to have Hannah here with us. You know, we're talking about raising sturdy girls.

So we did an episode a number of months back on raising sturdy boys. And sure enough, when you know it, somebody emailed at info at basecamlive.com and said, hey, what about the girls? I said, that's a great point. Let's see what Keith has to say about raising girls today.

And Keith, you, as always, are more than anybody I know, right there on the front lines. You see people in your office day in and day out. You're speaking at schools all around the country.

You got a pretty good sense of the pulse right now of what's happening in our culture. So let's just jump in on that, on girls. And Hannah, you can make sure we're not missing.

We just don't want to have talking about girls with just two guys. We just felt like that might not be fully balanced conversation. Yeah, if we get it wrong, Hannah, you need to correct us.

Hannah, if we get it wrong. Speaking on behalf of all women. Yes, Hannah.

Please set the story straight. Yeah, and if y'all don't know Hannah, I mean, Hannah was, you know, you were officially a K-12 classical Christian. And college.

And college. So we bought the whole season pass for you. And you've turned out pretty well.

But you have a lot of perspective on, you know, your contemporaries and challenges you see. So yeah, I mean, let's start with Keith. And Hannah, I love your comments.

Just what's the, lots of challenges today. There always have been. What are you seeing, Keith? Well, it's interesting.

You know, it's kind of the same key challenge I've seen grow over the years. In the last 10 years, it's really gotten out of control. You know, the thousands of teenage girls I deal with, it's amazing to me how many of them continue to look externally to the world, to culture, for a sense of value and meaning.

I would say in the almost 40 years of being in this field, that external view of figuring out your value in females is stronger than I've ever seen it. And so I run into that all the time. And it's funny because that's often paired with parents that are reporting to me, either my daughter is unhappy, but clearly that she's disconnected.

We don't have good communication. I mean, it's amazing. They're describing in many ways what's missing and driving that external look for value and meaning from their daughters.

You know, I somewhere saw recently just an interesting observation, just about like women's dress, where, you know, there was a period of time, even 50 years ago, where like young women kind of were, or, and you can explain this, I mean, more girly dresses. And then when you kind of hit 13, 14, you'd start, quote, dressing like your mother. And you kind of became,

your identity was in, I'm gonna become more like my mom.

I know where my place is in the world. Well, it used to be that boys had to wear shorts until they turned 11, and then they had to wear pants to dress like men. And girls wore skirts when they were young.

And then when they turned 12, it actually was the point of confirmation in the church. When you're confirmed in the church, then you would wear your long skirt or whatever. But yeah, there's an external point where you actually hit maturity.

But now, I joke all the time, I'm 26. It seems like everybody in their 20s right now with me is either partying like they're 18, or they have three kids. It's like, it's all over the place.

So it's kind of hard to define. As long as they're not partying with the three kids. But Keith, to your point, I mean, there are these sort of demarcations of what does it mean to be, in this case, you know, a girl to a woman? And what are those roles? And it doesn't mean you have to have a particular, you know, career choice or something, but it's just your identity, which sounds like what you're pointing to.

There's just this sort of absence of any guiding direction. Yeah, what I tell parents all the time is, it's a huge missed opportunity. We want to be the loudest voice in the lives of our daughters.

But in many cases, we've abdicated that. And or we have lost the common knowledge that we used to have of how do we speak into their life? How do we make the connections that begin to shape their sense of identity and value in the home? So that when they go into the world, they have a strong foundation. Yeah, well, and we're going to, I mean, most of this, we're going to devote very practically to what do we do about it? But just kind of staying in the like, what are you seeing? Talk a little bit more about what you're seeing that's maybe, again, a product of kind of this cultural moment.

I mean, certainly, you know, we can't get away from the technology conversation. Just so many of those challenges, I think, are coming from external narratives that we didn't really invite in that shape those identities. Oh, yeah.

Well, I mean, I'll give you a great example. When I go around and speak, sometimes I often show a commercial that was put out by Dove Soap that came out right during the pandemic, but it only ran for a very short amount of time and then got pulled. And my opinion is it got pulled because it gave the social media folks a black eye.

But it's called Reverse Selfie. And it walks through this young girl, I think she was 12, that looks like she's 25 years old, but through the commercial, she's removing all of the stuff that she did for what she was projecting online. And what we know is the stat, the most recent stat I've seen is that 80% of our daughters distort their image online by the age of 12.

And so that alone tells us they're pushing an external filter, trying to perfectly script and quaff

and manage everything for an external image and they're putting it online. And I see that in my office all the time. Young girls, teenagers that come in my office, even young women, young adult women, really struggling with their image and they're shopping so much of it and getting feedback from so much of it or comparing so much of it to what they see in the world of social media.

And so that's a huge part of this right now. You know, I tell the story to that point, just I remember being on a flight not too long ago. When you sit in a seat, you can't help but sit in a seat through the crack, the people, what they're watching and the seat in front of you.

And there was a teenage girl who gets, she was on her phone and she was manipulating an image of herself, you know, changing the filters and doing all this stuff. And I thought, okay, whatever. And then I looked up 10 minutes later and I looked up 30 minutes later and I looked up two hours later and she's still tweaking her same picture.

So I'm thinking this is like at the point of neurotic, like I have to present this uber self that is not even realistic. But that's, what do you think Hannah? It's a real problem. I think it's severely intimidating to go out into the world online and think that everybody in the world could look at what you are posting.

And it's very scary, but I don't think there's been given, at least I was never really given any guidelines on what I'm walking into when I'm posting online. I know that's a separate conversation, but you're really kind of in a free for all. And the images that you're seeing of these women online are beautiful.

And you don't see the two hours of editing that goes into that. And so again, I know for time, so setting that aside, because I'm sure some folks were like, you know, look, that's exactly why we're not giving it. We listen to Keith, we're not giving our child a smartphone until they're 48 or whatever it is.

At least, what, 16 and driving? Everyone always wants to know. Yeah, 16 driving, clean your room when we tell you. That's right.

So let's stay back in the land of maybe the younger, let's assume that there are other natural challenges of who am I and where do I belong and who's modeling that? I mean, it sounds like that's the core problem here. Yeah, well, it really is. I mean, when we think about identity formation, my goodness, you and I have talked about this on so many other formats before, but it's this questions of am I valuable? Am I capable? And do I fit? Am I connected to something larger than myself in a meaningful way? And so those three identity formation questions, when we do not begin answering those in the home, then they begin seeking those answers other places.

Yeah. And so those other places, the top three are, the first is social media. The second is relationships, often ones where there ends up being a lot of manipulation or pressure for

promiscuity.

And the third is often recreational substances. That has gone down. It's interesting.

The pressure for that seems to be lessened a little bit in a way, a good side effect of having a more fragile culture. We're actually more challenge averse. So some of those risky things are actually going down a little, which is odd.

But I really see teenage girls turning the filter external with social media and relationships as the two biggies. And the third being substance use, primarily pot use. Wow.

And Hannah, we've talked again, folks haven't heard, there was a great interview we did. We need to do another one, but it's probably a year and a half ago where you and I just kind of talked about kind of your life and world and having gone through a classical Christian education. And so a lot of the students you graduated with, they may be prodigals, but didn't end up probably making the wisest choices in terms of just the problems that your generation is facing right now.

No, it's very sad to me. I was having a conversation with a friend who I graduated high school with the other day and it struck us that we were the only ones that we talked to from our graduating class because we realized that everybody's walking a different path and going a different direction. And I think I said this on the other podcast though, is fascinatingly though, those that have really taken a step away from who they were when they graduated high school don't have strong families.

Well, and I'll echo that in a different way. When I deal with so many issues, now there's different levels of issues I deal with in my office just because I see so many thousands of people, but I deal with a lot of parenting issues, things like that. But when I'm dealing with teenagers, it's amazing to me the solid families, the ones who are really, nobody does it perfectly, but who are appropriately engaged in really developing their children into young adults, capable young adults.

They may have just as big an issue with a child, but their approach and how they manage it is so much healthier. And I see so much of a better outcome when I know the starting point is a solid family unit. And again, that's where I think often we can start in a good place with a solid family unit, but miss the opportunity about how do we build this into the framework of our child's development.

Well, why don't we pause just for a moment and take a quick break and come back, Keith, because I want to get into what are some of the key points, best practices that we can begin to implement and whether you've got a kindergarten daughter or a 10th grade daughter or one who's 26, there's still opportunity here, so it's never too late. So let's take a quick break and we'll come right back. I want to take just a moment during our break and let you know about the great work that's being done by Wilson Hill Academy.

They offer a vibrant, rich, and accredited classical Christian education available to families and schools almost anywhere. With a click of a button, students join master teachers and friends live online from all over the world to engage in deep and lively discussions, solve math problems, conduct science experiments, translate Latin, deliver thesis presentations, and so much more. At Wilson Hill, students make lifelong friends and graduate well prepared for college and beyond.

Discover what's possible for your family or school at wilsonhillacademy.com. All right, Keith, we've been talking, we could talk a lot about the problems, we all see them, but let's get into just some of the best practices, solutions. What do you recommend or how do you guide families who are listening on raising daughters? You know, you and I both speak all over the country. And so sometime in the last month or so, I was speaking across the country and had dinner with a pastor and the pastor said to me, he said, you know, I want to make sure that I really matter to my children.

And I thought, wow, what a statement, you know, from a dad, a pastor. He said, I really want to matter to my kids. And his question was really, how can I make sure I matter to them? And I think that's a wonderful question as we look at this piece.

How can I matter to my daughter? And the first thing I said to him, I said, well, I'm going to give you a kind of a crazy way of looking at this at first. I said, you know, have you had to talk about sexuality with your kids? And he kind of laughed and was a little nervous. And I said, because it's the same type of thing.

When you're a parent, that at eight, nine, 10, 11, you know, go take your child away for a weekend. You have this conversation. You're the author of the information.

You're the author of the correct terminology of body parts. You're the author of why God made us sexual beings. And you do not hold back with all of the appropriate, well-formed information.

You have planted yourself in a role of wisdom in the mind of your child, well above their peers. And you've done it at an early age. So now you have created this idea that, you know what? I know stuff and I'm going to share it with you.

I'm the one that needs to talk to you. Your mother, your father and I, we're the ones that hold that information. And so I said to him, I said, so that's really what you're striving for.

You want to know that you're claiming a seed of wisdom early in the life of your child. Now you can do it later. It's just coming through the side door.

So it's a little different. And he said, so how do I do that? And I said, well, let me turn it around on you. I said, let me tell you what thousands of teenage girls share with me over the years that they wish was different from their parents.

And I would argue it falls into, you know, just a handful of categories and I'll run through them real quick. You know, number one is time. It's amazing to me the number of girls that say, you know, my parents, they really don't spend time with me.

You know, I spend a lot of time with them maybe doing their errands, doing their things, but they really don't carve that time out just with me. That tells me, hey, I matter enough that we're going to carve time out and dedicate it to something that matters to you. And I just thought that was really interesting that, you know, that even at a young age, young teenagers are saying to me, I really want that, even though their parents are often in my office saying she acts like she can't stand us and never wants to be around us.

Yet I have the student on the other end saying, I really do wish I had that. So that's a huge one. It's the whole idea of being present when you're present.

I mean, just because you're, I like, you know, hey, we all ran to the store together and everybody's on their phone the whole time. Like, I mean, that's not being present when you're present. Or the dad that says, man, I'm with my boys all the time.

They always help me wash the car. Right, right. Yeah, exactly.

I'm not sure that's really what it is. Yeah. So that's a huge one.

The second one is touch. You know, it's really interesting to me and especially, this is true with moms and dads, but I even see it heightened a little with dads in general. I mean, we can have moms that are not touchy feely, but it's interesting to me that when young girls start to hit puberty and things begin to change, dads sometimes that were very physical with them when they're younger, almost feel like they're afraid to hug their children, to love on their children, to love on their daughters the way they did.

And I'm encouraging fathers in my office all the time that, you know, sometimes the way to reconnect with your teenage daughter is through physical touch. And it's amazing to me the number of fathers I've worked with that the only homework they have for months is beginning to craft the ability to give their daughter a hug when they come home, to reach out and put a hand on the shoulder. You know, all these small, simple things that demonstrate no matter what, they get feedback in return.

Just this notion that I'm demonstrating you're valuable and you matter by physically touching you. ISKRA Do you think, Keith, at some point, it's just families. The idea is obviously we don't want our, we want our child to mature and gain independence and move out into the world.

And I know from the school side of it, there's often this sense of we over hover the grammar school years and then we, you know, disengage too much when they get to middle and high school under this premise of we want them to become more independent. And I think it's probably just that sense of, well, it seems awkward to hug a 17-year-old daughter when, you know, she's not a little girl. And we don't want, I don't want to do the daddy little girly thing and

embarrass her.

I mean, so I think there's just confusion about what's appropriate. Right. And then we miss out on things that are important.

ISKRA Yeah. And I tell parents all the time, you know, you want to step back and allow them to demonstrate some independence, some of their own risk reward scenarios, their own challenges, but you never want to withdraw all the things that tell them they're valuable, they matter, that you love them. You know, it's funny to me sometimes around, when we're around other people, my son is 6'6", 2'10".

He looks like an Alaskan. Actually, right now, I just saw him. He's got a giant beard.

ISKRA He's living sturdy, by the way, yes. PETE He is living sturdy. Yes, he is a crazy, sturdy young man.

When my son and I see each other, we give each other a bear hug. When I see my daughter, who's 28 years old, if I don't get to her first, she's knocking me down, hugging me, hugging my wife. And in no way would anyone ever confuse those individuals as being mothered or dependent.

And it's funny because it's shocking to people around us. I've had dad's comment to me, even when my son was in high school, man, I wish my son would let me hug him like that. I wish my daughter would let us, you know, hug her like that.

And for us, I think we just came from families that were huggers. ISKRA Right. PETE We never thought of it like that.

But man, do I see that in my office all the time. Just that lack of ability to reach out and hug and connect, regardless of age. And I will agree, especially for dads, it gets awkward at puberty.

It absolutely does. That's why you need to talk with your wives, take their lead a little bit. But don't stop.

ISKRA Yeah. PETE And if you're someone who hasn't ever developed that, you need to push into that in a respectful way. ISKRA Yeah, because there's the physical component with hugs.

We'll get into this in a minute, but what comes to mind for me was, I mean, you always hugged me. That was just normal. But you would also like leave me little notes when I was little.

You'd put it in my lunchbox because moms always do that. They'll always be like, have a great day, sweetie. But my dad would do that.

And that was really special. I mean, he had this certain stationary that was like this special American Girl doll stationary. PETE That was very popular back then.

ISKRA Yeah, it was just, you know, early aughts. But you would, you know, leave it in my locker. And it was really special to me that we had that kind of relationship so I could talk to you about anything and you would come give me hugs.

And like, we were best friends, really. ISKRA Well, you know, again, I always, as often as I can talk about that, those four stages of the seasons that your children go through, where you're a caretaker to them and then you kind of have to cop them. And then you move into the coaching and then there's the consulting.

And I think that's like, we're moving towards where you and I are now is just a consulting stage. But to Keith's point, a lot of the early habits of whether it's a hug or just the rules of engagement, we've been working on the whole time. Yeah, that's good, Keith.

ISKRA Right, yeah. And when you have those rules of engagement early on, it's amazing what it does because it creates this notion. It's a notion that our daughters know this without knowing it, that this is stable, that I matter, that I have people in my corner, you know, all those things that do not then create the desire to seek meaning elsewhere.

SONIA So practically, Keith, if you're a father listening to this and you've never really hugged your daughter, what are some direct steps other than go hug your daughter? Like, how do you bridge that? ISKRA Yeah, well, here's what I do. Yeah, I think it's great. I tell dads all the time because I have dads in my office that say, oh, man, gosh, I got to learn to do this for my wife, too.

And I say, here's the deal. Here's what you do. You deal with people very directly.

You walk in the house and you say to your daughter, you know what, honey, I am so sorry that I have not been someone who's a hugger. And I really want to change that. So I'm not meaning to totally freak you out or anything.

But if you notice me giving you more hugs lately, it just means because I love you and I want you to know it. And that's it. Some entry point so that the daughter doesn't think, oh, my gosh, why is dad doing this? It's not that it's you kind of have to decrepy it a little bit.

ISKRA Decrepy it. I like that. ISKRA Yeah, well, that's all you do.

And it's amazing to me, the dads that come back and again, I hear it again and again and again, they're like, that really worked. Yeah, it comes from a foundation of honesty, too. Like, hey, I didn't do this right.

Let's figure it out. ISKRA Yeah, that's really something I want to change. And it's amazing to me, the dads, usually what they say is, oh, my gosh, they hug me back like you wouldn't believe it.

And it's and so it's it's just be direct and be honest. I tell parents all the time that I work with, you know, with any issue with their children, when they're saying, gosh, where do we go back? I

mean, our kids are 14 and 12 and 10. And I say, go home.

Say, you know what, guys, we haven't done the best and we need you to please forgive us. It's amazing how that gets a kid's attention, whether they understand it or not. And you just say we're going to start doing a few things differently around here.

It's not meant to to cause you frustration, but we definitely have got to do a better job with some things around here. ISKRA Keith, what do you think? And it's amazing how that creates a starting point. ISKRA Which is great because you don't, again, the sentence is like, we failed.

What are we going to do now? That said, there's it's never too late. Correct. You know, I'm curious your thoughts on like the idea of touch, but like looking people looking, looking in the eyes of the other.

That's something like Hannah and I were at Jay's ranch years ago and a father daughter week. And there was there's an exercise that we went through where they paired us up and it was kind of it was incredibly awkward. But like for two minutes, you just stare without blinking or you could blink, but you're staring directly at that person's eyes.

You're always like, well, so often we're visually not saying I'm really putting you in my focus. I'm not engaging you. So that must be part of it, too.

I think what is I ask dads every so often when they're struggling with a dad or a mom, really both with a teenage daughter and usually moms know this answer and dads sometimes know it. I say, what color eyes does your daughter have? And it's amazing, moms will usually know and dads don't always. And I say, well, and if the mom says, you know, well, they're hazel or they're blue or this.

I say, great. When's the last time you really looked at him to look at the pigment? And the mom's like, well, I don't know that I ever have. OK, well, that's one of your assignments.

There you go. Next time you talk to your daughter, I want you to be able to stare at her appropriately while you're talking to her, because when you come back in my office, I want to know the color of the other pigments you see. There you go.

And I do the same thing with dads. I mean, there's all kinds of techniques like that, but it's just that very simple thing. But it matters is your point.

Like these are points of physical touch and just connection and care. So yeah, if I'm in a meeting with somebody and they keep looking at their phone or keep looking across the room at somebody else or wherever, I know they're not interested. Right, exactly.

Guess what? Our kids know that, too. And to a comment earlier about technology, one of the biggest roadblocks is our relationship with technology. You know, put the stinking phone down and talk to your kids.

It's amazing how often I have to say that in my office. Exactly. All right.

Well, let's keep rolling because we got a lot of some grounding coverage. So what are some other key points you think could be important? Others I see, and this is a big one, especially with daughters. You know, I hear from teenage girls all the time that my parents are afraid of my emotions or my parents are dismissive of my emotions or they don't want to talk to me when I'm upset or they want to talk to me when I'm emotional.

And this is a massive missed opportunity. It's an opportunity for multiple things. Number one, it's opportunity to demonstrate, again, value for your daughter because it's amazing to me when we acknowledge where another person is emotionally, it's a value statement.

It says I paid enough attention to notice. But not only do we do that when we engage their emotions, but we also have the ability now to speak truth into them to help them learn something both about themselves and their emotions and that their emotions don't always have to be the driving force in their life. You know, I deal with, I speak in front of about 10,000 teenagers a year.

And one of the common questions I ask them, I say, you know, I want you all to tell me, do you recognize what I call the lie of the last two generations? And the lie is how you feel is the most important part of who you are. And they're all like, oh, yeah. And I say, can you all give me examples? And they do.

They raise their hands and the two most common examples are, it's all about being happy or the other is follow your feelings. And of course, the flaw in all that is our feelings can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality. So we have to understand our feelings should never run us.

So when our daughters are upset and instead of us either telling them, either being dismissive or trying to shut it down or getting, I love this one, getting mad because they're upset. Instead of that, when we can acknowledge, I can tell you, honey, be empathetic. And empathy very simply is acknowledging what we see.

You know, I can tell you're upset. Can you tell me about it? Let them dump. Don't get involved.

Just let them dump. Don't try to point out what's wrong or right or what you agree with, disagree with. Let it dump.

Once that's dumped, then you have the opportunity to speak into it. To give them other things to process, other things to think about. One of the things I recommend to parents, especially of younger girls, I'm talking eight to 10, when emotions often really start spiking in weird ways, pre-puberty.

I say, you know, once they've, once they've kind of lost it, acknowledge you could tell they're really upset. But then once they're calm, ask them, that thing you were that upset about, was it

really that big a deal? Was it really as bad as you thought it was or as bad as it felt in that moment? And that's actually the beginning of that girl starting to realize my emotions may not always tell me the truth. So then maybe I want to be careful about them driving my decisions.

But we can only get into that space if we're willing to show empathy in that moment and be uncomfortable in their big emotions. There's a kind of a concept when I was in seminary, getting trained in pastoral care, just called the ministry of presence. And it's like you show up and there's been a, whatever, a tragedy or a challenge.

And it's just, you try, you feel like you need to kind of overtalk it and bring immediate, and it's just, just be quiet, be present. Just listen, let them know you actually care. Like that's so simple.

25 years ago, a guy came to see me that just tragic loss in his family. And he was referred to me and he came and he said, I just need somebody to sit on my bench of grief with me. Wow.

Yeah, that's it. Yeah. Yeah.

When you, when you talk about asking, is that something that was really as big of a deal as it seemed to be? The first thing that comes to my mind, maybe this is just my woman's reaction. That's why you're here. Like, well, yeah, of course.

Like, maybe that's because I'm not eight to 10 years old, like you said, but trying, wanting to be heard in that way and not feeling like you're invalidating my reaction to that is a hard balance. Yeah, it is. It is.

And that's why that question of, when you try to give perspective, cannot happen in that first moment of emotion, because that is too close in proximity and often does exactly that kind of says, okay, I heard you now, listen to me, tell you the truth. Right. That's got to happen much later when things are calmer.

Maybe I didn't make that clear in it. No, you did. I just, maybe it's just my personality, but even thinking back, like a week later being like, well, I just had to express it that way.

Like, that's how I get things off my chest. I think that's a reaction a lot of women have, like, well, that's just kind of, and maybe that's something to work on. Yeah, but I also think it's not questioning the reaction.

It's helping them tease apart how it felt and whether the feelings were telling you the truth. Because I agree with you. If you get into saying you shouldn't react that way, well, that's a battle you're not going to win right then.

But if you get into asking the question very simply of, this is what your feelings were telling you. Is it possible your feelings weren't telling you the truth? It's amazing to me because I've dealt with this with so many younger girls and teenagers that then are able to step away and say, wow. Now, again, I realized it after the fact and after my reaction, but I was able to realize my

feelings were running at a 10 and the issue was a five.

Well, and the beauty of that separation, Keith, I think is that, and I'm going to maybe generalize a bit here, but I think especially for those of us who are desiring to raise families where there's more of a thoughtful faith, a theology, a way of life, not just reacting to emotional and emotionalism. When we see that, I think it's very easy to go, well, that's just being, you know, silly and worldly or whatever and not acknowledging that that's actually part of the health, call it healthy, but reasonable and occasionally appropriate emotions that especially girls are going through at that moment. Doesn't mean that they're not thoughtful and they can't reason well, but I think especially harder for dads, because I think we just go, well, just, you know, stop that crying and let's be reasonable.

Right. Exactly. Yeah.

Right. And it's funny, in my office today, were two parents walking through a situation with their 12-year-old daughter. In essence, the mom said, I think she's an alien.

I said, I just don't understand it. And they run through everything and they look at me and they say, is that normal? And I said, yeah. Yes.

That's not even, that's not even, that doesn't even bring up a sweat of it being abnormal, but it was so different, so emotional, so erratic in that moment. And again, my commentary with them was, this is a, this is not the way they were viewing it when they came in. Well, and again, especially if their world is very much kind of a fixed, they go to a church that's got a very kind of fixed liturgy and everything is very predictable.

And now all of a sudden, this doesn't fit the model. That's exactly right. And I had to pitch with them, this is nothing to try to overparent.

This is a moment that's an opportunity for you to engage in that messiness, because then it begins to give you license to speak into it later. That's really wise. Well, why don't we take another quick break? We'll come back because we've got a few more ideas here too.

This is a big topic, but you're covering some great ground here, Keith. Very helpful. So we'll be right back after the break.

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Learn more at lifearchitectscoaching.com today. All right, Keith, give us another really practical way we can help to create a generation of sturdy girls. Well, I'm going to tell you about a funny conversation I had last week.

I was speaking at a men's retreat and talking about all different things and this dad asked a question at the end. He goes, well, so can you actually take a girl camping? I had to laugh. He was struggling with this idea that, and we often fall into this, moms and dads buy into the idea that little boys should be adventurous and have challenge and do risky things a little easier than they do with their girls.

And I tell parents all the time, no, no, no, no. Early in life, we want all of our children, all of our children, our daughters and our sons experiencing adventure, risk, challenge, excitement because those things when experienced early in life begin to really work against that idea that I need to be fearful, that I need to be risk avoidant. And it's amazing to me, so many folks I see today, young adults and teenagers that were never allowed to do risky things.

And I mean, healthy risky things, you know, climbing trees, running around in the backyard, playing in the rain. I mean, that sounds like nothing to us, but to little kids, that's an adventure. And, you know, camping in the backyard, I told this one dad, I said, set the tent up in the backyard.

Actually have your daughter learn to set the tent up in the backyard. And then she's the one that gets to light the fire. And she's the one that gets to cook the hot dogs and marshmallows over the open fire.

You're the sous chef and the helper of all this. And it's like a light bulb went off in his head. Like I've never thought that practical about it before.

Right, right. And I said, you know, when we do that, when we engage in adventure and challenge and risk early in life with our children, it begins answering those identity formation questions very early, especially the one of I'm capable. Yeah.

And that's one that most of our young adults struggle with today. Well, there's a broader cultural conversation right now, of course, with womanhood. Like, first of all, what is a woman? But overall, between the trad wife and the boss babe movements and these girls are growing up seemingly confused if they're just looking at social media and for young women who have a lot of innate drive, like I did, what is your advice to parents about fostering a healthy amount of drive? Yeah, I think that's great because, you know, what I tell parents all the time is the messages the world and culture have for your children and primarily your daughters.

It's very demeaning to them. It actually will hold them back in many ways. You know, even though we hear things out there about we're doing this for women, doing that for women, the problem is almost all those messages have distortion in them.

And so what we ingrain in the first 12, 13 years of their lives becomes their foundation. Now, if they have no foundation, if we've ingrained nothing, then they are more susceptible to all of those messages, which means they're susceptible to confusion because there's so many different messages, you know, which do you pick? But when we take on the role of saying, wait

a minute, we're going to actually use this stage that we have earned through time and touch and dealing with their emotions and providing challenge. We're going to use it to begin speaking truth to our children, especially our daughters.

We're going to encourage our daughters through all the different things they do in life. We're going to speak to their capability. You know, it's interesting to me.

A thing I see sometimes is parents that get very engaged in the success academically of their sons and not so much their daughters. And I work with those parents and say, wait a minute, you have to use the same encouragement in academic pursuits with both of your children because you don't know what they will become in that. And when you're not encouraging that at a young age in your daughter, you're already handicapping that growth.

And so we've got to be able to speak in and be very encouraging. I tell parents all the time with strong-willed daughters, I say, oh my gosh, I love strong-willed daughters. My wife and I raised one.

I would so much rather have a strong-willed daughter that we're going to work to equip and steer, not break, but teach her how to handle and manage that strength than one that is too hesitant. We want to grow our children out of that hesitancy. Yet so many parents see that strong-willed nature as problematic more so in girls than in boys.

And I just, I would tell you, you know, clinically, that's wrong. Well, I remember growing up, my brothers had the task of taking out the trash and mowing the lawn, and they would always question why I didn't do any of those things. And I'm wondering what your approach is towards household chores in fostering these two different... Well, you did have other chores.

You weren't like the garbage girl. I mean, yeah. I mean, they also didn't do the dishes or vacuum.

I did all of that. So, but I'm just wondering about your approach of household chores between the two genders and what your recommendation would be. Is garbage more of a male activity? Yeah, is that more, or is that just kind of by nature how the chips fell? Well, my daughter mowed the lawn.

I would say whoever was closest took out the trash. I think we, you're right, we, if we're not intentional, we will segregate things to certain gender early in life. And I think, now this, understand what I'm saying and not saying.

We do need to speak into the lives of our sons and our daughters and tell them what it is to be a young man and a young woman. Absolutely. But early in life, we need to obligate them to everything responsibility-wise that we can across the board.

Because when you only have a girl that does dishes and a boy does all of the raking the leaves, yard work, the chopping things down, starting the fires and all that, you're sending another

message that one is unfortunately fragile and one is not. Yeah. And I would, I really would caution against that.

My daughter learned to shoot a gun and play poker at the age of five. I did that too. Yeah, there you go.

I mean, I was going to say you, I mean, I put you on a plane to Europe with, you know, with basically, you know, go figure it out. How old were you? I was eight. No, I was 17.

Yeah, but I'm just saying, I mean, like, okay, that was your, but I mean, not that that, there are other examples. Well, no, you would say to the camp when I was young and you're like, have fun, figure it out. Like, and I did all of that there.

Absolutely. And we have a great opportunity in our own homes to, in many ways, it's interesting. When God, when he called Adam and Eve to become one, he then gave them all of his creation.

He didn't say this part's yours, Adam's, and this part is yours, Eve. He gave it all to both of them as one. Right.

And in many ways he called us, I would argue to be a jack of all trades before specialization. Aristotle, Socrates, I think one was quoting the other, talking about praising the pentathlete over the marathon runner because the marathon runner is good in one occasion, the pentathlete in many. And we know that when we generalize early, then once we specialize, we do a much better job discerning what to specialize in.

And so I do the same with children. We want to generalize our children to every task in the home. You know, as boys, yeah, and when we do that, we just, it's amazing how, again, we're speaking into this common core of identity formation questions and beginning to give answers, especially that notion of capability.

Yeah. And that's a good point. I mean, there's certainly a division of labor just because you got to get things done, but there's also an exposure to things.

Correct. Just to be aware of. So that's really helpful, Keith.

Well, good. Well, I know time is running short. I want to kind of think about just things that maybe get in the way of us executing all these things.

Yeah. Yeah. There are two things in today's world that get in the way that rob us of the ability to even have the audience to do these things with our daughters.

The two biggest are buying into the idea that the busier our children are, the happier they are. Not only is it a lie, it actually slows their development because we can be busy and never process boredom. And boredom is necessary for creativity, imagination, decision-making.

Boredom and downtime is also necessary for processing and managing relationships. When we are constantly busy and constantly on the run with things, those things end up being very underdeveloped in that young lady. And then the second is technology use.

Before you get, so with busyness, I mean, is this just as simple as we signed our daughter up for three things at the same time because we wanted to kind of, we had the FOMO thing going on and we didn't want to... Yeah, the order I tell folks all the time is, you know, it should be our relationship with God, then it's our marriage, then it's family identity, then it's our kids, then it's the world. And so the activities and things our kids fall under, the things they can invest in and spend time in, don't disrupt the family. Meaning, if you want to sign your kids up for things, great.

Do they still have dinner with the family? Do you still go to church on Sunday? Are you still operating with their activities in a harmonious way with the family? Well, most are not. And that's usually the first indication that everything's out of balance. Everything is too busy.

And so I challenge parents all the time, you need to calm life down. Number one, for their benefit as an individual, but number two, for your ability even to have their audience. I mean, it's amazing to me during COVID, you know, we always heard on television, mental health of all children got worse during COVID, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Nobody ever cites a study. That's wrong. The largest study was done, dropped by Beacon Health, looked at all of 2020, looked at 27 million behavioral claims.

Here's what we found. That's where we track diagnosis, symptomatology, all those things. Here's what we saw in 2020, and my profession doesn't like it.

In 2020, height of shutdown, lockdown, we had a 10% drop in diagnosis of severe conditions in children and a 5% drop diagnosing severe conditions in teenagers. That on the whole, the average got better. Wow.

Family came back. Yeah. And it matched exactly what I saw with my patients.

That's fascinating. What happened? Life slowed down. We started having dinner together.

Couldn't find a board game at Walmart because we were all playing them at home. And all the extracurriculars stopped. Now, we got to about spring of 2021 where everything opened back up and we went right back on the standard progression of anxiety and depression.

You and I did a couple of podcasts on like, you know, don't lose the blessings of that COVID moment. We sure did. Yeah, because you're right, everybody just- Don't lose what you've gained during this time.

Which was, yeah, different. All right, so just because you mentioned tech, so just let's make sure we touch on it real quickly here at the end. Very simply, what we know of addiction, more than

50 years, stuff that is not up for debate in the world of those who treat addiction.

The reality is we know that whenever you introduce highly addictive things into the lives of individuals, it stops their social-emotional development or greatly impairs it. So if I have a 14-year-old that starts drinking and at 28, they sober up, I have pretty much a social-emotional developed 14-year-old on my hands. Well, guess what? It's the same thing we see with social media and technology use.

So when we are giving our young ladies a cell phone at 10, 11, 12, we are interrupting the opportunity for healthy social-emotional development. Not only are we interrupting it, we're now introducing also the main vehicle of distortion in it, the content on social media. Yeah, yeah.

Rewriting the story for them, so. Yeah. Well, good.

Well, Keith, a lot to think about here. Hannah, any closing comments, questions, or? Oh, no, it's fascinating to me. I have so many questions around the topic of femininity generally.

I think it's such an important- Well, just mention for, just talk about what you're doing because I think it's interesting. Yeah, well, I'm very passionate about what I call classical femininity, which I believe is the embrace of truth, goodness, and beauty in womanhood in contrast to modern feminism, which is a movement that is rejecting community and instead relying on autonomy. So my goal is to help young women see their value in the truth, goodness, and beauty that God made them to be.

And so I have a website now. Well, tell them what you're doing. I mean, it's a good invention, yeah.

Yeah, so it's fascinating to me. And I wanted to ask you about this, Keith, as to who should be good role models for young women? Because I found, go ahead, yeah. Yeah, and I want to comment on what you just said.

You think about identifying femininity as connected to community rather than autonomy. That's exactly what we're talking about with this conversation because we're talking about what shapes our children for their future communities is the community that they're being raised in. And so when we raise our daughters in a community of family, in those relationships with the focus of crafting appropriate healthy relationships there, it sets her up both with, number one, what to expect, what to look for, what to cherish, and what to avoid in future relationships.

And so I tell parents all the time that the best gift you can give a child, either child in your home, boy or girl, is that they grow being a witness to a healthy marriage because God actually puts you as their first primary role model. And I think when we take the time to understand that and understand that true leadership is by its nature to the benefit of those we lead, to the benefit of the followers, so it's going to be somewhat sacrificial on our part, but we are the first role models that God put in place for our children. And then when you look out to your, it's a

lot, I mean, we're, I mean, like you have an episode where you talk about a lot of the great... Yeah, well, I found it hard growing up to look out at the women that were being presented to me as role models, like Taylor Swift, who I really can't stand.

And who should we be looking at? Well, one woman that I have just been so inspired by for most of my life is Catherine, Princess of Wales, because she is so rooted in her family, in her duty, in her values. And it's very rare to find women like that. So I do a lot of analysis around her, around the contrast between her and then of course, like Meghan Markle, who is the epitome of modern feminism, who's all about autonomy and she doesn't really have a family because she's rejected both of her communities.

And so I think it's a fascinating framework to compare and deep dive into that contrast. Which is part of raising us dirty girls. Like, who are you emulating? Yes, mom and dad, of course, but as you move out into the world.

So just, I want to make sure we... If people want to hear this, where do you find you? I would recommend go to the swishmagazine.com. You can go to the About Us page and kind of watch some of the breakdown there about how I kind of came to this understanding of classical feminism. You've got a pretty popular YouTube channel. Yes, I do.

You can link all that on the website there as well. I only started that a few months ago, but it's truly a fascinating conversation because a lot of people love the royal family just because of drama and all that. But I think there's a lot of lessons to be learned when analyzing these figures.

We're looking at just who are the role models. I mean, Jacqueline Kennedy. I mean, others you're going back to and just saying, we've lost these females.

Audrey Hepburn. Exactly. And it's interesting because again, and you're right, when you think about... If I'm thinking of my daughter, the characteristics I want her to look for in a husband, she will only recognize if I have demonstrated those to her as her father.

And we've really got to think that way. We are preparing our children for their future relationships and future communities by the community and the relationships we build with them now. And a lot of that is grounded in the character that we demonstrate, the values we demonstrate, the morality we demonstrate, the way we deal with conflict, the way we show love.

And we, again, we have a huge opportunity that too many times I think we miss. Yeah. Well said, Keith.

Well, thank you, Hannah. Thank you, Keith. Lots on this topic of raising sturdy girls giving us a lot to think about and a lot of encouragement.

So thanks again, Keith. Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for having me.

And real quick, in case people don't know who Keith is, where can people go to find you? Oh, easiest way is livesturdy.com. Awesome. Keith, they know who Keith is. Of course, but if there's new listeners.

We've got new listeners all the time. I know you're... We do have show notes too. See, this is why we have Hannah on the show.

There will... They will have already heard the intro too, but that's okay. Just a reminder. But we don't... Like, who is that amazing man? We need to hear him more often.

Well, that's Keith McCurdy. What's up? All right, Keith. We'll talk to you soon.

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And we will see you back here next week with another episode that you will not want to miss. Thanks again for listening.