



How Little Moments of Big Connection Rewire the Nervous System To Raise Calm & Confident Kids

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson

Interviewed by Dr. Laura Markham

Dr Laura Markham ([00:04](#)):

This summit is brought to you with love by Peaceful Parent Happy Kids. Welcome. Hi there. I'm Dr. Laura Markham, founder of Peaceful Parent Happy Kids, and the organizer of this summit, Nurturing Hearts, Nurturing Minds, the Neuroscience of Peaceful Parenting. I'm so excited to introduce you to my guest today, the parenting thought leader, Dr. Tina Payne Bryson. I am so excited today to be here with Dr. Tina Payne Bryson, who is the author of a number of books, some with Dr. Dan Siegel, which are New York Times bestsellers, Whole-Brain Child and No-Drama Discipline, Bottom Line for Baby that she wrote herself, and her latest book we'll be talking about today, The Way of Play, using little moments of big connection to help raise calm and confident kids. She co-authored this book with Georgie Wisen-Vincent, and it's coming out Tina in January?

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([01:04](#)):

January of '25. Yes.

Dr Laura Markham ([01:06](#)):

Okay, so I'm very excited to talk with you about this book because, as I was reading it, I loved reading it and I felt that you had made a breakthrough, for all of us, that we can understand play in a different way now because you've been able to articulate specific strategies that parents can use to teach kids certain lessons. And it isn't just about teaching the lesson, it's about actually the impact on the brain and what kids learn to do. Can you tell us how you came to make this breakthrough in seeing play this way?

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([01:47](#)):

As a mom of three kids, I remember so many moments with my three boys where they wanted me to bang the super guys together. They were incredible with their imaginations and what they wanted to do. And there were times I found play really boring. There were times I felt like, "Okay, fine, it's what my kids wanted to do the most. Play's their first language." But I felt like if I did it, I had to do it for long periods of time and I had so much to do. And so I had a conflicted experience around play with my kids. I really enjoyed it a lot of times, but then there were times I really didn't, and as a clinician who spent a lot of time talking to parents over the years, I hear a lot of parents talking about how either they hate play or they want to do it, but they feel like they're just wasting time or it's just filling time, and they're like, "Okay, so I'll play with them and do what? Once I'm on the floor, then what do I do?"

([02:45](#)):

So a lot of parents don't even know what to do. And so this book co-authored with an incredible play therapist that has worked with me at my Center for Connection that I started nine years ago, has taught me a lot about play and she trains other people to be play therapists. And what I started to really learn that layered on everything I knew about the brain that I had written about in my other books, which is the idea of it's these repeated experiences that really shape the brain. And when we think about play, we know that it's one of the most beneficial things kids can do. And most of the stuff that's out there about play is about free unstructured play where kids are out exploring. And I am a huge fan of that. I don't think kids have enough of it, but this book's different.

([03:28](#)):

This book is really Lawrence Cohen's books on playful parenting that I just love. I'm such a fan of his work. We're really the only ones that I knew of that really taught parents what to do and how to think about play. So this book is really the idea of when we spend even just a few minutes, it doesn't have to be a long period of time, and we join with them, and we bring our presence to those moments of joining them

in this incredible world that they create emotionally, mentally, physically when they play, that when we do that, not only are we building connection and relationship with them, but the repeated experiences that we provide in our response to their play and in joining them can actually change the firing and wiring that's happening in their brain around social and emotional intelligence, around emotional regulation, around understanding and having insight into their own world, about communicating, and on and on and on. So it's such a rich thing to think about and it's very much actually, I think, very much in line with my other books where we talk about how it's the joining with relationally with our kids repeatedly over time. It doesn't have to be perfect. That allows our children's brains to develop optimally, and our relationships with them to develop optimally.

Dr Laura Markham ([04:47](#)):

So it's all about connection.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([04:49](#)):

It's all about connection. Always. The stream of all of my life's work is about relationships and regulation. Those are the two things that are at the heart of everything. And you too, just like you and your beautiful work that I am a huge fan of your work, as you know, that I want your audience to know too, I love your work. I recommend your books all the time. They're on my recommended reading list on my website, and I couldn't love your sibling book more. I share that with people weekly.

Dr Laura Markham ([05:19](#)):

That's wonderful to hear. I want to talk more about the strategies that you go into in this book, because I think for parents, it's going to be really helpful to have the specificity that you give. So for instance, your fourth strategy, dial intensity up or down helps kids learn to regulate their nervous systems, which is something that parents are always asking about, "How can I help my child learn to emotionally regulate?" And you say that it's about the circuitry between the parts of the brain, the somatosensory cortex, the motor cortex, and the body that helps kids pay attention, wait their turn, take instruction. So can you tell us about this?

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([06:00](#)):

Yeah, so the idea of dialing intensity up and down, well, let me say this first. In play, kids can tolerate more difficult emotions longer. And so Dan Siegel has this beautiful phrase called the window of tolerance. And play allows the window of tolerance to be wider. So if you think about this, your kid's frustrated doing something, they'll

actually stay with it longer if there's a play context or there's playfulness around it, because it's fun enough that they're willing to stick with it. And so that's one of the things that's in the background of this strategy is dialing the intensity up and down. Because we're playing, and because something fun is happening, we actually have an opportunity to give them some experience of dialing down how activated and intense they are or dialing it up. So some kids may be in a more shut down, dropping into boredom, or really some sad emotions.

(06:56):

And of course we want kids to feel all emotions. But if they're starting to withdraw from play and we want to wake up their learning and wake up their curiosity, one way we could dial it up would be to say, "Oh, I wonder what's underneath this. What's in this part of the world? Let's peek around the corner. What do you think it could be?" And we're not using it like, "Oh my gosh, we got to go look around the corner." We meet them where we are, but we just dial it up just a little bit to activate some interest, some curiosity, some motor movement. And then the thing that's more common though, is that kids get really activated, and they get really excited, or maybe they start becoming a little bit rough in their play.

(07:37):

So we're sword fighting with them with a foam sword and we are pirates, and they start getting too into it. Or maybe their siblings involved in now it's getting really hard. And so we might then use a pirate voice and say, "That's too rough. Let's do it medium. How does the medium sword fighter work?" Whatever. You do something like that and you say, "Can you show me what medium would be like? Let me show you what medium would be like." So we dial it down, and we are still staying with them, but we're giving them practice. If you think about the nervous system as a volume dial, and it's not the best metaphor ever, but it's a helpful metaphor. So we have these two branches to our nervous system, the sympathetic, which is like dials us up, gets us awake, gets us moving excited or big, intense negative emotions too.

(08:26):

And then we have the parasympathetic branch of our nervous system, which is, it's like the gas pedal and the brakes. And the parasympathetic calms us down and allows us to move into more regulation. It allows us to fall asleep and get quiet and use our attention, and all of these things. So what we want them to do and what regulation in the nervous system looks like is a good balance of those. So we activate up as we need to, and we activate down as we need to. So play allows us to help them experiment and practice again, we want that firing and wiring, dialing up and then dialing back down. So maybe there are gas pedals on. Full blast, the volume's

turned all the way up, and we find a way, "Maybe this pirate's getting ... oh, this pirate's leg is so tired, this pirate needs to have a snack and a nap, and a rest," whatever. And then we were like, "This pirate needs a breather," and so we can take a break and dial things down. So it allows them to practice really the idea of what this heart of emotional regulation is.

Dr Laura Markham ([09:28](#)):

I love that, and I love the connection you make also in the book to relationship at all times, because Polyvagal Theory would tell us it's the relationship that allows the kids to navigate the nervous system, as you're describing. So the parent is an important part of the equation here. It's not just what they're doing with their sibling or their friend. It's what the parent is bringing.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([09:50](#)):

And I think I love Polyvagal Theory and, to me, the thing that I got most from Polyvagal Theory is the idea of cues of safety. And that's really what the relationship is supposed to be doing, particularly when there's secure attachment and a parent who's not perfect, but predictable enough, is that play gives cues of safety. And in fact, Jaak Panksepp's beautiful work that looked at rats, and when a cat hair was introduced into the cage the rats stopped playing. Even once the cat hair was removed, their play levels were lower. And so I think it's such an important piece to think about the way ... You can think about fight/flight reactive circuitry that happens when we're under threat. Keep in mind it's not just a threat we might experience. A child might experience a threat that we might not be visible. If a kid has sensory challenges, the feeling of their clothes on their body, or a sound, or too much lighting overhead, or these kinds of things can actually create cues of threat.

([10:56](#)):

And so what play does, and what solid parent-child relationships do, are give cues of safety. So they allow kids to stretch themselves and even explore themes in their play that they're experiencing emotionally, like some fear, or some insecurity, or uncertainty about something, or power and control to try and see if I can be in charge of my body and myself. And then when they're getting the cues of play and the cues of the parent being present, it affords them enough safety in their nervous system to not go into the threat response and to really learn, because we can't learn when we're in a threat response.

Dr Laura Markham ([11:37](#)):

Beautiful. So just to wrap up that strategy, what is it that the child is learning from this? I know they're learning to co-regulate, but you have some beautiful words you use to describe it.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson (11:48):

Yeah. What I love about this is the child then has an experience of, "When things get out of control for me, when my threat circuitry gets activated or when I get too dysregulated, someone is there for me, someone will help me." And I think that is such a powerful piece of secure attachment, and what Dan Siegel and I talked about in *The Power of Showing Up*, which is that when we know that if we have a need, someone's going to show up for us, that creates tons of cues of safety, and it's really what we want our children to be wired for most. I think the other thing about it is that so much of the time, and I know you talk about this in your work too, and I've talked about this in my work a long time as well, is that lots of times when kids get dysregulated, it doesn't come out as the child's saying, "I'm feeling an activation in my nervous system. I'm feeling really dysregulated and I have a lot of feelings to share."

(12:43):

It usually comes out with either shutting down or acting out. So it might be a child who withdraws, maybe cries, stops talking, runs away from you, tells you to leave them alone, or in the acting out where it becomes aggressive verbal or physical behavior, or disrespectful tone of voice, or these kinds of things. When kids are in these dysregulated states and that's how it comes out, they often get in trouble from parents. And so what happens, is the message that they get is, "Wow," and this is not explicit. It's not like they're consciously drawing these connections, but their experience in their emotional life and their thought life and in their nervous system and their body life is that, 'Gosh, when I get overwhelmed and dysregulated, which I can't help yet because I have still a developing brain, when I get dysregulated that I can't help, I get in trouble."

(13:43):

Versus what we want them to experience is, "When I get dysregulated and I can't help it, someone will help me." And I think that is just key because when kids know that they're going to get in trouble when they're falling apart, it actually dials the intensity up even more and makes them even more anxious, more reactive, more angry. So I think it's that idea of bringing our presence to say, "I've got you." And then of course we can address the behaviors later. This is not a permissive approach. But it's the

idea of giving them repeated experiences that if they're falling apart, we're there for them.

Dr Laura Markham ([14:20](#)):

Beautiful. So just to delve into the other theories just a little bit, what I love is how you're developing children's emotional intelligence and the brain by helping parents see what they can say, what to pay attention to, how to attune, the think out loud strategy, for instance. Tell us about that.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([14:43](#)):

I love that one. It's the first strategy in the book. And what I love about this too is so much of the time when we're entering play with our kids, we're tired and we have other things on our mind. Our mental loads are so great, and this one doesn't require a ton of emotional or mental energy, but it matters a lot and we can do it really quickly. And it doesn't even require for us to take on the pirate voice and put on the cape. It really can just be during bath time. It doesn't even have to be in play settings where we're in the room where all the toys are. It can be throughout any playful moment. Think out loud is really the idea of what we noticing and narrating what our child is not just doing, for sure that, but also what they're intending to do, what they're trying to do.

([15:26](#)):

So we're getting into not just what we're seeing, but what we think that they're doing. So in the book, we use the example of a kid using blocks and he's building, it looks like he's building a ramp and the car's going up. And so think out loud is literally the parent just saying like, "Oh, it looks like you're building a ramp. Is the car going to go up the ramp?" My boys, I don't know why they loved tying ... I had one son who loved tying knots. He loved tying ropes around things. Sometimes, it was really unhelpful when we were trying to undo a car seat to travel, and he had done 30 knots on the car seat, but he would tie these ropes to the doorknob and then tie it to a little toy playhouse or castle. And so he would put one of his little action figures on the rope with the arm over it. And so a think out loud strategy would say, "Oh, that guy is going to go somewhere. You've got him. You have a plan for him. He is headed to the castle. So when we do this, I know it sounds really simple, and you're like, "How is that helpful?" But what it does is it connects.

([16:30](#)):

I can see and understand your mind and what your intentions are, what your motivations are. I see you, I know you, I understand you. And that allows them to not

only feel known and seen, but it allows them, what we're doing is modeling for them, that they can tune in and notice and express what other people's experiences are as well. So it's great for not only building, obviously, just their whole vocabulary, we're adding words in and doing these things, but it helps them pay attention to their own thoughts, and the thoughts of others as well.

Dr Laura Markham ([17:08](#)):

Yeah. So they're learning about their inner world. You're strengthening the attachment because they feel seen. They're learning to express, "Oh, that's what it is that I'm doing here." Because you're giving them the words for it. And you're developing empathy that they begin to see they can do this with other people. For such a tiny intervention, such big results.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([17:33](#)):

So simple. And for a long time in the parenting world, we've talked about sports casting, where you're describing what's going on. And I love sports casting. It's such a helpful tool. This is sports casting plus, it's more like mind casting. That's not even a word. I don't think I just made that up right now. But it's the idea that we're really tuning in and describing what's happening in their internal world and their thoughts and their emotions. And that is similar, and it leads to another one of the strategies which is bringing emotions to life.

([18:06](#)):

So think out loud is more like the thoughts and the intentions, and that kind of thing. Bringing emotions to life is similar, where it can be very short, it can be not just when they're playing in a play setting but, again, in the bathtub or being silly in the car, or other kinds of moments. And bringing emotions to life is where we bring emotions to their front of mind. And then we use words to describe it. So for example, we'll go back to the rope, the little action figure guy going down. I might then in that moment say, "Oh, but it's scary to go across the water. It's scary to go down the castle. I don't know. I don't know if I can do it. I don't know if I feel brave." So I would bring emotions into that moment. And what's amazing is when we do this, little kids like three and four and five-year-olds, and obviously older, they have incredible things to say about those moments.

([19:01](#)):

And what you'll hear from them is things they've heard from you, what they've internalized about how we get through struggle. So kids will say things like, "You can do it. You're really brave." And as they say that, they're hearing themselves say it. And

we're layering in from this firing and wiring, these repeated experiences over and over, a scaffolding for how we approach adversity in times we're scared and not brave later. So we're giving emotional vocabulary. We're tuning into the whole range of human emotions. We're actually making the play way more fun for them and for us, because we don't have to come up with something super creative. We're just naming what someone in that situation might feel. And when we do that, we're also helping them make connections between what they're feeling in their body and what their brain is processing in terms of emotion.

(19:53):

But the other piece I just have to put in because it's just the core of everything I do, is when we do that, it also communicates implicitly to our children, I can understand your emotions, and when you feel afraid, that's something we give voice to. We talk about feeling afraid. And I think, just in general, about all of these strategies and what play is about is joined attention. So if they're really interested in some stick that we think is super dirty, but we're like, "Wow, look at that stick." And your kid's super into it, you're like, "Show me why the bumps are interesting to you." Or, "What's your favorite part of the stick?" Whatever you can come up with. But when we bring our attention to join with what their attention is on, whether it's a super guy hanging on a rope or a foam pirate sword, or making a car ramp, when we bring our attention to that moment, and we bring our attention to what their attention is on, that is the heart of emotional intimacy. It's the heart of connection, it's the heart of attachment, of that kind of attunement, and it's really what emotional closeness is all about. And so that's why these strategies, even in micro moments, are so relationship building, as well as brain building.

Dr Laura Markham (21:17):

You're talking about the micro moment. Let's talk about how short some of these interactions can be, because I'm just hearing a busy mom who says, "You know what? My husband's got the plaything down. He tosses them around. They do that with him. I've got to move them through the schedule. I don't have time for this." So what can we suggest to this mom that she can do in small moments that accomplishes some of this?

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson (21:39):

So one of my favorite things that I learned probably ways ... it took me too long to learn this. I should have known this as a trained professional, but we can use these kinds of strategies and these moments, even in the moments we're trying to elicit cooperation. So even when we're trying to keep things moving, they actually are so

much more helpful. And I remember many years ago, Laura, I was speaking to a group of parents and I was talking about, even when we are not just sitting and playing, when we're playful with our children, it allows them to tolerate their emotions and stay more regulated and be more cooperative. And I had a mom who said to me, she raised her hand. She said, "I don't want to have to do a whole effing puppet show to get my kid to put their shoes on."

(22:21):

And I said, "Okay, I hear you. I'm so glad you said that. We're all thinking that. We're all feeling that." And how much time do you spend, how much emotional energy do you spend in the battle? Okay, so what I want to talk to you about now is how do we make it easier for you, less intense for you. This is not harder. This is easier. So in those moments, let's say you're trying to get your kid to get their shoes on and get in the car, just an everyday moment we all struggle with. So this might be where I bring a lot of playfulness, and I might say, "Please don't put your shoes on today because I am an elephant and I need teeny tiny little shoes, even though I have a big body, I have teeny tiny little feet and I'm going to wear your shoes today." And then I start making elephant noise, or something like that. And then your kid might laugh or they might not, they might say, "Those are my shoes." And they might get really activated. And then in that moment we tune in, we pull back and say, "Of course you can wear your shoes. I'm being silly and I'm pretending with you."

(23:27):

And then I can bring them, if the kid's cooperative, I can say like, "Oh, I love these little shoes." And be like, "They won't fit on my feet. Oh, I'm so frustrated. I love these shoes, but my feet are still too big. What do I do?" So that would be bringing emotions to life. Or little moments of just really like, "It's so frustrating to have to leave when you're having so much fun." So that's another whole thing we talk about in the book as well, is how we set parameters. They don't want to stop playing or they're misbehaving. They're having behaviors during play that are not okay. They violate family rules or values, and how we set those. But I think in the everyday moments, if we can bring this micro moment of just silliness and playfulness, and I know a lot of us feel like, "I don't know how to do that," or, "I'm not good at it, but my partner is, I'm too tired to do it."

(24:19):

But what I would really encourage all of you to do as you're listening, is bring, just try it once, try it once, then try it again, then try it again, and just act. We have to think about our own brains as being plastic too, and that we might need the reps and the firing and wiring. And a good starter strategy if you're like, "I feel weird, I feel

uncomfortable," or, "I don't know how to do it," is try to be with a silly voice. Make up a bear voice. If you've watched the movie Mary Poppins, the old one with Julie Andrews with the accent, and all of that, be Mary Poppins and use the Mary Poppins voice. Play with your voice. Play with your body. Be really clumsy and be like, "I'm like a wet noodle today. I can't get anything." So just start doing some silly things with your voice, face, and body, and you can do that while you're trying to get them in the tub, while you're trying to get the shoes on.

(25:20):

And then I'll just throw out one other strategy here, and that is if you're trying to get a meal on the table and there's a lot going on and your kid is having a really hard time not needing your full attention in that moment, or having a hard time letting you finish that, having high needs at that moment, again, a playfulness. I love, I buy them on Amazon. It's like \$8 for a huge pack of those white paper place mats, the little scalloped edge ones at the little Italian restaurants, and have your kid make place mats for the family while you're putting the final thing out. And then as they're doing it, you can be like, "We can surprise everybody." So you're bringing that excitement, and as they're doing it. Then as they're drawing, drawing is a form of play. We can say, "Oh, it looks like you're drawing a castle." So that's the think out loud. So we can bring these strategies into these tiny little moments even while we're just getting through the routines of our day.

Dr Laura Markham (26:22):

I was struck when you said this about the ability to do it even when you're having a hard time. Because actually, what I've noticed when parents start playing is they feel better too, because laughter, you talk about oxytocin, laughter is going to transform the parent, their mood, as well as the child's. It will also make the child cooperate more.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson (26:45):

That's right. And I think from Polyvagal Theory, one of the other things I love is that just yelling and crying release nervous system intensity, laughter does too, and so does movement. And so if we can be moving our bodies and laughing, or even we're just smiling, that can be really helpful. And we all know that if we're enjoying ourselves, or we're being silly and playful, that keeps our nervous system in a regulated state and keeps our threat circuitry from going off where we end up yelling, and these kinds of things. And it sure feels better to be enjoying and being happy and laughing. Sure feels better to us than where we get if we don't go that route.

Dr Laura Markham (27:34):

Let's do one more example of being playful beyond the playroom in a moment of conflict. Because obviously, when a kid is having big emotions, we're not going to minimize that and joke about it, but sometimes we can transform that moment. You describe even a moment of conflict, you can transform that through play. So let's say your child has to take some medicine they don't want to take. That would be a universal example that parents ... What could a parent do?

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson (28:04):

I'll give an example. But we also know too, that every kid is unique. And not only that, and every parent is, and every dyad is, but what works one moment might not work the next. So we have to always be willing to be flexible, and these kinds of things. So if it's a medication that's going to be taken chronically and your child has a lot of resistance around it, I would definitely make sure you have a toy that has some medical doctor kinds of things, because what kids can't say they will play. And so you might even have them be the doctor on you, and them be the doctor on all the stuffed animals, and all of these things. And if you're bringing a lot, again, just like kids like to read books over and over and over, because they're layering in meaning, they're able to process their own emotions and fears through play.

(28:53):

So not only is it a protective factor in reducing stress and threat signals, it also is incredibly helpful to restore and process what has already happened. So that's the power of it as well. So in this moment, your child does not want to take a medication, you have to figure out what is your child love? Let's say your child loves, there's a particular movie that they love or a character that they love, or let's say they're really, really into building right now. Maybe we build some Legos around the little receptive, around the little cup and be like, "It's a Lego cup, and this is the Lego medicine." And so we can do something like that. I think anytime we can bring that kind of silliness, it can be so powerful, adjusting to what our children need.

(29:44):

But I think the other thing that we often forget about, is to ask our kids and to elicit them in the conversation around us, even three-year-olds and up, we can say, "I know you don't like taking the medicine. It's really not fun to take it. I sometimes don't like taking medicine too, and we're going to have to take the medicine. So what could we do to make it really fun? And what could we do to make it so it's okay to take? Do you have any ideas? Maybe if the bear gave it to you." And then be like, "Oh, the bear has a wobbly hand. Oh, no. Oh, no. Is he going to spill it?" And so you're just silly in that

moment. And then of course you get it in the mouth. They might not have ideas, but sometimes they do. Sometimes they're like, "Well ...". Or you can just again, like a novelty, be like, "Okay, I know yesterday we took the medicine when you were sitting at the table. Today, we're going to put you up higher. We're going to put you up on the counter today and see, do you think it'll still work? I don't know. Let's try it."

(30:46):

So just bringing some novelty, some levity. But I think it's really important too that we're not distracting kids through fun and games and jazz hands. And we're not saying like, "Oh, the medicine's so fun to take." We're not gaslighting them. We're not tricking them. We really can also still say, "I know you don't like the medicine. The medicine doesn't taste good, does it?" Or, "It feels sticky in your mouth." You can be curious. "Tell me, what is it about taking the medicine that's not fun for you?" Sometimes we're surprised. I can't tell you the number of times when I've asked a parent to ask their child, "What is it about the saying goodbye at school that's hard for you?" Or, "What is it about taking the medicine that's hard for you?" And sometimes their answers are such a simple solution.

(31:38):

I had a mom who came to me, she thought her son had separation anxiety at preschool drop off. And I said, "Have you ever asked him what's the hardest part? Why is it hard?" And she came back to me and said, "It wasn't even separation anxiety, Tina. He said, 'My teacher's voice is too loud and she hugs me too tight.'" So all it meant was the teacher did a fist bump, they came up with a different morning greeting, and she lowered her volume so she wasn't so excited, and that solved it. So sometimes when we ask our kids, we acknowledge how they feel about things. We join with them in their feeling. We allow them to feel, we empathize with the feeling. We might ask for them to say, "What would make it better?" Or, "What is it that you don't like?" And if they say, "The medicine cup is too bendy." "Okay, do you have another idea? Where should we put it in?" Get an eyedropper. Have them help you be a detective to find the best medicine holder, those kinds of things. But asking them, and then that's when we bring in the play after we've acknowledged emotions and those kinds of things.

Dr Laura Markham (32:40):

And you're really empowering them when they're taking action and making choices and being part of the solution. You're getting rid of the power struggle, and they're building resilience by doing a thing that's unpleasant, but they've got your support

and they manage themselves through it. What an amazing skill for all of us to learn early in life.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([33:04](#)):

I think the reason that we called the book *The Way of Play*, and it might be one of my favorite, I love the title of *The Power of Showing up* as much, but I love the title of *The Way of Play* because it really isn't just about something you do in a playroom until it's time to get ready for dinner. It really is a way of being with our children. And in the subtitle when we talk about using little moments of big connection to raise calm and confident kids, the connection isn't just emotional connection. It really is also about the connections in the brain. And what we know is that children learn best from doing something on their own and doing it over and over and over again, and what is modeled for them. And so what we're doing in these play micro connections is we're modeling emotional intelligence and communication, and regulating our bodies, and reining it in, and then getting excited.

([34:02](#)):

We're modeling all of these things, but we're giving them practice doing it themselves too. And that doesn't just build the relational connection. It's allowing the brain to make those connections. Just like infants can't self-soothe, the way they learn soothing is by someone co-soothing them, co-regulating them, and getting their brain practice of going from an upset state back into a regulated state. And that's what we're doing in all these play scenarios as well, is practicing how we manage emotions and body and ideas and communication, and all of these things.

Dr Laura Markham ([34:37](#)):

Wonderful. Well, we have to wrap up. I know we could talk about play all day, but we need to wrap up. But I'm so excited for your new book. And let me ask you, how can people find the book, and how can they find you?

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson ([34:53](#)):

So the book doesn't come out until January. I don't even have the book yet. I got these postcards yesterday. So now I'm getting to see the cover, what it looks like, and there's the little strategies, just like my other books that I did with Dan. There's a refrigerator sheet at the back. The best way ... The book is for pre-sale right now. And it is so helpful to authors when people pre-order our books because it lets publishers know there's interest and people buy more of them. So you can pre-order the book anywhere you purchase books. And then I would love it too if people would follow me on social. And my handle there is [@TinaPayneBryson](#) on Instagram and Facebook,

Instagram's where I post the most. And in the months ahead, I'm posting all kinds of little nuggets from this book as well as my other ones, and my website's, tinabryson.com.

(35:43):

So I love for me, and Laura, I know this about you as well, this is work, but it's not really work. It's our heart, and just from watching you and admiring you over the years, I think we're both similar in that our drive is to serve parents and to have impact to support them in the most important job. And we don't have to be perfect as parents, but we want to be intentional. And so, yeah, I love getting content out there just to help you all, because I'm in it with you, and most of you, I want to also say, you need play too. We all need play. I need play in my life. It looks different. My play is going thrifting with my best friend. I love treasure hunting, and I think we all need some play in our lives as well. And it's really important that we show up for each other and support each other. So that's why I'm so glad you're doing this summit because you are such an important voice in this space, a solid, solid expert who knows content well. And I love how you've served parents over the years, and I hope to continue to serve as you have.

Dr Laura Markham (36:58):

Oh, thank you so much. It's an honor to do this work and, as you say, it is my purpose in life and I'm honored to do it with you and so many wonderful people. You mentioned a couple of other people like Larry Cohen who laid the groundwork for play. And so I'm grateful to be able to do this. So I would like to say thank you. What did you say?

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson (37:23):

It's so fun to celebrate other experts' work who are doing great work. I love the people's work that I love. I love sharing it because it's helped me. And so I feel like the more we can all really support each other, the better.

Dr Laura Markham (37:37):

Yeah. So thank you for your beautiful work, and I would like to wish everyone who's watching a playful day.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson (37:45):

Yes, thank you.

