



Podcast Episode 181
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“How to Help Your Child Become a Great Conversationalist”

David Loy: Hi and welcome to *In the Loop* with Andy Andrews. I’m your host David Loy. Andy, I am thrilled that we are once again sitting across the table from each other.

Andy Andrews: You’re thrilled.

David: I am.

Andy: Not just excited but you’re thrilled.

David: Instead of me staring at a screen, only hearing your voice, I’m actually looking at your face today.

Andy: I’ve gotten to where I like doing these so much, hanging out up here, in Nashville with you guys. I’d rather not do it on Skype.

David: Yes, absolutely. And it’s more fun, more entertaining. And you get to be in the room with Matt as well, Matt Lempert.

Andy: Matthew.

David: Our wonderful audio engineer, who puts all of this together. And now that I’m looking at your face, I’m also seeing and I’ve got to ask, and maybe I

shouldn't ask this on the air, but what's up with your arms, you've got all kinds of little cuts and scrapes and stuff on your arms

Andy: Yeah, oh my gosh. Oh good grief. I know, and it's like I'm keeping this triple antibiotic stuff, you think that's bad, you should see my chest area. Because I was crossing, we have like a vacant lot in between us and our nearest neighbors. Polly told me the Colemans were over at the house, I didn't see them a long time so I see them about to drive out of a driveway so I'm running across this vacant lot and I'm looking up, obviously not where I'm going. And so I'm trying to see, they're gonna get out before I get there and so I trip on a stump. Now, it was a little stump but when I tripped, it was like a cartoon. Because I mean, of all the places I could've landed, I landed in cactus.

David: Oh no.

Andy: I mean, it was like some roadrunner cartoon.

David: I'm sure it was all slow motion, you just flying into...

Andy: Oh man. And when I get up, they're like hanging on me. Now here's the funny thing, if there is something funny about it. I still, I'm like, they're going to get out of the driveway, so I get up and I keep running. And Robin Coleman, she goes, where did you go? And I said, what? She said, I saw you running across the lot and you just disappeared. And I said, well yeah, and I kind of looked down. And she goes, oh my gosh. And these cactuses were like hanging all over me. I don't know if you know this, it has a little hooks or something, because I couldn't, you know, you pull them out and it like really tries to hang in there. But even the weirder thing is, later that day, I thought I had everything out but later that day,

you know, I take my shirt off to get to a shower, and it's pulling, I still have these spines in me.

David: Oh no.

Andy: So anyway.

David: So that's why you have holes all in your arms.

Andy: That's why I have holes in myself David.

David: I was wondering about that.

Andy: Good grief.

David: Wow that was a little bit...

Andy: Well thanks for bringing that mental image to everybody that I'm like covered with scraps.

David: Everyone can know what I'm looking at. Just wanted to ask. Thanks for sharing. Well let's get into a today's episode. This question is a really good one, it comes from Bruce. Bruce happens to work with one of the companies that you've been working with frequently. And he sends in a great question. So let me read this to you and then we will get into it.

Andy: Ok, alright.

David: Andy, I've been playing catch up with your older podcasts, and listened to one today, where you said that the most important quality for someone to have

is to be someone others enjoy being around. One aspect of that from my experience is to be, well, interesting. I think the best skill to be someone others want to be around is to be a good listener. But there is a need for a verbal volley and I want my children to be well equipped in this area. We all have good stories or interesting things that happen to us or that we observe. Andy can you share how a parent might help train his child to tell a good story or anecdote in a conversational setting, to be engaging to their peers and to adults. Thanks for your resources, I always enjoy listening to you.

Andy: Man, that is, that's a great question. And that is so important, that interesting thing and

David: And I know we recently, several episodes ago, we talked about just in general teaching children how to behave around adults. But Bruce goes a little bit further into this, teaching them how to tell stories, how to engage in conversation.

Andy: Well if you narrow down, you know, really what makes, there are things that make kids popular in high school or junior high school, and a lot of it has to do with looks or you know, something like that, maybe money, I don't know. But as far as the adults go, time becomes a great equalizer. And you get out of high school for ten years and start, you know, roaming around out there. And it really turns into more who you are, not even what you do. And that interesting thing, that word he used in there, interesting, that's probably, that's at the top of the list. You know when Twitter came out, so many of us were like, what, why does anybody want to know anything about that? And people would ask me about that before I really even knew anything about it. But the one thing I knew right off the bat, and I told people, I said, if you're going to do this, let me just tell you something, don't be boring. Just don't be boring. I don't mind reading where you are and what's going on, as long as it's not boring. But if you're sending me some

twitter feed that says, I ate broccoli for lunch, I mean, you're gone. I don't really care.

David: It's got to be interesting.

Andy: Yeah. And so, he's right. There's so many things that we look at with our kids, and we talked about that before, that I believe so many parents, I just wanna raise great kids. And we've talked about it before. No, that's not what you wanna do. You don't want to raise great kids, you want to raise kids who become great adults. And that's what you're after. And so when Polly and I look at our boys, you know, one of the things that, you know, Polly is great at correcting their English. Now, you know, because she corrects their English so much, I probably talk a little slower at home so that she doesn't have to correct me because their bad English is probably from me.

David: I was going to say, that's got to come from you.

Andy: You didn't have to agree with that David. But that's one thing, you know, that she is very good at catching those little things that, and you know, this doesn't necessarily go into making somebody sound interesting. However the way somebody talks, the way somebody converses, can stop people. It can halt their mental processes when they're having a conversation with somebody, you know what I'm saying?

David: Right.

Andy: I mean, you can be having a great conversation and somebody can say something a certain way and it takes your mind out of the deal. And so you want to be, as a conversationalist, you want to be the kind of person that people are

paying attention to the story or to the idea, and not go into, oh I can't believe he talks that way, where were his parents?

David: Right, you don't want that to be the stumbling block or something that gets people uninterested.

Andy: Right, a stumbling block.

David: Let me ask you this. This is kind of a tangent but I think it relates. Are there any stories from your childhood where you did something like a show and tell? I mean, you always talk about how you always wanted to speak, always wanted to be in front of people, always wanted to be on stage. Was there anything that you remember about, specifically being in front of your peers at a young age?

Andy: Absolutely but let me finish this one though about what Polly and I do with the boys.

David: Ok.

Andy: Because I think this has a real bearing on his specific but remember that.

David: Ok.

Andy: I really believe that when we are creating interesting conversations with our boys, around our house, people get points for witty repartee. I mean, you get points at our house for being clever, for being witty.

David: What's an example of awarding points in your house?

Andy: I tell you what, this is an example that blows me away. Adam is 12, ok, and Polly was talking to him and we were kind of barely listening. Austin and I were doing something else maybe, we were in a room, barely listening. And Polly was talking and Adam, he is a great negotiator, you know. I don't know who taught him how to, and the assumptive close and he handles objections before they ever happen, you know, it's funny. But I'll tell you this, Adam is interesting because he will take charge of the conversation, smiles while he talks. I mean, I talk about smiling while you talk and that Adam, good grief, he is so good at it, he does it to me, I know he's doing it and it still works, right.

David: It still works.

Andy: And so Adam, and Polly say, ok, it's time to go to bed, and Adam says, can we watch just one more thing. And Polly says, Adam. And before she can even, he'll say, let me get it, I'll get it real quick, we'll put it right up, you won't have to think a thing about it. And he'll be moving the whole time. And Polly would be, oh, well. And he smiles, momma, this will only take a second, you will love this, I've been wanting to show you this. And we're all kind of laughing. Because we know he's fixing to get his way. So she's talking to him about something one day and he says something and she is explaining. And then she says this, she says, Adam, two wrongs do not make a right. And just like that Adam says, that's true momma, but two rights, can make an airplane. And I almost fell on the floor. I'm like, my boy. You know what I mean, like, dude, are you kidding me?

David: So that gets points, something like that.

Andy: Yeah, it gets points. And it gets points to, I guess, to relate something to something else and bring, you know, to connect dots. And so Polly is very witty. I mean, I know people think I'm kind of funny but they kind of know me, I'm on

stage, but Polly is very witty. And so around our house, that's part of what we do, we read witty things. When somebody finds something or finds a situation, and when we sit at the dinner table, which we do together a lot, it is the rare time, sitting at the dinner table, it's rare that we turn the TV on and all watch something. Usually, the TV is not on. And we sit down. But we have some questions that we ask a lot. And one of those questions, I mean, it's not just the, and this would get me into another thing actually, I have a lot of parents ask me, nobody has asked this in this particular case but it goes right in with this interesting thing. I have a lot of parents who will say to me, my teenager won't talk to me or I can't, they won't talk. I mean, I don't know what's going on they won't talk.

Well remember what it was like when you were a teenager. You're changing, things are different, and you're very aware of who you are or maybe you're very aware of. When I was a teenager, I was very aware of who I wasn't. I wasn't real popular, I wasn't unpopular, I was kind of one of the faceless rabble, I suppose. I wasn't a jock, I wasn't one of the smart kids, I wasn't a druggie, I wasn't one of the popular crowd, I wasn't in the band. And so I look back and I think, God I was just like roaming through the halls. But it's an uncomfortable time, is what I'm saying. And so a lot of times the parents say, well, you know, how did school go? Fine. Well, like, is that all? Well, yeah.

David: With no follow up, no detail.

Andy: Yeah. And so people think, well they won't talk to me. Well I really believe as we've said before, the quality of your answers is only determined by the quality of your question. And so, figure out good questions. And so if you want to raise a child who is interesting in conversations, then this child needs to be equipped with good questions.

David: So you said, you all do dinner as a family around the table together. What are some questions you ask the boys around the dinner table?

Andy: Here's a great question. And just understand, our boys are a lot like your boys. They're, sometimes they don't want to talk either, ok. Sometimes it's like, what do you want me to say. But here's the other thing, we know, that as adults, as a functioning adult, in society today, you are not allowed to get away with fine, what do you want me to say? You're not allowed. Because the kind of jobs that you get with those kind of answers, are not jobs you want. I mean, the kind of career that you have with, well I don't know what you want me to say, I mean, no offence, but you're hanging out of the back of a garbage truck, ok.

David: And you can't get through an interview process if your answers are short, without story or detail.

Andy: That's right. So there's a ton of people that don't, I mean, you want your kids to learn that when they're 12 and 13, 14. You don't want them to have to learn it when they're out of college. When they get out of college and they realize that the only people they've really have been good talking to, are their own friends.

David: Right. And like you always say, you either, you can teach them while they're at home or you will allow the world to teach them when they leave.

Andy: That's exactly right. You can discipline or the world will discipline. And if the world disciplines them, it's never pretty, ok. So a good question, here's a common question at our house, what is the funniest thing that happened today in school? That's a common question. And you know, sometimes, well, oh gosh, nothing funny happened. So Polly and I will go, really, really? So the entire day, unfolded, and you didn't smile a single time, you didn't laugh at anything, nobody

did it. And so then they'll start, ok, so there was. Ok, so what happened, what did he say? See, you will teach your children how to tell stories. Because who is it that people really want to be around, you know, at parties? Who is it that people want to be around in the office?

David: Well and the secondary effect of a question like that, is that, that child then goes into the next day of school looking for something funny. It changes their perspective.

Andy: That's right. I know my dad's going to ask me what was funny.

David: So they're looking for it. So that's great.

Andy: And it also, I think that question is a great question because it, you and I David know ton of people who, inadvertently go through their life expecting the worse thing to happen. Well I knew that was going to happen, well you know, what do you expect. And so inadvertently, these people are going through their life looking for the disaster, looking for the other shoe to drop. I want our boys to walk through life looking for the funny thing. I want them looking for what's funny. So truly, you know, here, we're all up here, for Spring Break, in Nashville, and Adam and Robert, Adam and uncle Bob went walking. They went to the park walking yesterday while Austin and I were doing something, Polly was doing something. So they come back from the park and Adam has stories about the people that he saw and what they were wearing and how they walked. And so

David: And he's looking for that stuff.

Andy: Yeah, he's looking for it.

David: That's great. Ok, we're almost done here, but real quick, tell us some stories, some memory of your childhood when you did show and tell or when you were up in front of your friends, speaking or telling the story of some type?

Andy: Well, you know, I always want to go back to that time that Kevin and I did show and tell with grandmother's underwear. And it was so huge, it was so huge. And that's in that book, the book is out of print, but this book... It was so huge, we went out to the hall to prepare our presentation. And so, I got in one leg and he got in the other leg and so when we came in, you know, it created a stir.

David: I'm sure.

Andy: It was interesting. But there were so many things that and I urge people with your family stories, create memories, create memories. And don't be afraid to be the subject of the memory that doesn't make you look the smartest or whatever. One of the funniest things that I still remember, my daddy has been dead 35 years, and this may have happened when I was in junior high school, but we would play games occasionally. And I think the games are good thing to do with your families. I'm not good at it but Polly is great. They've got a monopoly game going right now, in our bedroom. And that thing has been sitting on the floor forever. But I remember playing scrabble with my dad, my mom, my sister. And it is a family legend that my dad, who was a smart guy, somebody put the word S-U-I-T. And my dad immediately jumps up and says, suit, what kind of word is suit. Suit is not a word, I challenge that. And we have laughed about that. Literally my dad's been gone forever but my dad's probably rolling his eyes in heaven right now going, I will never get away from that.

David: He'll never live it down. That's so funny. So don't be afraid to be the funny part of that memory. Andy thanks for your thoughts on this. Bruce thank you for

that great question, that's fantastic. And Andy we're always excited to hear those stories in your perspective. So thanks for sharing your wisdom.

Andy: Thank you buddy.

David: If you'd like to have your question answered on a future episode of *In the Loop*, there's two ways, give us a call and leave us your name, where you're calling from and your question, and Andy will address that on a future episode. That phone number is 1800 726 Andy. That's 1800 726 2639. Or you can email us intheloop@andyandrews.com, Matt as we mentioned earlier is the one that overseas that email address and he will get us those questions to address on future episodes.

Andy: And if you guys, if you haven't taken the opportunity to go on iTunes and just, quick, tiny, little review, of *In the Loop*, we would appreciate it. Because that is how people find this. And you know, we do this for you, we enjoy this, but we want to help and so obviously we want to reach the largest number of people possible and that would help. If you have not, you only get to do it one time, and so if you can go on iTunes and find *In the Loop* and just give it a review, that would be awesome. And please encourage your friends or send them the links to this, encourage them to put their name and email address on andyandrews.com. That way we can be in touch and bother them as much as we bother you, I suppose.

David: Thanks Andy, we'll talk to you next week.

Would you like to run something by Andy? Contact us and your question might be featured on the show!

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