

Matt (host): Welcome back to the Nimble Youth Podcast. Help families better understand the mental and emotional health of children and adolescents. I'm your host, Matt Butterman. Today's episode focuses on something that feels urgently needed in our culture right resilience. And not just resilience for teens, but for parents too.

Our guest is Doctor. Kate Lund, a psychologist who works closely with teenagers and families navigating anxiety, burnout, academic pressure, and emotional overload. She's also the author of the new book *The Keys to Resilient Parenting*, which explores why sometimes the healthiest response to stress isn't pushing harder, but pausing, resetting, and reconnecting with what really matters. Doctor. Lund's work looks at resilience not as toughness or endurance, but as something much more human flexibility, awareness, and the ability to recover when life knocks us sideways.

Today, we're going to talk about what resilience really means for teens and parents, why so many families feel exhausted and overwhelmed these days, how to help kids build coping skills without minimizing their struggles, and what Doctor. Lund's book *Step Away* teaches us about creating space for mental health in a noisy, demanding world. Doctor. Kate Lund, welcome to Nimble Youth podcast.

Dr. Kate Lund: Thank you so much for having me. I'm grateful to be here.

Matt (host): Thank you. So what led you to focus your work on resilience in both teenagers and in their parents?

Dr. Kate Lund: Yeah, you know, so that's a great question. And it's an area that I've really always been interested in. I did my training back in Boston, working with kids and families facing significant medical challenges. Did a fellowship at Shriners Burn Hospital for Children and really got into the research of what it meant to bounce back from significant injuries, significant challenges in that domain. And since then, it's really evolved into much more of a broad focus in my work.

I became a parent myself. I have 18 year old twin boys, you know, been been through the developmental phases of what resilience looks like, and have a full practice of parents and kids, families who are facing so many challenges and it just feels like a really relevant and important space to focus.

Matt (host): Absolutely. So when people hear the word resilience, they often think of it as response to stress or some kind of adverse, events in their life, pushing through the pain kind of, but how do you define resilience in a healthier way?

Dr. Kate Lund: Yeah, so what we're looking at in terms of resilience is more of a lifestyle. It's not pushing through that challenge that happens to pop up and then putting it off to the side. We really wanna integrate resilience into our day to day as parents, and we wanna model that for our kids. Starts with finding a way to manage our stress response in a consistent and ongoing

way so that we show up level each day, not up here such that when a challenge hits, boom, we're gonna escalate to the point of shutdown. So we really wanna make sure we have that piece dialed in.

And I teach a technique developed by a physician in Boston in the nineteen seventies named Herbert Benson called the relaxation response. Super simple, but very powerful, very effective, and practiced consistently. So what we do is we come up with a word or a phrase that we find soothing in some way, and we breathe. And we practice that five minutes in the morning, five minutes later in the day, such that we're bookending the day, and we're starting to understand what it feels like to be in that level space, and it becomes integrated into our baseline. So that's the first thing.

And then, you know, we wanna understand ourselves beyond that. What do we need to be optimized in our own unique context? And we wanna help our kids understand that same thing. And so that's where it all starts. It starts with modulating our stress response, building a sense of self awareness in terms of what we need to be at our best.

Matt (host): Yeah. So why do you think resilience has become such an urgent topic for families today?

Dr. Kate Lund: As parents, as families, we're being barraged from all directions with so much these days. So many inputs are coming at us. And it's a question of being level, having the pieces in place to optimize our well-being, to be able to move through across all domains, most importantly, for our kids, and to be able to model the, you know, some thing same things for our kids. So this is very, very important.

Matt (host): So what what are the biggest emotional pressures you see facing teens, today?

Dr. Kate Lund: So high expectations from folks on the outside as well as from themselves. Comparison, wanting to be like your best friend or be like they're here in class, maybe get a better grade. Maybe they have different strengths, different aptitudes. You know? So this this idea that we have to be functioning like everybody else.

Perfect images. Those perfect experiences portrayed out there. And it's just not healthy for kids to be seeing that day in, day out. We wanna help them to appreciate their own unique context. We wanna help them understand what it means for them to be at their best, and it doesn't have to look like everybody else's because there's so much pressure on our kids out there these days from all directions.

I have always upon applying to college and really helping them to understand what environment will be best for them to thrive in as opposed to what looks best on paper and shooting for that and that. You know? So it's the balancing act, understanding ourselves as parents and helping our kids to do the same.

Matt (host): Right. Sort of a related question is how can parents tell the difference then between what is normal teenage stress these days and then something that requires extra support. I think that that delineation there is is sometimes really hard to gauge as as a parent. What are your thoughts on that?

Dr. Kate Lund: Yeah. It's it's true. It's a great question. And it's a very real question, very important question. Starts with knowing your knowing what our kid's baseline is in terms of how they handle stress, how they manage disappointment.

What's the typical baseline in terms of how much time are they, you know, choosing to spend on their own? How much do they talk to us, you know, that sort of thing. And if there's a definitive or distinct shift in those things, like

Matt (host): Right. So let's, talk a little bit about what your book addresses, and that is the idea of parent resilience. So why is parent resilience just as important as teen resilience?

Dr. Kate Lund: Yeah. Super. To be as resilient as possible as parents so that we can show up fully across the domains of your life. Right? And particularly for our kids and our family, but all the other things that we have going on.

So, again, it starts with managing our own stress response as parents and then figuring out what is it that we need to be optimal in our own unique context and building those things into our life. You know, maybe it's a regular call with a good friend who maybe we've lost a little bit of with. It's perhaps a stronger social support network. Exercise is huge. Very simple things, but oftentimes we forget these things because we're moving so fast through the day to day that we forget what we need to be at our best.

Maybe it's a walk around the block lunch. Maybe it's reengaging in a different hobby or something that we used to love before we became parent. You know? Any number of things. Maybe it's reading a good book, listening to a good book before we go to bed.

So many different things that we can plug in, optimize our own sense of well-being.

Matt (host): Yeah, it's kind of the idea, I suppose, of, you know, you have to take care of yourself first before you can adequately address the needs of others.

Dr. Kate Lund: 100%, yes.

Matt (host): So what does healthy emotional modeling look like for parents at home?

Dr. Kate Lund: Well, it really, it looks like having a regular practice to modulate our own stress response as parents so that we're showing up in that level space. And kids notice that. They notice when we're level. They notice what are not level even if they don't overtly say it. So that's a really important piece.

Connecting with our kids on an authentic human level, not jumping there to stick to challenges that they're having, rather be there to listen as they're ready to talk. And that's the really important piece. So what inspired you to write

Matt (host): the book, your latest book, Step Away?

Dr. Kate Lund: Yeah. It really so it came down to a couple things. It came down to what I was seeing in my practice. You know, parents coming in just stressed, on the edge of burnout, having trouble functioning at their best. You know, their wellness, their well-being was not optimized.

And then, about fourteen months ago or so, the Surgeon General came out with a statement saying that US parents are on the brink, just teetering on the edge of burnout, very, very stressed, all time high level of stress. And so I was like, this makes sense. You know, what I'm seeing lines up with what we're hearing out there in the news. And let's write a book that will help parents in a very straightforward, digestible way, put a plan in place to optimize their own sense of well-being so that again, can help their children do the same and they can show up fully across the domains of their lives. This book, Step Away is a digestible, easy to read guide for parents to begin to understand themselves better.

They need to be optimized within their own eating context.

Matt (host): So in the context of mental health, what does the term stepping away really look like?

Dr. Kate Lund: Well, it means taking the steps to optimize your well-being, which will help with your mental health, right? And so in terms of the first step in the process, it's a good way, modulating that stress response. And that's gonna automatically help to reduce one's overall sense of anxiety. Worse, there's always that situation where folks need additional support. But it's really figuring out what you need to be at your best if you are in a place where you're not suffering from a clinical anxiety, a clinical depression, that sort of thing.

This is gonna help you to optimize or in that clinical space as a parent or otherwise, you know, additional support on the other side of that, but this process of stepping away absolutely gonna happen. Yeah.

Matt (host): So what's what's one simple practice that you could you would recommend for families to start with right away with that that you address in the book?

Dr. Kate Lund: Yeah. So there are a couple of things. I've already talked about one of them because it's it's the core. It's it's figuring out a way to modulate your stress response. Do that as a parent.

I suggest the relaxation response by doctor Benson and teach your kids to do the same. Another really powerful technique that's very important in this is keeping a record or journal each evening of three to five things that went well on the during the day. Because human nature brings us to all would've, could've, should've, all the things that went wrong. And that really serves to pull us down, get us caught in those negative thought loops, those negative self talk loops. And so to try to neutralize that is very, very important.

And we teach people to do it by really focusing in on things that did go well on a day.

Matt (host): Yeah. So next question is one that we often address on this podcast. I think Jonathan Haidt's book, *The Anxious Generation* is kind of our, our Bible here. So how does this constant technology and all this stimulation that is bombarding our young people today, how does that make it harder for them to build resilience?

Dr. Kate Lund: It's a great question, and it's a very real problem. It takes our kids' focus away, you know, if they're constantly watching YouTube Shorts and then jumping to something else and on their phone and text messages and Snapchat. It's a real issue that that comes up that impacts the ability to maintain focus and attention. It impacts the ability to maintain a sense of calm. Alright.

So at least you're building that piece in. Yeah. No. Technologie I always wonder what would be possible for kids if the technology piece wasn't there. I mean, I see it in my own house.

Like, see see them on their phones, and they're 18 years old. So, you know, like, I take the phone or whatever. And I don't really want because we have to be teaching our kids to modulate their their technology use from the inside out. Because if it's always being guardrail, they're gonna hit that point of being 18, 20, whatever. And they're not gonna build them and the addiction piece is going to just lock in even more.

Yeah. No, I agree. It's they're easy answers. And trust me, I've experimented with a lot of things here, but I think modeling is really important.

Matt (host): Yeah. I think that's a really important point. Just helping them become comfortable with the technology because the reality is it's it's probably never going to completely disappear from their lives. So they have to be learn how to use it appropriately. So many parents and teens, they feel guilty, especially in the pace of of modern life.

They feel guilty about resting or slowing down, taking taking it, stepping down the pace of life. And and so how do you help people release themselves from that guilt for taking care of themselves?

Dr. Kate Lund: Yeah. That's a great question. Oftentimes, it's done through a process of self awareness, experimenting, small shifts in the direction of slowing down and taking a step back because it's true. You know? It's that that drive to keep them up.

It's that drive to do more and more and more. Really, oftentimes, doing less, more, it allows us to function more optimally. What folks have to get to that realization in front of the inside out, and it's a process.

Matt (host): Yeah. So it we've talked about you mentioned this earlier in the interview, but let's talk dig into a little bit more deeply. When should families consider seeking professional outside professional mental health support for their for their

Dr. Kate Lund: Yeah. Again, you know, if they notice significant changes in what their child's baseline or kind of typical presentation has been, if they get easily agitated at a new level, if they're starting to isolate more and withdrawing from activities that they love or friends, withdrawing from us as parents at a level that seems atypical for them, that's when it's time to get support beyond, you know, some significant counseling or coaching or other mental health support.

Matt (host): Wrap up our conversation today with, with with hope. And specifically, wanna ask you, what gives you the most hope about today's teenagers?

Dr. Kate Lund: You know, I feel like there's a lot of opportunity out there for our kids. And if we can help them to harness the power within themselves to figure out what their strengths, their aptitudes, their ideal direction would be, And I feel like that's set them up to harness those opportunities because there's there's a lot of opportunity for our kids.

Matt (host): Yeah. Absolutely. Well, Doctor. Kate Lund, thank you so much for joining us today and for all the work you're doing to help both teens and parents build resilience in a very demanding world. To our listeners, if today's conversation resonated with you, we encourage you to check out Doctor.

Lund's new book, Step Away, and to remember that resilience doesn't mean never struggling. It means learning how to recover, reconnect, and keep moving forward with support. And we will have links to Doctor. Lund's book on our website. And if you found this episode helpful, please share it with a friend, a fellow parent, or an educator.

And please don't forget to rate and review the Nibble Youth Podcast wherever you listen. Until next time, I'm Matt Buttermann and this has been the Nibble Youth podcast. Take care of yourselves and the young people in your life. Bye for now.