

GED_S01E03_The_Good_Enough_Dad_Brad_Kearns_231025 _MID31-10_FINAL_R2.mp3

Anonymous voice: [00:00:02] A listener. Production.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:04] This podcast was recorded on the ancient lands of the Gadigal peoples of the Eora nation in Australia. I wish to acknowledge their rich and continuing culture, and especially pay respect to the elders past, present and emerging, and to acknowledge and pay respect to any First Nations people from anywhere in the world who may come to hear this podcast. We hope that we may all come to walk with gentle feet, strong minds and compassionate hearts in this global village.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:35] Just a warning this episode deals with baby loss.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:46] Now, no dad wants to be a lousy dad. Aiming to be a good dad is great. But do you know what? Being a good enough dad is so much more important. I'm Maggie Dent, parenting educator, author, and champion of boys and men. And this is the Good Enough Dad, where I chat with committed, caring, sometimes confused, and often funny dads about all the ways they've discovered to be good enough at this parenting gig.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:46] My Good Enough Dad today is Brad Kearns. Brad lives his parenting life online where he's known and loved as DadMum. He's a husband to Sarah and dad of four boys, including Buddy, Brad and Sarah's first born son, who was born sleeping or stillborn. They also have Knox, who's nine, Finn who's seven, and Teddy, who's four. Okay, Brad, what happened in your house this morning?

Brad Kearns: [00:01:44] I missed it.

Maggie Dent: [00:01:46] That's one of the best I ever.

Brad Kearns: [00:01:49] I yeah, no, I, I was up and I left at 530 this morning we had some cousins having a sleepover, so I had to go in and [00:02:00] say to them, don't wake anyone up. You actually shouldn't be out of bed yet, so don't make any noise.

Yeah, absolutely. They're all out of bed running into, you know, slumber party. They're running into the other rooms.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:09] Nothing like a cousin catch-up.

Brad Kearns: [00:02:10] Yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:11] So, Brad, you've gained a level of fame by posting about being a dad and a husband. So why did you decide to share your parenting life in that way?

Brad Kearns: [00:02:21] Look, I think for me it started from a post, so I'm quite conservative traditionally, believe it or not. And I had a pretty private and locked up social media profile. When you come from the police and then the army, you don't share to people outside of your circle. And Sarah went into hospital and I put what I thought to be a bit of a joke on online. I had to be mum for a day and I'm going to call myself DadMum, that's my superhero name. And yeah, I wish I thought of a better name that day to be honest, but but here we are. So yeah, I posted something and I said to Sarah while she was in hospital with kidney issues, I said, you're not going to believe how hard my night was. And she said, mate, I think I'm going to believe it. I said, I'm going to write it down for you. No. She goes, Brad, write it down. So I wrote it down and she goes, my friends want to share it, but they can't share it because you're on private. So I took myself off private and then yeah, the next morning I had 50,000 followers and the local news crew wanted to rock up, and I was like, that's weird. So from there, I just started posting memes. And then to be honest, I posted a couple of things. It was more insightful than than funny. And yeah, I found I had .. People just related to it. You know, there's that connection and people would message you and say, I took a lot out of that. They would never comment, you know, some of the probably best things I've written are the lowest engaged posts, but they're the ones that people take the biggest messages from and you wouldn't know. But, you know, you get a lot of guys that they'll reach out and say, hey, I really thought on this and it's going to change how I, how I act tomorrow. And you go, well, that's cool. I'll keep doing that.

Maggie Dent: [00:03:57] Those posts where people didn't necessarily [00:04:00] comment much, tell me a bit about what sorts of things were in those posts.

Brad Kearns: [00:04:05] I guess there's different types of posts. So what I've learned over the years is don't be accusational when you write something, because it'll come off really poorly and people will feel accused when they get something shared with them. So what I definitely try and do when I write is I try and articulate a message that a guy will understand that his partner can share with him, and for me, that's always been my recipe online is go off the number of shares, not the number of likes or even comments. Because if you can say something that someone else couldn't articulate, then that's how you win.

Maggie Dent: [00:04:40] And I think you did that beautifully, particularly around indoor plants and cushions.

Brad Kearns: [00:04:44] Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So there's the fun. There's the fun side. Um, but then there's also the more the more serious side. And, and what I find is when you, when you write something like that and it's, it's a safe space for someone and they read it and this is what happens with the guys. They will they'll read it and go, okay, I see. So one one that I wrote, for example, was around whose job is it to keep the relationship going, the spark. It's not her job to put on makeup and keep looking good and all the rest of it. It's both your fucking job. Yeah. You know, it's up to you to show interest. It's up to you to give her a reason to want to look after herself. And it's not about looking after yourself physically, but mentally, because the person that looks after themselves mentally often that will that will also translate into the physical world.

Maggie Dent: [00:05:36] You have that ability to offer insights from a very masculine space that were more honest and deep than were normally out there. It's a bit like what's on TV, you know, the dads are portrayed as bumbling bimbos. You know, we are moving it, but seriously, most of them were. Yeah. And then you stepped into a space where, yes, there is humour, but every now and then you just hit a ball [00:06:00] out of the park on something that we've all thought about, but we might not have said.

Brad Kearns: [00:06:05] [00:06:05] People underestimate the emotional intelligence of of guys, [00:06:10] and I don't think it's anything to do with their level of emotional intelligence. It's to do with how something is articulated or even the safety of articulating it. So they'll connect with something, they'll read it ... They won't even look sideways and pretend they've acknowledged it. But something's happened. They've absolutely

read it. They've taken it on board, and they just haven't felt safe enough to say, yeah, yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:33] And also, there's this depth that is often completely misunderstood, that guys often like to think about things quite deeply. They're not as quick as women to want to talk about it, but that doesn't mean to say they're not thinking about it, and it's actually going to be it's going to be processed. And then when it is. Yes. Safe space. They will they will be able to talk about it.

Brad Kearns: [00:06:56] Yeah, 100%. Generally speaking, especially online and in conversation, women, they overshare like my wife tells me what she talks to people about at the gym. And I'm like, you've known these people for a week. Um, with guys you could know them for, for 12 months.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:12] Try 20 years or 20.

Brad Kearns: [00:07:13] Years. Yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:13] 20 years before you, actually.

Brad Kearns: [00:07:15] Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:17] And it's one of the things I discovered in my research is the whole friendship drama is incredibly complex and fraught and driven by lots of things as a female, particularly estrogen, which is the bonding neurochemical, whereas guys don't have as much of that. Right. But they're bonding and their friendships are just as significantly important. And so often you'll ask a guy how many really good mates you have, and they'll go two, and you'll say, when did you last see them? And they said, oh, about 20 years ago. When did you last connect? Oh yeah a while back. But that's it. It doesn't change. Yeah. It was not an interesting shift. That and that's why we often have issues with loneliness for men later in life.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:58] How do you describe yourself [00:08:00] as a dad?

Brad Kearns: [00:08:02] Um. Gee whiz, that's a tough one, I think. I try really hard. Like, I put conscious effort into things that I know that I'm not good at, you know? Um.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:14] Like what?

Brad Kearns: [00:08:15] Uh, so let's say something like, I grew up not doing homework, right? Like I lived in a household where education wasn't valued so highly. And and I now have a career where I prepare for things. And I know how important it is to get on the front foot. Like I prepared this morning to come here and wrote some notes, even though we won't use them. So I think for me, that's that's an example where with the boys we had like Easter hat parades, for example, spent a month with them working on Easter hats. We built the friggin skatepark on top of a helmet. Yeah. Um, and I think for me, it's just put effort into things and it doesn't matter how good you are at it. Um, yeah. And the kids will see that.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:57] So they're good enough?

Brad Kearns: [00:08:58] Yeah, it's good enough.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:59] Still a skate track on an Easter bonnet ... I think it's aiming a bit high...

Brad Kearns: [00:09:03] Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Smacked it out of the park. That was that was awesome.

Maggie Dent: [00:09:08] So before you had the boys, did you realize you were going to be a dad that was as conscious of the choices you were going to make as a dad?

Brad Kearns: [00:09:17] No, no, not at all.

Maggie Dent: [00:09:19] Where'd that happen?

Brad Kearns: [00:09:19] I think it's happened over time. Like you wouldn't suggest. There's a switch flicked. It's a case of it's a competency curve. You know, you're unconsciously incompetent, then you're consciously incompetent. And I think I got to the

point where I was consciously incompetent really quick. Um, you know, and I was like, wow, I've got to do something about this.

Brad Kearns: [00:09:39] You know, for me, growing up, you know, I won't talk too much about it, but there's a lot of things that I knew weren't right, you know? So it's a case of, well, how do I use that consciously incompetent for those things and say, well, what do I got to do? And for me, Sarah has probably been the biggest driving force of that.

Maggie Dent: [00:09:59] So tell [00:10:00] me, what did Sarah bring to the table that made everything a bit different for you?

Brad Kearns: [00:10:04] So we met when we were 18. Um, I was on my way into the Army at the time, and then we met. She was on her way into the police force, and we just hit it off from day one. And I think the reason she's been so influential for me is because we came from two very different upbringings, two very different households, two very different levels of stability, I guess you would call it, and two very different sets of values in terms of family and what we perceived our family values to be. So I think when you take that for me, I was probably pretty not probably.

Brad Kearns: [00:10:37] I was pretty lost as a young adult. And Sarah just had these values that she was not willing to give on. You know, she would say things and she would be like, they can't treat you like that. And I would I would have accepted that. And she would say no. And early days that would have caused fires. So I'd be like, well, I can't stand up to these people because I don't perceive anything to be wrong. Whereas she just had those values where she was like, no, you treat others this way and you expect to be treated this way. So, um, over the years, that stuff's really rubbed off on me. She's very strong in terms of what she will and won't accept from people. She's got really high standards, you know, and sometimes I know in our relationship I've had either friends or even family at times be like, oh, she's really hard to deal with. And the longer we've been together and we've stood the test of time, the more I've sort of learnt actually, you know, she just had standards and you didn't, you didn't meet them. And you've got to meet those standards for the other person.

Maggie Dent: [00:11:34] Really important thing to have. Well done. So we all know the saying happy wife happy life. So is that one of your values.

Brad Kearns: [00:11:43] Yeah. Oh absolutely. Yeah. Yeah I value that every day. Just different levels.

Maggie Dent: [00:11:50] Can you give me what are your main family values that you and Sarah want to make sure your boys have?

Brad Kearns: [00:11:57] It probably starts with we plan [00:12:00] together, you know. So whatever it is, we'll sit down and, and it's not a conscious or a deliberate thing. We don't have a Sunday sesh where the whole family gets together. We just check in really regularly, make sure we're on the same page. Because if Sarah and I are driving in different directions, then you know all hell's going to break loose. So there's probably that. There's planning. Other values would be we we try our best to support everyone in the family for what they like, which is different. You know, like our boys are three very different people. I'm a very different person to what Sarah is. So we really value that individuality. We're not just a footy family. We're not just a dancing family. We're not, um, everyone's got their own thing. So we we do our best to consciously put effort into what everyone likes and does. And then maybe the last thing is we really try and demonstrate to the boys how we talk and how we treat people. My friends just bought a house this week. I messaged them and told them how proud I was. Knowing that we're in our 30s, not many other people in their 30s would have done that. That's something you would expect from their parents. But you know, they actually said to me, Brad, not many people have. Have reached out to us. They were really thankful for that message and we spoke a little bit about it. So I guess it's just about showing the boys that. The most important thing for our family is not just to succeed, but to see others succeed as well and and be part of that and enjoy that with them. And yeah, and I find that that yeah, it goes a mile with the boys. They look at what everyone else does. And if someone gets an award we all congratulate them. We don't you know, there's there's no benchmarking or comparison. So yeah, it's a really big value for us.

Maggie Dent: [00:13:43] The thing that I think you haven't mentioned that comes across on your platform is the fierce, unconditional love that you have for each other and that that should be up here. Right? Because. Yeah, right. It's not [00:14:00] just. You know, we were a team here trying to do this. We're doing it with this underlying crazy thing that sometimes older generations didn't necessarily have that bedrock of

serious, unconditional love. We had a very conditional love. Yeah. Talk to me about that a little bit.

Brad Kearns: [00:14:17] Really interesting word because I actually wrote that down this morning. Conditional is something that it drives a wedge between people. You know I know for me I've got personal relationships where conditional has driven a wedge between us. We've had other parts of the family that maybe we haven't spoken to for periods of time because things felt conditional. And I know a lot of kids really struggle with; my parents are interested in what I do conditionally because I'm doing the thing they want me to do. So yeah, um.

Maggie Dent: [00:14:46] Get the exam results and the trophies.

Brad Kearns: [00:14:48] Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. They're not interested in me. They're interested in the things.

Maggie Dent: [00:14:52] What I'm doing that makes them. Yeah.

Brad Kearns: [00:14:55] Yeah, yeah, yeah. But when something's conditional, people generally can see straight through it. And you can argue a lot.

Maggie Dent: [00:15:09] One of the things that I've learnt over the years is that dads aren't always keen to jump on with a great idea that their co-parent has, particularly a woman who's suddenly decided this is what the family needs. So getting a pet is a biggie. Right. And. I want you to share the rabbit story, because you and I know that was a really significant moment of incitement that you might not have realized was coming. So tell me about the rabbit story.

Brad Kearns: [00:15:38] The thing about being married or, you know, in a relationship with a pretty strong female is that they're just going to do stuff, you know, like, and you've got to be prepared for that stuff's just going to happen. You're going to rock up one day, and the bed that you just bought is already going to be replaced, because actually that wasn't the right one. [00:16:00] And we made a bad decision. We, being the operative word made a bad decision. Um, and now we've made the decision to fix it. So yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:07] Always aiming higher.

Brad Kearns: [00:16:08] Yeah. Always aiming higher. And I think something as a man, you've got to understand is that if, if she wants a pet and you don't want a pet.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:17] Which is 99% of most men initially.

Brad Kearns: [00:16:20] Absolutely. Yeah. You're getting a pet and and not only are you going to get a pet, you're going to have to feed it. You're going to have to walk it. And ultimately you're going to have to help look after it because it was a family decision.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:32] And someone in your family made the decision. Yep, yep. Okay. And then what happened? Because this is the other thing I see all the time is how much the dad falls in love with the pet that they did not want. We get so many photographs of the unwanted pet now snuggled up on dad's lap, dad's shoulder, in bed with dad, the one they never wanted. What's going on there?

Brad Kearns: [00:16:56] Yeah, well, I think. You just find yourself on the out with the pet at that point, don't you? So you're both out there together in the doghouse and all you've got's each other, so you've got to just bond.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:10] So one dad said to me, well, there's just one person in the house who loves me the same every day, and I find that that's pretty good.

Brad Kearns: [00:17:18] Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. The the animals don't judge. You know, if stuff's going bad during the day, if the kids aren't ready in time, it's because something you did the day before that means that they're too tired to get ready on time. So that pet. Yeah, yeah, but at least the pet still wants you.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:35] Consistent, most predictable creature with love. Unconditional.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:43] Brad, you did face one of the biggest challenges any parent can face. So can you tell us about Buddy?

Brad Kearns: [00:17:50] So I would have been gee whiz, it was 2012. So maybe 22, 23 at the time. I don't think we were ready to [00:18:00] be parents as much as you think you are. We'd been married a couple of years and and that's just the stage we were up to, is having kids. So we went through everything we went through, I guess that pregnancy journey shit scared, right? Like, no idea what you're doing. So I went and bought my little Broncos onesie. I did all of those things that you do, um, with the baby on the way. And then, yeah, we got to a point where we we learned that he wasn't viable. You know, he he had. Yeah. Well, yeah, but that's the word. So. So he wasn't viable. There were some soft markers. And then after a bit more analysis, after being told we were a 1 in 47,000 chance of having anything wrong, it turned out there was some genetic issues there. And the soft markers told told them to look. So we did the amnio and yeah, it turned out that there was a whole host of problems.

Maggie Dent: [00:18:52] And how far along in the pregnancy was that?

Brad Kearns: [00:18:55] Uh, it was 25, 26 weeks, I think. Yeah. And it's really interesting because at the time I thought, you don't really understand, especially as a young guy, that how far along that actually is. You're like, oh, okay. But but in reality it's, that's a baby. Basically a fully formed but small baby in there.

Maggie Dent: [00:19:18] So so what happened after that?

Brad Kearns: [00:19:21] Um, we sort of knew that things had gone south. So they said, okay, we have to basically get him out. I don't know if there's a nicer way to say it. So we have to do that. And Sarah had to be induced and yeah, we went through through that.

Maggie Dent: [00:19:38] Were you aware of the impact of that loss? At the time or ... How did that? Because grief is a strange beast.

Brad Kearns: [00:19:48] No, I don't I don't think I was, you know, I don't know where Sara was at, but I don't think it's until, um, we seen him in the bassinet. I know for me that I really appreciated [00:20:00] how far along it was and what it meant, because to that point, it was just a couple of scans, you know, it was an ideal that that's what it was. So I think it it hit us that day. And then on that particular day, I had to make an outbound

call, and it was to a funeral place because the counsellors had told us after 20 weeks, there's a birth certificate. It's it's a pretty formal process. So I had to make that call. And I think for me it hit me when I, when, when a bloke answered the phone and I said, oh, I need to organise a funeral for our son. And it's the first time I'd ever said the words. Our son as well. So it was for me. That was probably. That was probably the moment where where it hit me. But then there's a bit of imposter syndrome as well, because you're like, I'm not a dad. Never seen him. So yeah, I think that was probably the moment it was after the fact. And then yeah, the next probably week, week and a bit was, was a blur because you're, you're organising a tiny casket and you're, you're writing a speech for someone you never met. And, and you're doing all of those things with, you know, the white lady funeral people.

Brad Kearns: [00:21:09] And then after that you go, oh, shit, I'm on two weeks off work. I'm going to go back to work and live. Time marches on. That's that's it. That was the experience. So for me, we got through that. And then it was a case of. Don't really know what this means. I don't know what I. To be honest, I felt like a bit of an imposter because I didn't have a lot of the emotions that I thought I should have had, you know? And you've got people saying, oh, you're Sarah's rock, you're this, you're that and the other. And I'm like, I actually think I'm a bit inept. Like, I don't, I don't really know, I don't know. The situation is. So it took time. I then got invited to these groups. You know, there's all those amazing organisations like Bears of Hope. You know, they reach out and I got invited to a group, there was a chat group for dads, and as bad [00:22:00] as that's going to sound at the time, I said, this is just a dads crying group. I don't want to be a part of that. You know, I didn't... Some of them had experienced loss of a one year old and like, I don't belong here. I don't belong in that group. So I pulled back from that stuff really early on and I was like, well, that's how I'm going to deal with it. I'm just not gonna.

Maggie Dent: [00:22:21] So how did you support Sarah?

Brad Kearns: [00:22:24] It's a tough question. Yeah, because I don't think you don't support people through grand gestures, so it's really hard to put a finger on it and say, well, that's that's the thing that I did.

Maggie Dent: [00:22:37] But you were aware that her response was quite different to yours?

Brad Kearns: [00:22:41] Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, yeah. Completely different. You know, she just birthed a child and gone through the pregnancy. And to that point, how close we were with Buddy was very different. So I guess for me it was just trying to be as aware as possible around what she was going through. I could see her developing new friendships with people that had experienced similar things. And that's probably where I realised that, wow, this is really it's really important for her that that she's got that network and and those people. So.

Maggie Dent: [00:23:13] Had you had any other death experience in your life prior to Buddy?

Brad Kearns: [00:23:17] No.

Maggie Dent: [00:23:17] No. You see you had no nothing to.

Brad Kearns: [00:23:21] Yeah. No no.

Maggie Dent: [00:23:22] No. So this is it. This is a pragmatic man going done. Move on. Yep, yep. Done everything I needed. So does it ever really impacted you like when you were expecting the next one? Was there a thought at any point of gee, I hope this goes okay.

Brad Kearns: [00:23:37] Yeah. Yeah I think it was. So there was another very early turn pregnancy loss as well, between Buddy and Knox that I don't think we've really ever spoken about. It was only very early like first trimester type thing. So I think for me it was knowing how on edge Sarah was that put me on edge. It's that typical, when she's stressed, we're [00:24:00] all stressed. So it was like that. But I know with with Knox, we opted to to maybe get some more tests that might have, a lot of people advise against it. But we're like, we've been through this, we've given the numbers and it fucking failed us. So we're not going to, we're not going to listen to anyone. We're going to get this test again, and we're going to do it early, and we're going to make a decision early, because we're not going to get burnt by this process a second time. So I think to the

hospital staff, to the midwives and that we were on edge, you know, we would have been a tough young couple to manage. But I think it's because of that first experience that we were like that. So I think it definitely played in into Knox and that pregnancy a lot.

Maggie Dent: [00:24:41] So what was something from that experience that Sarah and yourself thought, we could make it easier for other people who go through this?

Brad Kearns: [00:24:52] So originally we did what I guess what everyone else does when you're supported by an organization, you go, let's try and get some bears donated. And then I think at one stage we volunteered as well and, and said, let's go and meet with hospitals. And it's really hard, you know, like you need people and you need money. That's what makes a difference. When you look at a charity, you need lots of people and lots of money, a couple of people without a platform, having a conversation with their network, it's great, but it doesn't achieve a lot, you know? And I don't want to say it's wasted effort to anyone out there doing it. But it's hard. It's a slog. So you've got to take your hat off to the people that do that. I think for us, we sort of realized when we started talking about it online, I would have been online for probably over 12 months before we'd sort of even mentioned it, you know, just paid a little tribute. And all these people started reaching out. I think for us it was a case of. We wanted to put his name on something, so I released. It was called The Buddy Pack, and the idea was we'll donate to Bears of Hope a percentage of everything we sell. But it's just his legacy. There was a lot of people that were like, we want to support ... [00:26:00]

Brad Kearns: [00:26:01] Don't need the product, but how can we support? And so I put something online one day and I said, okay, just on a whim if I post something, will you commit? And it's the first time I think I'd ever asked for a call to action from our audience. I said, okay, I'm going to do this. Are you with me? If I post at 7 p.m. tomorrow, will you share it? And that's all I asked. And people did. They said, absolutely, we'll share it. And I remember saying to Sarah that night, I said, I've had over 1000 people just on my little Instagram poll, say, yes, I'll share it. I believe them, you know, like I believe them. So sure enough, next day, 7 p.m., put it on Facebook. And I was going out to dinner with a mate, and I posted it at 7:00, and by 7:30 I'd looked at the post and it had 1000 shares. And then I got in there out of the car park, went in and Sarah's like. Brad there's been \$20,000 donated in the time I drove from home to

go to dinner, and I remember spending that dinner with my mate, just I couldn't I had to keep looking at my phone, I looked at. And I found it was on a GoFundMe and I found myself looking at every everything like I'm like, I seen your name come up.

Maggie Dent: [00:27:18] I was there.

Brad Kearns: [00:27:18] Maggie P uh, Pennington. Right? She tried to hide who she actually was, but donated \$2,500 out of her own money amongst all the other people, and it's things like that for me. I looked at it and I went, wow, there's these people that they believe in it, whether they've experienced it or they know people that do. It touched people. Yeah, yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:27:38] And the other thing, you know, having worked in the death and dying sector and I've worked with families just like yours is, sometimes you just want to hang on to something good that can come out of something just so hideously awful. Mhm. Yeah. You can make a bit of difference by you know, Buddy's life isn't completely a waste.

Brad Kearns: [00:27:53] For me it was about by telling our story in the hospital of we didn't have any time with him. We had to visit him [00:28:00] a few days later in a facility that wasn't very nice. And we can give other families that time that we never had.

Maggie Dent: [00:28:06] That was one of the most common concerns when I was first working in the funeral industry, was how quickly we took those babies off people, and. I remember, um, a beautiful, really good friends of ours. Their daughter lost her's at full term, and they wanted to bring him home and bury him on the farm. And, um, when they were going to, they spent as much time as they did in the hospital. But when they came back to the farm, I said. I just want you to say, are you ready? And if you're not. So they took him back in for another couple of hours, and that when they're ready, then to surrender their precious baby to the funeral farewell. That was a really big moment of ... It doesn't make it any easier in terms, it doesn't make your pain any less, but it is honoring the fact that it's difficult to give up something you've created. So thanks for that.

Maggie Dent: [00:29:08] So do you reckon, because you've actually faced one of the worst fears that parents can face, has it changed your perspective as a dad?

Brad Kearns: [00:29:18] Ye? Yes. Not at the time, but I certainly, I appreciate mortality a lot more than I think I did when we were younger, and for me, it's a case of when you're thinking about that stuff and saying, you get one shot, you're on this earth once you get that childhood with your kids once, and you can look around at the situation you're in and you can whinge and you say, this, this isn't for me, it's not working. Or you can just take the tools that you've got and you can take the life that you have, irrespective of money and family and friends and all the bullshit. And I think for me, I think about that a lot more now and I go, well, it's Sunday. How [00:30:00] do I make today count? You know, I might get a couple of hundred of these while they're kids. How do we make today count? And and if that's spending \$3 on a bag of hot chips and going down the park, then that's what it is. Yeah. Um, I think it's changed me in that way. I think about that stuff a lot more than I thought I would have.

Maggie Dent: [00:30:20] Yeah, I had an experience where I almost hemorrhaged to death when I had three little boys, and I was on the cusp, literally going down the golden tunnel. And afterwards everything changed for me as a mother because I nearly wasn't able to do it, and that I think it was a really wonderful gift. And, I mean, I was a bit crazy mad beforehand, but I just went to a new level.

Brad Kearns: [00:30:43] You.

Maggie Dent: [00:30:44] Yeah. Are that hard to believe, I know.

Brad Kearns: [00:30:47] Oh, shit. No way.

Maggie Dent: [00:30:49] I also was very competitive at basketball, and I remember playing basketball after that going, it's actually okay not to win. Like, I was such a fiercely competitive human being. That's my bloke side coming out partly. And I started to play for joy. Man, that was a big one.

Maggie Dent: [00:30:49] What challenges are you facing right now that sometimes may mean, what do I do now?

Brad Kearns: [00:31:19] To be honest? I feel like we're in the best place we've ever been in. You know, like, I know I, I speak from a place of privilege when I say this, but time like, for me, time is the challenge. You get a certain amount of time and you get a certain amount of money, and normally you have to trade one for the other and there's no right decision, you know, because if you want your family to have everything, then you've got to work. But the more you work, the less time you have to enjoy it.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:47] It's one of the biggest dilemmas for dads.

Brad Kearns: [00:31:49] It's yeah, yeah it's impossible. So for me, that's my challenge.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:52] So how are you fixing it?

Brad Kearns: [00:31:54] To be honest, I've made career decisions that give me more time, you [00:32:00] know, because if I was working for myself, I work like work. I go to sleep and I work, and it's not because I want to or I want to take away from my family, but that's just who I am as a person. So I've, I work in a senior leadership role and I absolutely love what I do, but. I do this kind of work and not entrepreneurial work. For that reason, I have that outlet within my job. But the reason I don't do it for myself is because I have a family.

Maggie Dent: [00:32:27] Yeah, yeah. And so there's this common dilemma that I know a lot of dads who are highly pragmatic struggle with is quality time. How do I find enough of that? And when I've given dads the ideas of micro connections, which are the little bits that we can keep dropping into our kids little hearts and souls, they suddenly go, oh man, I can do more of that. And that makes me not feel so bad that I'm not there all weekend or after school or so. Micro's they're the eye wink more, and I laugh more, and I ruffle their hair and I punch their arm or I, I, I read them that extra story some nights when I'm there. So have you got some micro connections you do with your kids?

Brad Kearns: [00:33:11] Yeah, I, I think for me it's not something I do consciously, but if I'm there with them, there's that. It's that physical act of as a parent, this is so important, the physical act of because you're going to look at your phone, we're all way too attached to them. You physically put it down and you throw it.

Maggie Dent: [00:33:30] Away, hide it.

Brad Kearns: [00:33:31] And I think when you do that it says something to you. And it also says something to them. And then you say, get the witches hats, let's play soccer. I think for me it's start there because you can you can have a go of documenting all of the things that you're going to do.

Brad Kearns: [00:33:46] But the reason most of us don't have a connection with our kids when we're at home is because we're looking outside of our house for entertainment.

Maggie Dent: [00:33:54] Yeah. That's it. I, I just want to throw one idea, and I don't know if you've ever heard me talk about this [00:34:00] one, but I've noticed that sometimes, particularly when you're a parent of a boy, that's one of those rooster kind of ones that's always getting busted because he's just pushing every boundary. Right. You might have been a little bit like that. Yeah. So when they come home, they don't they don't feel super loved because the school's rung and you know, everything's a bit crap. And they've been given some consequences, which means they don't feel so good either. So I talk about the surprise bedroom attack. So what happens with that is it's after the lights have gone out. Just 5 or 10 minutes is you race in in the dark and you leap on top of them and you tickle the heck out of them, or blow raspberries in their ears. And you just. Absolutely. And they work. You work them over. And then as you walk out, if it's a dad possibly dropping a fart because what's happened is that kid's still busted, but that kid's just had a big dose of significant, you know, positive neurochemicals from a parent.

Maggie Dent: [00:34:50] And that means they're going to sleep a bit better, even though they're still going to be in trouble the next day. But what's really funny is, um, you know, because it's been nearly 20 years that I was suggesting this for, I've had the dads who have done, like, triple flips, you know, a bit too spectacular and plowed through the, the wall. And I've had another one dislocated his shoulder. Um, so I had to just say just it's a small fall on top. It's not the you know, we know. That's it. So I just noticed that, um, it shifts something. So sometimes it's we don't have to have a big, serious conversation because we've been doing it. We just have to connect in some

way that. Yeah, that means, yeah, we've got your back. Even though you're a bit of a pain in the arse at the moment. Has there been a significant moment you've gone? Ah, bugger. I could have done that better.

Brad Kearns: [00:35:39] Oh, absolutely.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:40] Just give us one.

Brad Kearns: [00:35:41] Oh, probably a couple of months ago. We're in our new house. You know, we put a lot of time, money and effort into buying it, I guess. So we're really protective of some some of the things around it, like the carpet downstairs for example.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:55] Don't tell me you got a white one!

Brad Kearns: [00:35:57] No no no no it's not white carpet thankfully. [00:36:00] But yeah. Like uh, probably a couple of months ago, one of the boys came in and it was Finn and he was talking to me about something and. It just caught me off guard. But I was that I seen that he had his shoes on, on the carpet, and I couldn't even hear the words coming out of his mouth because I was. Yeah, I don't even know how, because it was early in the morning, but I obviously I was at my I was at my wit's end and I let him have it and it broke him, like, legitimately broke him because I'd ignored what he said. I'd gone off at him about the carpet, and then Sarah had to jump in and I had to go for a drive like I had to leave. So yeah, that's an example of where. So I've absolutely not dealt with something the right way.

Maggie Dent: [00:36:42] You do realize that was triggered from your own childhood? That's actually what that was something happened very similar that just went boom. And we lose our concept for that rational place. It's just heartbreaking.

Brad Kearns: [00:36:54] And normally I'm okay. Normally I'm pretty softly spoken, and I was.

Maggie Dent: [00:36:57] There ever a time you walked dirty feet over something and got yelled at. You remember?

Brad Kearns: [00:37:01] Oh, I, I had a childhood where I got more than yelled at, but but yeah, I don't doubt that's where it's from.

Maggie Dent: [00:37:08] So when we get triggered, this is, this is a really big thing. And I, you know, it's the power of the pause. If you can feel it happening in your body and you can feel that's when we go, oh, just out of here, just move. Because what we know is when the amygdala gets fired up in boys and men, the next part of the body is usually it is the body. So sometimes we will. Push, shove, hit, kick. Or we could walk away. Literally walk away and just hang on out. Kind of. It's a break point, but it's the pause point. And it's not easy to do because that came really, really automatically. And I think the other part to it is that we need to let ourselves off the hook as well, because there's all these other things, and what we can do is get in a cycle of just focusing on what I'm doing wrong. You know, and that's a boy thing. How often do boys who get busted a lot, you [00:38:00] know, mum comes in and she's a bit grumpy and she puts her shopping down and you go, what have I done wrong now? Yeah. You know that that. Yeah. Right. And then that becomes a defensive kind of unconscious thing that can happen as well.

Brad Kearns: [00:38:11] So the other thing that I think is, it's tough when you experience that is it's not just about identifying that I've done something wrong. Any rational person knows shit. I've just done the wrong thing. Mhm. Um, but then especially if your partner checks you on it, which rightfully so, I think it's.

Maggie Dent: [00:38:31] Not easy but it's still absolutely okay.

Brad Kearns: [00:38:33] Yeah. Yeah. And so there's a couple of things. One part is sometimes you need space to walk away and. Not that you would ever say, hey, don't follow that person, but don't follow that person. Sometimes you've got to give that person time to just give them space to walk away. But then when they come back, I think the hardest thing for me is as as I was driving. I don't want to go home. There's a level of shame in that as well, that you go, I don't want to face that music. That's not. That's not who I am. It's not who I want to be. That's. That's not me. So you come back and you do it, and you apologise. Because that's the important thing, right? Like you've got to apologise to kids.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:13] Let's touch on that there. Because that's a really biggie for guys. The rupture and then the repair. Yeah. So has that got easier for you to repair after a rupture than possibly when you were younger.

Brad Kearns: [00:39:26] Yeah absolutely. Yeah. And that that takes years. You know, like Sarah always says to me, Brad, I want to get you in front of a counselor. And I've always said, no, I probably I definitely need one. But you're like, there's nothing wrong with me. But then, you know, absolutely. That's not a rational reaction to someone wearing clogs on the carpet. So there is something wrong with me. There's absolutely something wrong with me. But I'm smarter than that. I'm more emotionally intelligent than that. I have better values than that. I can do better. I don't need someone to tell me that. So there's that. There's that shame [00:40:00] aspect as well where I'm like, no, I don't need anyone to tell me I'm going to do better. So I don't know what the right answer is. But, you know, you've sort of just got to recognize and. And apologize.

Maggie Dent: [00:40:11] One of the big things that you know, which is why I've been such a loud voice in this space where we have to stop hitting, hurting, and shaming little boys for making mistakes that are often biologically driven is that their self-worth is something they give themselves from when they do good. So when they don't do good. And that's not just competition. That's how high up the tree I went. Or then we really attack ourselves. Yeah. You know, guys attack themselves and then anger is the big one, right. Because. What they probably want to do is just curl up in a hole and just sob like a normal human. But that's not conditioned in them to be that way. So the anger comes out first, and that's that's not easy. But. You know, I agree with Sarah. I think a really good therapist would help get rid of some of that anger, but I'm moving on. Now's your fess up fabulous time. I want you to imagine you're stepping in with a swagger thinking, man, I nailed that just then. I got that so good. What is it? What's that moment?

Brad Kearns: [00:41:15] I try not to judge things day by day. Like I try and play the long game. For me, the win is, let's say, something that I got told the other day. Another kid in a public place being a little bit of a bastard, you know, that's what happens. That's what kids do, carrying on swearing. And my boys say we don't speak like that. And when the other kid said, well, I'm allowed to talk like that because my dad does, my kids said, well, I don't talk like that, and my dad doesn't. As little as that is for me. For me

hearing that, hearing Sarah play that back to me, I'm like, well, that's good because we don't talk like that. You know, we don't treat other people like that. So that's a win.

Maggie Dent: [00:41:56] It's a really, really big win. Yeah. And it [00:42:00] goes right back to your values. Yeah. All right. So what is the one thing, Brad, that you want your boys to learn from you?

Brad Kearns: [00:42:14] Just effort like, doesn't matter what you do. Like Sarah says all the time that I definitely have ADHD and that I master everything I do. And she teases me about it to no end. But, um, I think the one thing I would want them to take away is that if you're going to do something, try your best and don't be scared of failure like most people are so scared of failing at something that they won't enter 100 meter sprint race, that they won't get in the pool at school. And it's all those things for me, that it's that confidence to give things a go, that that'll set your social life up. It'll help you identify what you're good at and more importantly, it'll put you out of your comfort zone. Because if if you never put out of your comfort zone, you're you'll never achieve anything. Yeah. You know, you'll never put yourself out there for the rest of your life. So I think for me it's it's I try hard at everything I do. So like, let's say we do football. Finn plays football. For me, the effort is, well, I'm going to coach because I want you to see that I'm out on the field too. Yeah. And we'll try our best.

Maggie Dent: [00:43:19] Not shouting from the side.

Brad Kearns: [00:43:20] Not shouting from the sideline. I'll shout from the field because then I'm closer. But but it's that effort I think I want them to take that away and go, well, it doesn't matter how good I am at anything. I'm not the biggest, I'm not the strongest. I don't need to be.

Maggie Dent: [00:43:32] If you could go back in time to the pre 22 year old first time dad. Yeah. What advice would you give to Brad then before he became a dad.

Brad Kearns: [00:43:44] I'd probably tell him to work more on relationships and find those people that you know, generally when you're in your early 20s, there's still people that you've got to drop. That's just how life works. But I would probably tell him to put [00:44:00] more effort into finding the right people then and dropping the right people

then, you know, because you can change a person's environment, you can change, um, you know, how you interact with them. You can change all of those things, but you're not going to change their values very easily. So if you're hanging around people that they don't fit where you want to be, change your circle. I'm only now finding those people that have similar family orientated values to me.

Maggie Dent: [00:44:29] So is there a part of you that could say to that, Brad, you know, mate, you're going to be a good enough dad?

Brad Kearns: [00:44:35] Yeah, I think I think he'd be happy, like I was pretty, was pretty lineal in my thinking, and I was conservative, and I also didn't know how big the world was like. To be honest, at 22, I thought success was being a sergeant of police on \$100,000 a year and and maybe having a mortgage, and if I could afford one, a caravan one day, you know what I mean? Like, I that was my legitimately what I thought success was. And so so I think that changes. I probably would have also said, hey, broaden your horizons a bit buddy. Like have a look at the world. Don't be so defined by what maybe your career advisor in school told you you could achieve based on your grades, because that's bullshit. Just try really hard and find the right people and do whatever interests you.

Maggie Dent: [00:45:21] So good. Brad. Thank you. Thanks for your time today.

Brad Kearns: [00:45:25] That's alright. Thanks for having me.

Maggie Dent: [00:45:28] Brad Kearns, you'll find him on Instagram as DadMum official.

Maggie Dent: [00:45:34] Brad has so many insights to share. So many good ones. So here are three that you can add to your good enough dad checklist. Number one, for some dads, being a good enough dad doesn't come naturally. However, you can learn and improve and grow to [00:46:00] become that good enough dad over time. Number two. Put down the phone. There is no question that creating connection with your kids is important. Whether you've got one minute, five minutes, half an hour. Put the phone down. It really matters when your kids know you're fully present. And number three, we'll all have moments. We muck up badly. So if you've had one of those muck up

moments, you know the big ones. Remember, after a rupture, we come back and repair. Yeah, it's not easy, but it's incredibly important. Repair the rupture.

Maggie Dent: [00:46:46] I'm Maggie Dent, and this is the good enough, dad. Follow us on the listener app or wherever you get your podcasts.