

GED_S01E07_The_Good_Enough_Dad_David

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Anonymous Female Voice: [00:00:02] A LiSTNR 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 the 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: [00:00:36] No dad wants to be a lousy dad. Aiming to be a good dad is great. But you know what? Being a good enough dad is so much more important. I'm Maggie Dent, parenting educator and 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. My Good Enough dad, today is David Campbell.

David Campbell: [00:01:10] We're happy. Little Vegemites as bright as bright can be. We all enjoy our Vegemite for breakfast, lunch and tea.

Maggie Dent: [00:01:25] Now, you may know David best as the co-host of Today Extra on Channel nine, but I couldn't resist playing that little bit of gold because David is also an incredible musical performer who has starred in musicals and cabarets, and crooning is something that appears to be a family pastime. If you peruse David's social videos, you'll see him singing duets with his wife, Lisa Hewitt, or maybe even a family medley of Silent Night with his three children, Leo, 12, and twins Billy and Betty, aged eight. David, welcome to The Good Enough Dad.

David Campbell: [00:01:58] Now, I don't know why [laughter] [00:02:00] it's a thrill to be here, Maggie, but I don't know why you chose Happy Little Vegemite of the dozens of albums I've done. But that was where you, that was where you went. And I have to

correct you. My son is now 13. If that's not on the record. We are. You and I are just. We will never leave this room alive.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:17] I love it. So how does breakfast roll on a normal morning?

David Campbell: [00:02:22] It's quite loud. For some reason we've got wonderful neighbours. And I turned to Lisa the other day and I said, why are they so nice next door? They've got kids the same age as us and we're so loud. We're like the loudest family on the street, because you're just, it must be genetic. But they're just really loud.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:41] You grew up until the age of ten thinking your grandma was your mother and your mum was your sister. So do you remember what life was like before that kind of revelation?

David Campbell: [00:02:50] Oh, yeah, very much so. My grandmother was a war baby. She raised four kids in, you know, sort of really below the poverty line in London and Tottenham. They were a Tottenham family. They came out as part of the £10 Pom program. My dad came out through Glasgow and a lot of that's in his book. But also he talks about my mother in his book because they were good friends. They were high school mates. They weren't even sweethearts. But, you know, he was a roustabout. You know, he was rock and rolling at the age of 15, 16. And so I was conceived like as just best mates, rolling around at like 16 one night. And I think both families wanted to adopt me out, thinking that would be the right thing to do. And my maternal grandmother adopted me in, but she adopted me because she was adopted herself. So she adopted me as her her child. So she'd already had, her last child would have been like 13, 14 years older than me. So she'd already gone through the whole thing, and she was doing it all again.

David Campbell: [00:03:50] And she did it basically on a widow's pension. So she was quite, we were quite strict growing up before my dad sort of threw chaos at the world in a good way, [00:04:00] but she was very much ... She'd been through four kids and she wasn't messing about. But, you know, there is also a certain sense of tough love. But love. But also that became harder to deal with as I became a teenager. I think that she just couldn't be bothered going through a fifth teenager as a grandparent, and the struggle of then holding that lie down of like, you're my son, once it all came out,

became a really traumatic time. So it was a very, a very difficult time post that up to then it was it was pretty, it was pretty normal. Like I would read comic books. I, you know, watched as much, you know, Spike Milligan and The Goodies as I could. And, you know, I had early to bed. I was a very emotional child, though, I remember that. I did feel conscious that the person raising me was older than my friends parents.

Maggie Dent: [00:04:54] So your siblings were "siblings", in inverted commas, were older?

David Campbell: [00:04:57] Yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:04:57] So did you hang out with the kids in the street? Did you have neighbourhood stuff that you remember or not?

David Campbell: [00:05:02] There were a couple of mates I hung out with. I was very nerdy and I changed schools in primary school quite early on. So I lost a lot of friends and had to start all over again. And you know, it was really rough in the 80s and 70s, growing up in Adelaide, it was like a lot of, like I remember one of the things that stands out was like, kids like you're in a gang, whether you had a Holden jacket or a Ford jacket. And this shows you how unsporty I am, Maggie, is that I decided these are the days oof Brockie and stuff like that. So I got an Allan Moffat Mazda jacket, and I was the only kid in my school has, like, I'll start my own gang. This did not catch on. This was pooh poohed on by the bullies of my school. So I didn't wear that jacket very often. But you know, there were some nerds and I that sort of hung out and, you know, you sort of. It takes a while to find your tribe sometimes.

Maggie Dent: [00:05:49] Yeah. So were there any father figures floating around anywhere, any teachers or any anybody else? No. So you just completely raised by

David Campbell: [00:05:58] It was a matriarchy.

Maggie Dent: [00:05:59] Yeah. Great. [00:06:00] And that's not all bad. Let's just.

David Campbell: [00:06:03] No, no. I'm listening. Look, if we look at society, it'd be a nice chance to try it.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:08] You also found out this is that big moment. That. Yeah. The lead singer of Cold Chisel, Jimmy Barnes, was your dad. Can you remember when that landed? Yeah, I bet, I bet you can remember it.

David Campbell: [00:06:19] I've been, it's actually 40 years ago, the week that we're recording now.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:23] Wow.

David Campbell: [00:06:23] Because my dad was doing the Last Stand concerts around Australia for Cold Chisel, and they've just celebrated the 40th anniversary of that. And he was doing the Sydney shows but had had a ruptured or was bleeding from the throat. I mean, obviously he's been bleeding from the throat his whole career, but no, he had actually done some damage during these shows. And so I met him during a week break. They had to reschedule shows, obviously, and I came up and met him because Jane was like, had married him and in no uncertain terms found out about me and went, why don't we have this child in our life? And so she was very instrumental. She's a good egg. She's very instrumental in bringing me into the family. And my sister Mahalia was born then, she was like 12, 15 months old. And so I came up with my grandmother just to sort of, I think, still just being like friends of the family. I think she wanted the lay of the land to make sure that this wasn't going to be like a Sex Pistol sort of scenario.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:21] Yeah.

David Campbell: [00:07:21] And of course, she saw that there was a house, there was a farm, there was a family. This is going to be fine. So I found out when I got back from Adelaide from that trip about 40 years ago.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:30] So wow.

David Campbell: [00:07:30] Wild. But see, the thing was and the hard thing to sort of the challenge that I've had as a parent, is finding out that my mother was actually my sister and that my grandmother was not my mother.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:43] Two big enormous things.

David Campbell: [00:07:44] Yeah, the Jimmy Barnes thing affected me later in life, career wise, you know, and through his addictions and learning about him. But the emotional, foundational stuff that I still sort of have to sort of combat on a weekly basis, depending on when I speak to [00:08:00] my mother, is what I sort of, you know, sort of reckoned with.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:03] Absolutely. It's huge.

David Campbell: [00:08:05] Yeah, it is really big. And it's not uncommon. You know, there's a terrific podcast talking about like a lot of kids from that time, which was done by an amazing Australian. And it's it talks about like kids that were just born and taken away or born at that time. So it's not uncommon. And I'm lucky that I was kept in the family.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:22] Yeah.

David Campbell: [00:08:23] But it does come with issues.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:24] Oh yeah. I mean we've all got them, but that one's a particularly big one. So can you remember how it was being a tween and teen boy? You know, now that you're Jimmy Barnes's son, how was that?

David Campbell: [00:08:35] It was a struggle. I guess the term for nowadays, people call it code switching. You know, so I would be back in Adelaide at like this very much working class, you know, lower middle class high school, not really wanting to tell my friends, but telling some friends at school. And so it would start to seep out bit by bit that my dad was coming to town or but not really telling a lot of people. And so I was struggling with that sort of fear and anonymity and not really having much at our home. You know, we were you know, we did well week for week. But, you know, it was a struggle that I didn't have to know about until much later on. But I realised now what a struggle it is. And then coming to my dad's place and it'd be like, you're flying to Thailand, you're doing this, you're doing that. So then I'd have all this whirlwind school

holiday stuff maybe once or twice a year, and then I'd go back to Adelaide with nothing. And because they were touring and because there's no mobile phones, I may not hear from them for a couple of months. And so that was a real push me pull you thing about wanting a parent that wasn't there, having a parental figure that was there, that wasn't my parent, and then my mother, who struggled to have an identity in the middle of all that. So I was really combating all these three things. No therapy. It's the 80s and not really knowing what that means and how to process that.

David Campbell: [00:09:55] So that's something that as I had my own children, [00:10:00] was very mindful of what boundaries were going to be and what was going to be in place and what was going to be labeled for these kids and what they could rely on.

Maggie Dent: [00:10:09] So I've worked a lot with teen boys. And when something big like exactly what you've kind of got this sort of conflict in your life between those two worlds and the frustration of it, and no one really making sense of it for you. Often that meant they would bring those emotions out and act out in ways that probably wouldn't. Wouldn't necessarily be bringing a smile to people's faces. Did you act out or shut it all in?

David Campbell: [00:10:38] I was a people pleaser, so I was very needy. I think that was prior to finding out about my family. I just always was.

Maggie Dent: [00:10:46] You do realise it's mainly conditioned from females, so you might have got it from

David Campbell: [00:10:50] Right, well, also my my grandmother, you know, bless her heart, she tried her best, but she would be very withholding with emotion. So if you were in trouble, the tap was turned off and she got very cold. And that was because of how she was brought up. And there was a lot of details that not for me to describe about her marriages and stuff, but that's that was her trauma. So, you know, and I know this now, but that's still you can't explain that to a ten year old child.

Maggie Dent: [00:11:13] Or a 14 year old boy.

David Campbell: [00:11:14] 14 year old boy. As I grew older with that, and as I started to recede and sort of go inward, I found myself really struggling at school. Probably my undiagnosed ADHD was kicking in by that stage. My people pleasing was kicking in at that stage. Therefore, I was performing a lot more in class. I was getting in trouble, but also trying to charm teachers, trying to be the popular kid, trying to be the class clown. So grades went out the window. But luckily for me, I had a couple of smart, incredibly astute, and patient, God they were patient teachers with me who were like, okay, you're not studying a music instrument, but you can come and do the choir. Just come hang with musicians. And, you know, an English teacher who was very much like, just just [00:12:00] do monologues and keep reading stuff. And then a drama teacher was like, come and do school plays and musicals. And this is a public high school in Adelaide that was known for its agricultural background. So it was great that those three teachers sort of triangulated me at certain times because I think it could have been a lot worse without those teachers.

Maggie Dent: [00:12:20] The tethered you.

David Campbell: [00:12:21] Yeah. And I had a really good core group of friends who I still talk to now, who were the same.

Maggie Dent: [00:12:26] We call those lighthouse figures that we've got them that are outside the family, that just give us a sense of hope or, you know, that we're not all bad.

David Campbell: [00:12:34] Because my family was unreliable and, or I thought they were unreliable.

Maggie Dent: [00:12:39] I'm so glad. As a former teacher, that was one of my, I like to be the the lighthouse figure for some of the ratbag boys.

David Campbell: [00:12:44] They really do love them. Ratbag boys love a good teacher.

Maggie Dent: [00:12:47] I know.

David Campbell: [00:12:48] It's really important. It's an important relationship because the Ratbag boys are looking for a connection to somebody to be like, am I making you happy?

Maggie Dent: [00:12:56] Yeah, do I matter?

David Campbell: [00:12:57] Do I matter? Do you see me? Do you value me?

Maggie Dent: [00:12:59] Absolutely. And I love the ones that crack jokes and entertain. The class clown guys god it was awful if you didn't.

David Campbell: [00:13:04] You're welcome. Can I say you're welcome? On behalf of me and my people.

Maggie Dent: [00:13:08] It was really dull without a class clown, you know, even though they'd say things like, oh, someone's got a stiffy, miss, or someone's farted. Oh, love it.

David Campbell: [00:13:16] Did they?

Maggie Dent: [00:13:18] Just to lighten the tone of an English lesson when you're doing ballads so good.

Maggie Dent: [00:13:18] Jimmy was pretty young when you discovered that he was your dad. He was in his late 20s. So how did how did kind of the father figure that's a rocker, how did that how did he kind of connect with you as a father figure?

David Campbell: [00:13:39] I think he struggled. And I think that's okay that he struggled. You know, I look back at it now and the and how close we are now knowing that I have more forgiveness because he tried. He did he tried really hard. And I think that it was an impossible task for a man in his early 30s to have a teenage child just stop at his doorstep.

Maggie Dent: [00:13:59] And [00:14:00] a big career.

David Campbell: [00:14:00] And a big career. I mean, we're talking the heights, you know, and as most nepo babies will tell you, that's an impossible thing to sort of, you know, get attention from, because that is just being pushed out all the time. And the demands of that, as I know now, are so super intense and super high. And, you know, we'll never see the likes of him and Farnham and that again. So we'll never know that sort of intensity again. And it really was, you know, when I was coming from the quietest of suburban backgrounds and then just being thrown into the maelstrom and then being like, why doesn't this kid behave? What's wrong with his skin? You know, why is he behaving like this? Why is he moody? And then I would, you know, I'd have some emotional breakdown and I'd be like, okay, time to go home. And I'd be home like, they've rejected me. That's not exactly what happened at all. But they were just doing their best because they had to get on with like multiple children that they were having that needed them, that were, you know, I was only at times I used to think that times I felt like a hassle, but really it was like it was just like they I think they just were like, let's keep inviting him.

David Campbell: [00:15:08] It's going to be fine. He'll get through this. I think Jane was very sensible about just keep inviting him. Don't, let's not just reject him and not, you know, let's let him go, but just keep dragging him back in. Keep the door open. Keep getting him back over here. And, I mean, I have such strong memories of those times that are just wonderful, you know? And I remember I was saying to Lisa, the other day, I remember one time, you know, how teenage boys get pent up.

Maggie Dent: [00:15:31] Oh, yeah.

David Campbell: [00:15:32] Sitting on my dad's bed in a hotel somewhere in South East Asia. Might have been Hong Kong, or it might have been Thailand. And just not knowing where I was and not, and just sobbing, sobbing with huge emotional tears, not knowing why. And I remember this moment just the other day and I was like, what the hell was I crying over? But I needed to just get it out in front of them, like not performing it, but just letting them know that, [00:16:00] you know, I was there and I had these feelings and I couldn't control it. And I can only imagine that these when I left, I went to bed they're like, this is a nightmare. What about boarding school? How about we get this kid out of here? They never said that.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:14] Look how incredibly healthy that is that we now know because teenage boys are still being conditioned to shut it down. Be stoic. You are actually safe enough to sob your heart out in front of these two people who every now and then where they were not.

David Campbell: [00:16:30] I felt trust and I felt safety for them to be able to do that. So obviously something was unlocking that was deep.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:35] So even though he didn't get it all right, you knew he was absolutely trying.

David Campbell: [00:16:39] Yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:40] And he must have created a sense of safety with that. Those tears wouldn't have come out, it would have gone into some anger or rage or something instead, which so many boys today still end up being the only pathway to feeling sad or frightened.

David Campbell: [00:16:52] Oh you made me feel much better about that. I felt really sorry for them.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:56] No, No, it was a gift.

David Campbell: [00:16:57] It was a gift. You're right. They should thank me.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:59] I keep saying that parents are really hard to convince, though. When your kid is sobbing away or yelling at you, it's actually a gift because you're safe enough.

David Campbell: [00:17:05] That's true.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:06] Especially dads. So, so often our dads feel really uncomfortable when the kids cry or get upset because they were told to shut that down and keep it close. So let's hope that's the way we're moving, hey.

David Campbell: [00:17:20] I hope so.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:21] You have become really close with Jimmy.

David Campbell: [00:17:23] Yeah, yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:23] And those bonds, even though we're in amongst the chaos and the fact that you kept coming back, when did you really feel like, oh, me and my dad. We've got this.

David Campbell: [00:17:33] Oh. Maybe when I was in New York was the first time I felt that. And through no fault of their own.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:44] So how old would you have been?

David Campbell: [00:17:44] What am I, 25, 26? 27?

Maggie Dent: [00:17:48] You also now got a prefrontal, so your brain's a bit better at seeing things more accurately.

David Campbell: [00:17:53] Yeah, you're right. And he he'd flown over to see me at a show there, which was quite a significant show for me. And I just felt like, [00:18:00] you know, he all of a sudden I felt like, hey, he notices what I'm doing. And he knows that this is not just like me faffing around being an actor or doing musical theatre, and he doesn't understand it. He was like he'd engaged and he'd participated. Like he got up on stage that night at this gig I did,

Maggie Dent: [00:18:13] Oh my God,

David Campbell: [00:18:14] In front of all these Americans. So, you know, he participated in my world. And that felt really amazing. So yeah, around that time we were connecting through music, believe it or not, that's it's the sort of vibrational connection that we had a lot of that, you know, I'm trying to now impart on my own kids.

Maggie Dent: [00:18:38] What is one thing you chose not to take forward from your dad? As as as your father?

David Campbell: [00:18:45] Well only because, only because it's different. And so this is not actually a judgment call at all on his parenting. This is actually circumstance. And it's actually a relief. Um. That my careers don't define my entire life. And he's just unfortunately not in that predicament.

David Campbell: [00:19:17] You know, you only you can only have a few legends in a lifetime. And he's one of them. It takes a village to make that go. And I felt like. Even though this is not really relevant. I felt like sometimes emotionally in my insecure teens that I was sacrificed to that, but I wasn't. It just wasn't any of my business. He was just a business. I'm so privileged to have the work I have because I can be with my kids. I pick them up after school or I'm there at breakfast time, and sometimes I have to go out of state and sometimes I'm doing a show and I'm doing that at the same time. And so there'd be months where it's like just a lot of work. But for the most part, I've got a lovely balance that these core years, [00:20:00] which you'll never get back, I've got. But as I say, he is the nation's Jimmy Barnes. He's not just my dad, and he is a wonderful grandfather. Yeah, you know, they will never know that, but they will have to know the words to Flame Trees.

Maggie Dent: [00:20:22] They will.

David Campbell: [00:20:23] And maybe some harmonies and maybe need to play it on an instrument because he always needs people in the band.

Maggie Dent: [00:20:31] I just think a lot of service to the country they did during Covid.

David Campbell: [00:20:35] Oh my God, it was amazing.

Maggie Dent: [00:20:36] Oh, I just there were times I'd just go and check out the latest.

David Campbell: [00:20:40] We did too. I know every night we'd be like, okay, it's up. Yeah. You know, and we were watching too. And so the kids would watch as well so they could see, they could see their grandparents connecting, laughing, singing,

singing, you know. And so with my kids, you know, my son is quite musical now. And as I said, you know, my kids are getting there too. But my older son is like quite musical. And sometimes he could be a bit like possessive over it because he knows it's his thing. I'm like, you don't understand. If you can sing with your family, not only is it the biggest privilege in the world and the greatest honour in the world, I said, you'll never feel closer to them. And you don't have to form a band and tour the world. You don't have to be the Osmonds, that dates us, maybe the Jonas's. Let's be fashionable. You don't have to be that. But you can always. Like I sing more with my dad and my sister Mahalia than I do most people in my life. And it's just we look at each other on stage and laugh and have these connections that no one knows. Like I'm singing with Mahalia this week. I sang with her two weeks ago, and I trust her to walk on stage at a heartbeat, look me in the eye and sing a love song duet with me and know how awkward this is, and know she's trying to crack me up and.

Maggie Dent: [00:21:49] Also nail it.

David Campbell: [00:21:50] And nail it. And I said to Leo, like, if you can have that, if you can, if you can grow that, if you can be the bandleader to those other two, you will always have each other [00:22:00] and you'll always have each other's backs, and you'll never harmonise better than you harmonise with the brother and sister. You will be in sync.

Maggie Dent: [00:22:08] Is there any particular part of Jimmy's parenting that that you definitely have wanted to choose to use with your kids as well?

David Campbell: [00:22:15] Yeah, more and more, I think about the sort of, you know, we talk about blue zones a lot and the importance of, you know, these places like Okinawa or Sardinia and what keeps people living to an older age where they're cognisant, where they're aware if they're lucky enough to have their full capabilities do it. And one of the big things that I've noticed that I've really have latched onto in the last six months or so, is this world of a community that is built with these kids, and I see a lot of like TikTok memes and things like that, where parents read out like, honey when we're frustrated with our kids, remember that, you know, in five years time they'll never call us and blah, blah, blah. And, and, you know, we should cry about this. And he's never done that. He's actually. And it's not in an unhealthy way, but it's probably

because of the Thai background of, you know, my stepmum Jane. It's that sort of like family's family and family stays in generational families live under the roof together, and that's really good and really healthy. Whereas we in a sort of more white British Americanized culture, like, know the kids have got to get out and they've got to get into the capitalist society of it all, but actually keeping them close, and they can go away and come back and go away and come back.

David Campbell: [00:23:26] But speaking to them every day and talking to them and, you know, allowing them the space to come into you and to and to be a part of your world and Sunday dinners are Sunday dinners, no matter where you are and how old you are. I actually think there's something to that, because my brothers and sisters, you know, they may have their own little things here and there that they can talk about, but they always come back and they they are really close. And we do holiday as a family. And I sometimes think, is this unusual or is this something that has actually been welcomed by Jimmy and Jane? You know, there's a certain [00:24:00] sense of privilege to it, to holiday together, but you don't always have to do it that way. But just to be around each other all the time and to be near each other is something that I would love my kids to have the trust and be able to do that still.

Maggie Dent: [00:24:11] I'm just singing my heart out here because. So I've got four sons and they're all daddies now, and Covid locked half of us out because two families were in WA and we were over here. And when we got back together in a caravan park in New South Wales, it was just what you're talking about. There is watching all of these cousins and their dads who are really incredibly proud uncles and aunties, and there's just something it just wouldn't have happened with random friends. And then as the kids went off to bed, out come all the stories, right? When I mucked up particularly they love taking the piss out of me and my worst cooking disasters and and there's this like as we walk off to bed, we have, i just feel you're filled with something that is incredibly special. And it's because it's the kin family stuff.

David Campbell: [00:25:03] It is and I think that, you know, immigrant families do this really well.

Maggie Dent: [00:25:06] Yes, absolutely.

David Campbell: [00:25:07] They do. They just do. You know, I've got a friend of mine whose whole family he's been a friend of mine for decades now. He's my musical director. His family's Sicilian. It's every week there at the at the parents place. The parents are gardening, the parents are making their own thing. All those things like, yeah, this is all the things we're now coming back to learning about now through Netflix or a book or whatever. But actually, they're just the tenements of like, how we've evolved as a species and what works best.

Maggie Dent: [00:25:29] And sometimes the happiest kids are in third world countries with nothing because they have that.

David Campbell: [00:25:35] Well, it's that not wanting anymore, you know, and teaching your kids to, you know, you can yearn for a better thing or, you know, be ambitious but don't want for any more things. Be happy with what you got. And that includes family.

Maggie Dent: [00:25:48] The most popular toy is a stick.

Maggie Dent: [00:25:48] David, you're dad to twins. I want you to give [00:26:00] us an idea of how was that experience in those early years for you and Lisa? And do you have any advice for any dads who suddenly get the double whammy, or even more like that's interesting.

David Campbell: [00:26:11] It is interesting. It's remarkable. Any parent of a multiple. And I used to think, God, this is so hard, this is so hard. And then you bump into somebody who's got triplets and I'm like, I take it all back. It's, you know, the first 18 months or so or 12 months, depending on how you manage it and how you're, I guess, how your tribe is, just come in and help you is is really essential. I remember there was a moment like 12 months into this where I turned around and I looked at my oldest son and I'm like, how long's this kid been watching TV before? Is it eight months straight? I think it might be. We might need to just get back on track here a little bit. But survival, it's survival, you know? And that's the thing it's and it's about I mean, I think I've learned so much about myself as a human through having twins, you know, about just being a parent. You know, I have had for most of my life, which I hadn't known, but I've been able to name in the last decade or so since becoming sober and stuff like that, like high

anxiety and trauma and, you know, probable misdiagnosis of something and this and that. And so the kids, you know, I used to be really like fiery and alert and hypersensitive and really, you know, victimised.

David Campbell: [00:27:29] Like, why is this always happening to me? God, this which I heard as a child as well from my family in Adelaide growing up, that when you're growing up with people who don't have a lot of money, but who live with a lot of trauma, they do have and they don't mean to, but they do have a victim personality. And it's very at the present, it's very much how they parent. It's very much what they teach you. And so having twins and learning how to let that go and to really like check yourself. And really we are just going [00:28:00] at it here. And my wife, being so well grounded and therapied and emotionally intelligent has allowed me to, she and she's never judged me on any of my stuff. She's really just like, it's going to be fine, you know? And that's allowed me to, my shoulders to drop and the calm to start. And so even then, the frenetic ness and like I said to you at the very beginning of this, we are the loudest family on the street. There's a beautiful joy in that chaos that actually probably really appeals to me and that sort of surrounded by family thing that's, you know, my kids are good. They don't really fight with each other too much, which really, you know, touchwood at the moment, really lucky.

David Campbell: [00:28:41] But they are very close. But they just do things all the time and they're just it's madness, you know, you have more. You get outnumbered as a parent. You're done. Like any parent out there, I'm like, if you have to keep it at two, if you're going to more than that, they're outnumbering you and the car gets bigger and you're done. It's a democracy and they outvote you.

Maggie Dent: [00:29:01] Who sits in that seat?

David Campbell: [00:29:02] Yeah, but it is really beautiful to have that chaos because when they're not around, when I'm in another state, because I'm having to do a gig, I get immediately lonely, like this strange Stockholm syndrome that I might. I'll take it myself for a walk around the city with a podcast on, because I just need company. And then I'm on the first flight back in the morning to get home because I just can't take it, even though I'm so tired when I get back and I probably need a nap. But if I lie on the couch

near any one of my kids, and even if a foot is touching my foot, I'll drop off because I'm home and they're here and they're safe. I just need to know they're around.

Maggie Dent: [00:29:42] So you've just been describing beautifully the power of attachment.

David Campbell: [00:29:46] In a healthy way or not?

Maggie Dent: [00:29:47] No, no. So our childhood kind of is how we start to shape who we are and everything. So when we're being parented by people who struggle with their own demons for whatever reasons and their capacity [00:30:00] to love fiercely and unconditionally is impacted, and often that means we don't feel safe with that person all the time. And that's what real attachment is. The research is so strong. The more securely attached we are, the healthier we end up, not only mentally and emotionally, but physically. So it's profound. You've just described that the fierce, unconditional love in your family, which is really strong attachment, which is why you have this noisy, chaotic house and anything can go on because you're all secure. But you can see why, for you, coming from your very unique and challenging background, that you have to work through this. Thank God you got a winner there.

David Campbell: [00:30:39] Yeah. When I say it's chaos, they're not rude kids like Lisa was saying last night, we're so lucky. They behave really well and they've got great manners and they listen. But they're also. My wife is a wonderful. Like. She moved here to Australia after meeting me, after us being together for three weeks. They've got a wonderful sense of gameness like, let's go for it. Should we go for it? Whereas I was always coming from a sense of fear and mine was always like on the back foot battling like, okay, I've got to punch my way out of every situation, get myself out of this, and everything's going to be a battle because I've come from a battlers time. Whereas like and so thankfully my kids have not, you know, and for me as a parenthood has been about my own and I don't want to drag it back to me. But it's about my own growth and learning how to parent the way ideally, I would like to, not the way Instagram tells me, but how I want to, by talking to experts like you, by interviewing people, by listening, by doing therapy, by getting rid of my stuff. So I want I think the responsibility for me as a dad is not just to like, raise good kids, but actually raise good humans. Yeah, because

they're not my responsibility after 18 years and they're going to vote. I want to make sure they vote the right way.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:48] So you do realise this whole journey is a big con by Mother Nature, is that we have children so we can become better humans. It is actually the plan.

David Campbell: [00:31:56] Yeah, right. Good.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:57] But we didn't know it was part of the plan.

David Campbell: [00:31:59] That's certainly what's [00:32:00] happening.

Maggie Dent: [00:32:00] And then we get challenged, don't we? Because our story that we have from our childhood might not fit the story that's happening at this moment. And I can get really angry because right now you should be more respectful to me. And yet it's just a story I tell myself. And that's the beauty of when we go and explore it with therapy and shine a light on stories that aren't true anymore, then we go, hang on, that's actually not their stuff. It's actually my stuff and we become a better human. It is amazing. I was the most impatient human on earth until I had children, and now I'm incredibly, incredibly patient.

David Campbell: [00:32:32] I find myself apologising to my kids a lot, not because I've behaved badly, but because I go, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said it that way, or I acted this way. Like, if I like, okay, guys, just go to your room or whatever, you know, I have to come back and go, sorry, guys, I've had a bad day. That's not on you. That's on me, you know? And I find myself just explaining my emotions to them and I'm like, I'll try and do that again.

Maggie Dent: [00:32:53] It's really healthy. It's called rupture repair. Your kids are going to learn to do exactly the same in their relationships down the track. Hang on, that wasn't said, no that's not the parent I want to be. Not the human I want to be. So I'm going to try and do that a little bit better next time. Excellent.

David Campbell: [00:33:07] Yeah. Great.

Maggie Dent: [00:33:09] So we all muck up and we all make mistakes. I even left one of mine at the pool. Fortunately, he was a state swimmer, so he didn't drown. But, you know, I did fail. And he reminds me often. So can you think of one of your memorable parenting fails which will make all the dads listening feel like. Yeah, okay. He's all right.

David Campbell: [00:33:26] Um, well, I was the first one to drop the child. Drop a child. So, you know, when you're that parent. And not from a big height, you know, any height, any height, you know? And I was changing Leo, he was a baby. We were coming back from Fiji. It was like a babymoon sort of thing. He was three months old and I just put him down to change his nappy. And Lisa was like in the lounge. She was relaxing like, this is good, this is good. I'll take him in. And I always change him. And I just turned to get a nappy and I just heard him, like, rustle, and as I turned around, he [00:34:00] was mid-flight, falling off this thing. And it wasn't a big height. It was like lower than lounge height, but it was like concrete. And so I sort of put my hand under his head and he sort of slapped my hand and that slapped the floor. And of course, like babies do, they just start screaming. And Lisa's drinking a champagne in the lounge. This is back when we used to drink and she was like, oh, somebody's having a bad time as a parent in there somewhere in this lounge, and it's not me. And she was like, I wonder what that is, and then she said, I came out sweating, white as a sheet, and the baby had stopped crying. Because baby, it was a fright. It was a fright. But the fright was for me. She's like, are you okay? I said, that was us, that was us. Don't look at me. That was us. That was really traumatic. I just dropped the baby. I dropped the baby. So it's those sort of things that I think are the big like epic fails. It's for me. I try and learn from my fails a lot. You know, if I ever.

Maggie Dent: [00:34:54] So you've never dropped another one?

David Campbell: [00:34:55] I've tried not to, but it's hard work.

Maggie Dent: [00:34:57] See it worked, didn't it?

David Campbell: [00:34:57] It's really good, you know. You really shove them into bjorns and you just keep them really tight. I think the hard thing for me is, is just learning about myself as a parent and forgiving myself as a parent and knowing that I'm enough

for them, you know, and not comparing myself to other dads. I really, because I didn't have a father figure growing up, I really I think I struggled for the first few years of being a parent of just going like, I've got to be more and I've got to do more and I've got to please them. And it's like, actually, no, you don't, you just don't. You just need to be there and be enough for them. And a friend of mine, who's one of my oldest friends and he lives in New York, he has two daughters. He's like, they just want to see you there. They want to look up from swimming and be like, oh, there he is.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:41] There's a face, there he is. Not looking at the phone.

David Campbell: [00:35:43] Not looking at the phone. You know, they want to see that. You're like, you pick them up and that you're engaged. They want to see that you wake them up in the morning. They want you to hold their hair back when they're vomiting. Those are the core memories they're going to have. As much as I want it to be Disneyland and they love Disneyland, it's probably going to be [00:36:00] that time that you were there for me.

Maggie Dent: [00:36:03] And David, do you have any other parenting failure moment that you might like to share with us?

David Campbell: [00:36:09] I think that when you are growing up around people who do not have good boundaries and do not have great boundaries with what we know, how you should behave around kids. Alcohol was always really prevalent in my childhood, and so I was witness to really poor behaviours from a young age. I was witness to domestic violence at a young age. You know, I was witness to a lot of things, and not that I was a victim of it, but I saw it in aunts and things like that. And it was always around. And it was never it never looking back and it never felt healthy, but it always felt normalised. And so I drank from a very young age. And, you know, when you start to become a part of a music industry or a TV industry, one of the things you do is that you get free booze and it is prevalent and it is everywhere, and it is fun until it's not. And when you do a gig and you go on tour with a band, you have free riders backstage where a venue will provide you with, here's all the booze in the world you want. Make a list of the booze and we'll get you that specific booze. The most iconic images of my dad is him holding up a bottle of vodka on a Cold Chisel tour. So, you

know, these images are burned, not into my own psyche, but also, I think a lot of Australian male men of my age.

David Campbell: [00:37:32] So as I was touring, it became more prevalent to me that I was drinking more to get more of a buzz because I was getting just better at it, and that would go from 1 or 2 nights a week to 3 or 4 nights a week. And then, you know, I got on TV and was doing the first year of doing the show. And, you know, I was having a lot of fun and, you know, it wasn't out of control. But then one night we were going on a holiday [00:38:00] that Leo would have been three and a half. We were going to Broome on a holiday. We'd saved up to go to Broome. I was going to be our first proper holiday as a family, and Lisa and I decided just to watch a movie and have a few drinks that night. And I didn't even drink that much. And I that's the thing that always struck me about this night. I don't know what it was comparatively to what I would usually drink. I had like 4 or 5 drinks maximum, and I woke up the next day and my body couldn't take it. And I knew it. That feeling when you know that you get the sweats and you're like, oh God, I'm going to go to the toilet right now and this is not going to be good. And Liz was like, are you going to make it to the plane? What's wrong? And I'm like, I don't know, I don't know.

David Campbell: [00:38:40] Um, and I was panicking and as we were trying to, we only had one flight. There's only one flight to Broome. Looks like we'll get to the flight. Get to the plane. I'll get to the plane. I'll get to the plane. We're getting to the plane. I'm in the car with the window down. I'm, like, driving out the taxi. I've got my head out the window. Just trying to. Just trying to calm this feeling down. And I heard Leo in the back saying. Dad's not well. And that was the moment that I thought. Breathe. Get through this. And then we'll, we'll, we'll deal with this emotion that this has triggered because it triggered something very visceral in me. Watching and witnessing older people in my life do this and knowing that they're not well. So we get to Broome. By that stage, I'd slept on the plane, woke up, felt better. We go to lunch. I looked at Lisa. I said, I'm out. I'm done. I'm done drinking. I said, I can't have a child that's part of my life knowing that I've been brought up with, on the record, alcoholism and addictions issues in one part of my family, and lots of alcohol and addiction issues on the other side. And then that causing so much trauma. I can't sit here as a human and say that that's what I should continue doing.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:55] As a father.

David Campbell: [00:39:56] As a father. I can't do this. I don't want to do this. [00:40:00] This can't be his memories of me is hung over. Or my best, his best memories, is party dad, that can't be it. That can't be it. So I stopped, and I was lucky because I wasn't an addict. Addict that I could just stop. And I realised saying that, that there's a privilege to the fact that there will be men and women out there, that there will be like, I can't do that. Please find the way to do that. Go to AA, go find someone, go find a sponsor. But luckily, the one thing my grandmother had was an incredible willpower that she could stop things when she wanted to. And I have that gene or that lesson in me so I could just go, right, I will cut this off like I was going to start off my own arm, and it really meant a lot to me. And I wear it as a badge of honor. I don't mean to rub anyone's face in it. Sometimes people get really excuse me, they get shitty with me about it like, oh, can't you even just have a champagne? It's like, no, bro, that's not how this works. I'm happier without it. And I've never been, and anyone who gets sober says to you, I've never felt better. Yeah, anyone who gets sober says to you, I've never felt happier. And sometimes it brings up stuff. And sometimes the stuff that you've been drinking away all of a sudden comes in and you're going to have to deal with it and go to therapy on it, or speak to somebody on it, however you deal with it. But for me, it's been wonderful.

Maggie Dent: [00:41:19] It's allowed you to be the dad you want to be.

David Campbell: [00:41:21] Well, it's just allowed a major thing to be out of my way so I don't have to deal with that, too. And then once you have twins, you do not want to have a hangover. You do not want a hanger. Have a hangover with twins. Doubly bad. They are a hangover.

Maggie Dent: [00:41:42] We all worry as parents for our kids, but if you could pin what your biggest fear is for your kids in today's world. What might that be?

David Campbell: [00:41:54] It's a lot. And I think parents today have to [00:42:00] deal with a lot because we're all consciously parenting, whether we know it or not. I worry about sextortion. I worry about porn. I worry about having a daughter and having something happen to her. I worry about my sons not behaving well with a woman and

me not doing my job in teaching them about feminism and what it means to have body autonomy and consent. I worry about whether I have told them I love them enough in case anything happens to me. I worry about the climate. I worry about the state of our politics. I worry about democracy. I worry about people who have been raised by people like I was, who didn't care about how you voted, and how important voting is, and how important voting for the right thing is. Not just voting for your back pocket, but for the person underneath you who doesn't have enough back pocket. That dragging people up with your vote is more important than your second or third mortgage. I am so conscious of their privilege. I'm so conscious of their legacy that's handed down from their grandfather through to me, and how they deal with being double Nepo baby. Nepo baby squares. So I am constantly. Spinning a lot of maybe too many plates in my head about things that might go wrong because of my triggers are spiraling and fatalistic because of my background, so I tend to go there a lot. And that's why I try to just try to keep it positive. That's why I'm very conscious of like, now I've got a teenage boy about like having to sit him down, his face when I have to sit him down like, hey, let's have a talk today. He goes, oh God, what is it going to be now? And I'm like, have you ever heard of sextortion, son? And he's like, no. I'm like, good, let's talk all about [00:44:00] it. I just did a segment on it on Today Extra. And he's like, God, what is happening? I'm like, look me in the eye.

Maggie Dent: [00:44:05] No, don't do the eye stuff. Remember?

David Campbell: [00:44:07] That's right.

Maggie Dent: [00:44:08] No, no side to side.

David Campbell: [00:44:09] Side to side in the car. No he's good. He'll sit down and talk to me.

Maggie Dent: [00:44:12] But the eyeball stuff, really? It's a female thing.

David Campbell: [00:44:14] No that's true. Yeah. So that's that's kind of. Those are. That's my first list. How's that.

Maggie Dent: [00:44:19] Now but look at your awareness. Because you're aware of those concerns. You're already addressing them. You and Lisa will be addressing them. You'll be having lots of conversations. One of my challenges is how parents want to avoid awkward conversations about exactly some of the things you've spoken about. Yeah, how we've had, you know, the access to porn for children is so easy, which unfortunately shapes the way they see the rest of the world. Yeah, and the figures for exactly what you're talking about. The sextortion figures are incredibly high.

Maggie Dent: [00:44:49] And it's 95% are our boys in that 12 to 15 age group because they're just they're not good at making good decisions. They're easily manipulated. But if you've not had a conversation, they are so much more easily manipulated. And it needs all of us to step up, not just, you know, dads will often go, go talk to your mother. No. Not now. We need both of you talking, and we need you to have the same conversation so that they can be aware.

David Campbell: [00:45:14] I got to say, you know, we've been lucky so far that my son doesn't have a phone. He has a computer or a laptop or whatever he has, and he can walk to school. He doesn't have to catch a bus. He catches the bus once a week for one of his sports things, and I'm like, you've got to watch and you've got headphones. You're fine. Um, so I've really, really been strict on that. And that is through talking to people like you. That is through talking to other experts on the shows like this. These phones, and I know from my own thing I've been addicted to the phone. We all went through the pandemic, we all doom scrolled. I was on that damn thing way too much. And it was really a big lesson for me. And also like, this is not good for young minds. And so, you know, I have kicked that can as hard as I can down the road. And I hope to do the same with the twins too. [00:46:00] But it really is so important to get in front of the screens and to be in front of them, like waving your hands, going, no, no, no, let's talk. And you know, I said to my son with a hard, ugly conversations, when we sit down with if my wife and I do the sex talk or the consent talk, or I did the sex talk and talk, I said to him from time and time again, I said to him, every couple of months I will drag you through teenage hood.

David Campbell: [00:46:22] I will drag you through. This is going to be so awkward, and I'm going to talk you through it, and you're going to be at times like, dad, please, I'm begging you to shut down and stop it. But I will keep holding on to you to get you

through this, because I just know how bad it's going to be. I've been there. Yeah, I know what it's like, I said, and we'll talk about all the good things and the bad things, and there'll be positives to some of this stuff. I don't think, you know, porn for boys necessarily is terrible if you explain it, you know. But I will drag you through this with me. I'm not going to be too prescriptive, but I'm going to be, I'm going to hold on to you to get you through it because I, I'm scared. I'm like most dads, I'm scared.

Maggie Dent: [00:46:58] So there's one thing in that if you hold too tight, then he will have to rebel against.

David Campbell: [00:47:03] Sure, that's fine.

Maggie Dent: [00:47:04] How about change the metaphor to I'm going to be the rails on the bridge for you? So you don't fall off the edge,

David Campbell: [00:47:09] Yeah, yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:47:11] Metaphorically drag you through. That's not bringing me the. I don't know there's any.

David Campbell: [00:47:15] Well, I think I said that just to sort of give it a sense of.

Maggie Dent: [00:47:17] Yes. I'm not letting go of my role in this.

David Campbell: [00:47:21] I think there's a sense of, I guess a masculinity I'm not very mask. So that's what of my masculinity sort of verbalising.

Maggie Dent: [00:47:29] No, no seriously, it's but I'm going to be with you all the time. I've always got your back. Yeah. And I think that's true. That's that's the message. You know, so many kids have told me in therapy is I don't want to call dad because he will really lose his shit. And I want them all to say, I know I can call my dad. And after he's lost his shit, he'll help me. That's what we want from you.

David Campbell: [00:47:51] Yeah, because dads are gonna lose their shit and they're allowed to. They're supposed to because you're going to do some dumb stuff.

Maggie Dent: [00:47:56] As as we've already figured out. Okay, so here's your big moment. [00:48:00] What do you reckon is your biggest parenting win that you can, look, I nailed that. You've done you've covered some of them. But is there one other thing that you've done particularly well?

David Campbell: [00:48:10] At the moment, I think of my son yesterday said something in front of a group of people who was disparaging at a karate tournament, my kids do karate and the twins were breaking boards. And he was like, I bet you those boards are just like, not even real wood. Walked away. He came back five minutes later to the group of people who he's talking to like, sorry guys, I was really hungry. I just had some pizza. Not true those are real wooden boards.

David Campbell: [00:48:37] Oh, man that's huge.

David Campbell: [00:48:39] And the fact that he is at 13, 13 still able to be self, like he'll come up, he'll be the first person to come to us after he's been moody. And I'll be like, go away and fix your face and tell me what you think about this. And he'll come back. He goes, sorry, I was a dick, dad. And I'm like, absolutely no problem. Yeah, you're going to be a dick. It's totally fine, you know? And I think at the moment, I mean, the twins are great because they're just in that eight year old, nine year old. It's all exciting. Yeah, but to have a boy who's there's hormones happening, there is height happening. But for him to be able to absolutely check his emotions and to come back and go, and all of my kids are very good at this, but they'll come and be like, I don't like, like my youngest son, sometimes you'll tell him off, he'll be like, I actually don't like the way you're talking to me like that. And I'd be like, granted, but I don't care. Yeah, right now, but thank you for thank you for saying that. I hear you feedback. Thank you. I will, I'll check that next time. But this we're going to just come back around now. I think you're very good debating at this, but we're just going to come back around now to this. But the fact that both of my boys are very good at talking about their emotions is something that I think my wife's very good at, but I've tried to, in my parenting style to like, feed into that, like apologising when I've needed to apologise or saying, this is why I'm going to do this now, or this is why I need you to do this. And sometimes it's about like, no, you're doing this now. [00:50:00] Sometimes they'll just be the straight like, no,

just do it sometimes. And then sometimes it's like, hey, can you just, I need you just to do this for me. And then sometimes I'm apologising for that.

Maggie Dent: [00:50:10] And that's all those three are completely valid. You know, I think it's sometimes we think I'm going to say that. No, that is it. We're not doing it. That's the end. Put it down. And people go, oh wait, won't that upset our attachment. No. I need you to know you are the parent. You've got to be tough sometimes. If all you're doing is that, then it might be problematic.

David Campbell: [00:50:29] I'm like, they will have, my kids are major debaters. If I'm too softly, softly with my parenting, it will take me days to leave the house just to be like, look, just get dressed, get off the toilet, put the book down. No screens right now. I've got to go. Over to your mother.

Maggie Dent: [00:50:48] I love it. All right, now I'm going to ask a big question.

David Campbell: [00:50:51] Go on then. These haven't been big because I felt like.

Maggie Dent: [00:50:53] I'm working up to the two biggest ones. So you ready, David?

David Campbell: [00:50:56] Yeah. I'm ready.

Maggie Dent: [00:50:57] Okay, so you're only allowed to choose one thing. What is the one thing that you want your kids to have learned from you as their dad?

David Campbell: [00:51:06] You can always change. Like you can grow.

Maggie Dent: [00:51:10] You're not stuck.

David Campbell: [00:51:11] You're not stuck. Life is amazing. Just grow with it. And that's the thing that I want them to know. When you were born, I was this way. You taught me all these things. Look at me. I've changed.

Maggie Dent: [00:51:24] Love it. And the final question. If you could wind back the clock to just before you had Leo, and you could give advice to David before he became

a dad. What is your number one piece of advice you would give to yourself before you became a dad?

David Campbell: [00:51:40] Take your wife to Europe. Don't be an idiot. Stop working so bloody hard. Go to Europe while everyone else is going to Europe. And just have a nice time without kids where it's cheap. You idiot! Because we've never been. And now we're like, there's five of us. We're not going. And look at Instagram. I'm like, don't care. We're not going.

Maggie Dent: [00:51:57] I like that, so. And other than that.

David Campbell: [00:52:00] Other than that I [00:52:00] would have said sober up. I probably would have said sober up much, much sooner. Because, you know, we've had, Lisa and I had a great time and we had many, most nights were really good drinking and but, you know, you do have bad nights. We just go, what did we fight over? And why is my tongue feel like this and why am I eating this hamburger? So I would have say sober up and and travel more without the kids. But also we were working. We traveled the country. I went to, you know, I took my wife who'd never been to this country before, from air all the way down to Shepperton to Lonnie. We went to, you know, you know, Rockhampton. We we saw this country. We've been to Alice Springs. We've been to Ayers Rock, you know, we've done it all. And so, you know, that was also good too, that we did tour this country without kids.

Maggie Dent: [00:52:43] I love it. David. Thank you.

David Campbell: [00:52:45] Is that it?

Maggie Dent: [00:52:46] Yep.

David Campbell: [00:52:46] How much do I charge for this therapy?

Maggie Dent: [00:52:52] I love it.

Maggie Dent: [00:52:53] David Campbell, co-host of Today Extra on Channel Nine. David has certainly had a very unique childhood, and yet he's taken from that difficult

journey some lessons that he's learned and he's shared some pretty profound wisdom. And let's add to The Good Enough dad checklist from that.

Maggie Dent: [00:53:22] Firstly, you can be the dad you want to be, regardless of your childhood or the complete absence of a dad, so you can watch dads that you respect. You can read books. You can, you know, listen to fantastic podcasts like this. And yes, you can do therapy and explore the stories that you keep telling yourself that are no longer true. Secondly, it was great to hear David being emotionally honest and how we know that being emotionally honest and showing all our emotions as parents, particularly as dads who were conditioned not to [00:54:00] show vulnerable feelings, how important it is for our kids and to be able to talk about feelings. And then thirdly, remember that prioritising family time with especially with extended family members, aunts and uncles and grandparents and things so that you can just hang out together, share stories together, play together, sing together. If you can, sing and just laugh together because those things really matter. I'm Maggie Dent and this is The Good Enough Dad. Follow us on the LiSTNR app or wherever you get your podcasts.