

# GED\_S01E15\_The\_Good\_Enough\_Dad\_Barry Du

## Bois\_240117\_MID25-23\_FINAL.mp3

**Speaker1:** [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:** [00:00:36] No one 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 for our 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 Barry Du Bois.

**Speaker3:** [00:01:05] Barry shows us some great DIYs that will give you a new lease on your lease.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:01:10] Just clearing a space has changed the dynamic. These kids don't have a backyard, but we're going to give them a bit of a swing. Yep. A good old fashioned disc swing.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:01:21] Barry's a TV presenter, possibly best known for his renovation skills on The Living Room. He's a mental health advocate, partner to Lenny and dad to 11 year old twins Bennett and Arabella. He's a very open man and has shared his and Lenny's fertility journey to have their twins and Barry's experience with multiple myeloma, a blood cancer. Hi Barry, welcome to the good enough dad.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:01:44] Thanks for having me here. I love that intro. Earlier you said they're going to be a bit funny, a bit confused, a bit scared. I mean, if you're not all those things, you're not a good dad.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:01:52] That's what I reckon. We wanted to own it. Okay, so, Barry, give us an idea. What was your childhood like?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:01:58] Amazing. Everything [00:02:00] about my childhood was beautiful, even the bad parts. But, uh. Um. Yeah, I lived in a home with a with a mum that was an angel and a dad that was a dominant man, an alpha, an alpha that you don't see anymore. I will admit he had a bit of a problem with alcohol, and that isn't that he was an alcoholic or anything. It just changed his psyche. Like I said, I love everything about my childhood, and part of the resilience I have today is through the adversity I faced with my dad's, um, reaction to alcohol.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:02:32] I always say, and you'll hear it probably ten times in this talk, I wouldn't change anything about my life because I didn't have it the way I had it I wouldn't be here and I wouldn't be who I am. And I love everything I've got. So, uh, we lived in a two bedroom house, uh, little fibro house on a six lane highway. It was full of love.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:02:49] Siblings?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:02:50] Yeah, brother and a sister. And we always had a, uh. We always had one extra, meaning my uncle lived with us for many years because my dad was from the country. There wasn't a lot of work in the country back then, so they would come to the city for work. Then he moved into a caravan in the backyard.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:03:05] It's like the castle, my place. And, um. And my cousin was from Yass, again, he was the same age as me, and uh, we had two other uncles. One was a mechanic, one was a carpenter. So I got the apprenticeship with a carpenter. He got the apprenticeship with the with the mechanic, and that meant he had to move from Yass to Sydney and work and live with us. My brother, who's 18 months younger than me, Mick and my beautiful sister Lizzy, who is about five years younger than me.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:03:32] Yeah, we had a gorgeous time, everything. It was a tiny little house and there was vacant blocks of land either side and a big paddock behind. My dad was the guy that could build anything, so we couldn't afford much, but he could build anything. So we had, you know, Billy cars, go karts, mini bikes that he'd manufactured. And when we were about 12, 13, 14, he would go down to Dollar Wals, that was a wrecking yard, and buy us a \$10 bomb, and we'd drive around and around the paddock in it until [00:04:00] until it stopped and the engine stopped and we'd rip the engine out, pull the doors off and push it round. You know, it was amazing and.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:04:06] Kind of what we did on a farm.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:04:07] Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:04:08] So what were your, kind of Christmassy Easter gatherings with that kind of a, you know, the castle home. Can you remember those?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:04:17] Yeah, beautifully. Christmas is all about the children. Um, as someone of means today, it affects me emotionally thinking about how tight my mum and dad had to be with money. Yeah, we got one present for the whole family. I don't remember, quite frankly, celebrating Easter. Yeah, I'm not sure. I mean, it wasn't a big thing. I just don't think it was a big deal.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:04:39] Don't even think we had chocolate eggs, did we?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:04:41] No, I don't think there's a hope in hell we had chocolate eggs. I may be wrong about that, but Christmas was an amazing time. And, uh, birthdays for each of the kids was a big deal for mum and dad. They would sacrifice anything to make sure we had what was required so that that was a house, like I said, full of love. And a beautiful structure, great discipline. Dad worked always two jobs but was always at the sporting carnivals. If there was a play on at school, he'd make it. Mum was that typical mums like my beautiful wife today, Leoni in the PNC, she's in the tuck shop, she's doing the fundraisers, she's picking other kids up from school and dropping them off. She's that that trusted parent that, uh, schools have, um, some schools are lucky to have a lot of those parents. Some schools, not so many. But she's she's one of those moms that all the teachers know they can rely on. All the kids know her and love

her. And are we talking about my mum now or my wife? I'm not sure they're the same person. And the result of that is my two beautiful twins and and their nature. Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:05:41] So tell me, when you first met your partner, Leonie. Where where did that happen?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:05:46] Interesting story. I'll back it up a little bit. I was a very successful builder in the western suburbs. We've had many building booms and economy explosions in my time, and this was one of those times, uh, [00:06:00] the late 80s. I'd never been to the eastern suburbs. I thought the richest guy in Australia was the only guy in our area that had a brick house. I had a real fetish for fibro there for a while, but, uh, I could do anything with it. And there was a builder whose name was Michael, and he had a brick home, and I thought he had to be one of the richest guys in the country. It was a giant house. I was an early member of the Master Builders Association, and I got asked from an Eastern Suburbs builder because I had a good reputation; would I price a job for him that he'd already priced in one? And when I told him my price to do the job off the plan, he said, listen, add 30% to that and you can have it. I said, really? He goes, yeah, because my price is double yours, so you can do it at 30%. And that was one of those booms. So I had to, uh, get myself to the eastern suburbs.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:06:51] It was actually Vaucluse. And uh, when I arrived in Vaucluse, it was a life changing moment. I, I couldn't believe that people lived like that. I just it was a really funny story. I know this is heading to how I met my wife, but this is in the first couple of weeks of my life. Is, um, I pulled up at this place on Lower Village Road, Vaucluse and the lady across the road. The alarm was going off and she said to me, can you help me? And I said, yes, what with? And she said, the alarms going off the back doors are open. I see you've got a ladder, would you take it around the back, climb up on the balcony, go through the house and let me in I can... I said. Sure, so I raced over there like like I would do for anyone up the thing and as I'm climbing up the ladder, I'm just. I've got this harbour behind me, this house to me, remember that song Hotel California? I imagined that that song was about this house. Yeah. It was, it was just I said, people live like this. Just really. This is incredible. And then I went across the road back to my client, and the client had all this stuff out on the street. [00:08:00]

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:08:00] It was, uh, beautiful washing machines and dryers and fridges and stuff like that. And they were just throwing them out because they were getting new stuff, and they were waiting for the council to come and pick it up. And I said, what do you want me to do with all this stuff? And they said, well, the council's going to come pick it up. And I said, I know that washing machine. It's it's only like a year old. Yeah, but we're getting the new one. It's all integrated. And, and I said, oh can I buy that off you. My mum still got that washing machine, that twin tub. Well she had a twin tub. She also had the one still that the rollers went through to dry the clothes out before you hung them out on the lawn. She, she'd never seen a dryer and they said, no, you can just have it. And I thought, people are throwing away perfectly good things and they live like as they were, they were living like millionaires because they were millionaires, but I didn't. I'd never experienced that, so fell in love with that joint. I said, this is if you're going to make it. This is where you got to be.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:08:56] Damn the fibro! Moved on

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:08:57] Yeah. God, I never saw it again. But, um, so what happened was I first things first. I rented an apartment there in Vaucluse. I couldn't believe how much money I was making. I couldn't believe the people I was surrounded by. I couldn't believe just the general vibe in the area. I mean, you, they didn't seem to be worried about getting stuff knocked off and stuff like that. And then I discovered Bondi Beach. I mean, wow, what a place. You know, I lived on the Georges River at Liverpool, so we used to go to these cafes as you do. I'm an expert at it now. I'm an expert at the Bondi Cafe. I can do a latte, oat milk. I could do a decaf. I can do it all.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:09:35] So sophisticated.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:09:35] I've done mochas. Yeah. Everything. Kimchi. I eat it all. But I walked into this one cafe one day, which was, uh, opposite North Bondi Surf Club and there was this hot little chick behind the counter, great little shorts on, beautiful legs and a big smile. And we chatted for about three hours. And then her boyfriend came in. Uh.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:09:55] Oh.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:09:56] So I left, but then I started going back there and, um, that [00:10:00] was that was Leonie she really challenged me. In a lot of ways. I thought for me, the social aspect of North Bondi was amazing, and I thought I'd done pretty good in the world, and I knew I'd done it with nothing. And I kept saying, And I'm and I'm my close mate now, Pete Colquhoun, is a who's the architect on Better Homes and Gardens. I said to him, he loves this story, I said to him, if I had a grown up here, I would have been the best at everything. Because you've got a beach, you've got the best fields, you've got everything. I said we had nothing and I did it right. Imagine how I would have went if I had have grown up here. I would have been a classic. But anyway, I fell in love with Leonie and we were friends for about two years. And then I courted her. And, uh, you know, push came to shove, so to speak. And, uh, we we were together.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:10:55] So good. Barry, how would you describe your relationship with Leonie? Because you've you've been through a lot together.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:11:03] Yeah, it's an interesting one. Um, she, uh. Leonie is a saint. There's no doubt about that. I think some of the hurdles that we had to jump through are incredibly trying on a relationship. I think IVF is the best relationship killer on Earth. I think anybody that's going to go into that has to be very conscious of the the support you need for each other, but by others, for each other as well. We haven't talked that much about it, but I became very, very dark. The black dog had me by the throat for a while.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:11:36] And where was that in this journey?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:11:38] Well, you know, I had a terrible accident in 2000, broke my back in three places and my leg in a couple of places, broke a couple of fingers and a shoulder and and physical pain is a hard thing to deal with. We had a terrible incident of abuse within my family, which affected everyone in the family terribly. That's what I [00:12:00] believe buried my mum in cancer. She had already had cancer, but she was doing really well. But that just drove her back into a terrible pit. And the last period of her life was a terrible one. So that was that. My own personal mental pain. Then came grief. I lost mum and then got cancer. So again, seeing others in pain. And then that all drove me to depression and depression ... it's not something you wake up on a Monday

morning with. It takes a long time to go into it and you self destruct. You manifest conversations which are horrific. I told the Leonie several times that I couldn't be with her anymore. I didn't want to know her anymore. She was wrecking my life. I thought everybody in the world would be better off without me, and that's why I contemplated suicide. So Leonie, being Leonie had great faith that the real barrier was in there somewhere, and she encouraged my friends to support me.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:13:05] She knew she had to take a backwards step because it seemed everything she tried to do was making it worse.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:13:11] So it's a how would I describe our relationship? It's one that's weathered some storms. It's faced adversity of its own, but it's one that now any storm in the future looks like a pee in the pond. I don't think if you've been through what we've been through together that anything could break it.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:13:30] It's interesting. We live in a household where we have very different, often very different political views, which is funny. We can vehemently disagree. I don't respect another woman on earth like I do her second to her would be her mum, to tell the truth, you know, I know I am what I am, it's because of her. And I like to think that maybe I'm a bit of a rock for her as well. And even though I've been a failure in so many ways for her, I am there if she needs me. And and I [00:14:00] like to think I support her and and she definitely supports me.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:14:03] Don't you think that's the most realistic relationship that we need, that no one's ever consistently, gloriously happy?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:14:12] Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:14:12] And we all have moments where we struggle, and that is when the other partner can hold us till we come back, and then we can do the same for them is, you know, emotional honesty is that's how it has been.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:14:25] And I believe that our, our period in time is the reason we survived that. I do believe today, though, because we have lost so much of the society has lost its ability to be resilient. It's gotten so easy to walk away from things that people

are happy are okay... we've had the kids, I love the kids, but I'm out of here. And, um, it's just, uh, there's a lot of that. It's not a moral thing. I just think that people are, society is losing their ability to take on things.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:15:02] Even though you retired early at 45, life is certainly throwing you some curve balls, many that you've spoken about previously and the long journey to having children. Leonie having cervical cancer, losing your mum to cancer, your own diagnosis and treatment. I feel like we could do a whole podcast on each of those things, but what I'd like to know is what has been your biggest challenge when it comes to being a dad?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:15:27] Good question. Um, I just want to clear something up. I did retire when I was 45 years old.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:15:33] And then you went back.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:15:35] Yeah but I retired for a bunch of reasons. I had plenty of money, but I was also manically depressed. I was not, well, like you said, there's a whole podcast in that. But I realized that I had to make some changes in my life, where I was wasn't making me happy. So. So I had to go on. So.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:15:51] But, uh, challenges of being a dad is the question. Yeah, challenges of being a dad. Well, for us, obviously. This isn't an answer you're going to hear very [00:16:00] often. Well, maybe you do, and that'll be a celebration. There is absolutely no challenge in being a dad for me, I am, with every inch of everything, I am absolutely love and cherish every second I have as a dad. I went close to 19 years trying to have those children.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:16:21] Yeah

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:16:22] We did probably 16 miscarriages. 12 of those were through IVF. So that, you know, ever familiar scream from the bathroom, which you automatically know as a miscarriage, as well as that, the grief you face when you lose both your parents and you haven't, um, you haven't had children. Yeah. Uh, and then it's huge. It's really hard, um.



**Maggie Dent:** [00:16:50] And becoming an orphan kind of figure.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:16:51] Yeah. And and you want so you I think as a parent, a lot of parents think that their mum and dad are going to help them out. And mine were gone. But more importantly than that, they didn't get to see those beautiful children. When you went through as much as we did, and the journey was as long as we did, there is nothing else on earth that I want. When people say to us, oh, we're getting our first weekend away from the kids, I think I couldn't think of anything. I hate being away from the kids. Uh, we were at a dinner party when the babies were one year old, and, um, and we. I think it was the first dinner party we'd been to without the children. No, you know what? They must have been two, because we wouldn't have done it before two. They came everywhere with us and someone said, oh, you know, we're we're going to have a weekend away. And we couldn't wait to get out of the dinner party. And when we got in the car, I said, can you think of anything worse than leaving the kids for a weekend? She says, I said she couldn't do it. I could not do it. So I'm afraid there has been no challenge. Some of it's been spectacular. Some of it's been amazing, some of it's been heart wrenchingly beautiful, and [00:18:00] all of it fills me with pride. So there's not one second of that that I find challenging.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:18:04] Can you remember the moment that those two beautiful babies arrived?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:18:08] Of course,

**Maggie Dent:** [00:18:09] With you know, you and Leonie after all those...

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:18:12] Yeah, it's, uh.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:18:13] Paint the picture for us.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:18:16] Paint the picture. Well, as you know, the children are born through surrogacy. Yep. And that was our seventh attempt of surrogacy. But we were there with Bharti, as we described Bharti to the children. Bharti lent us her tummy. You know, they were born through cesarean. Arabella was struggling a little bit because

some people might know this. You probably know this, but when you come out through the birthing canal, it squashes a lot of the fluid out of your lungs. And a common thing, I believe, when through caesarean is that that doesn't get squashed out so you can have some trouble breathing. So Arabella was in that situation. She likes to say that she is the oldest too, because she came out first. And I said, effectively, you were just on top and the easiest to get out, but we'll go with your story.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:19:00] But she was in a little oxygen tent for that. Bennett was just screaming his little heart out. And um, it's so funny on that one. Like, I was adamant that Bennett would be, uh, circumcised as well. And without doubt, you know, that was that was going to be the case right up to the second that they were born.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:19:17] And they tried to take him away from me for a circumcision. And I said, not a chance. You are touching this kid with a scalpel. Not a chance, you know.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:19:25] Interesting.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:19:26] Yeah. No chance that was going to happen. Okay, here I go. I'll back straight on my words. One of the challenges was, and it wasn't from the children, but, when a child is born through surrogacy in another country, they are an illegal alien.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:19:39] Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:19:39] First things first. They have to do a DNA check of that child. Because I've already done the DNA check. We have to determine that this is my child. Yeah, so that means they have to scratch the bottom of their little feet, which I just. I said, no, no, there's got to be another way to do this. And but they did it anyway. Then we've got the DNA. [00:20:00] It's proven this baby is mine. It's all prearranged. There was 300 pages of documents that were all certified and all that. But then what I've got to do is take the DNA results and all these papers and all that to Delhi, to the embassy to get an Australian passport for them. But before I go, I've got to get passport photos for the babies. Okay. The babies are like 24 hours old right now, a little bit older.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:20:25] Because I will share another beautiful experience about having those children in India. I know lots of people listening to this will be having preconceptions about what the the Indian health system is like. It leaves ours for dead.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:20:41] Oh, really?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:20:42] Yeah. The hospital we're in makes anything in Australia look stupid. The rich people in that country are the richest people in the world, and they have had more kids than anyone else in the world. So they've got a clue. You know what I mean? So much so. This beautiful hospital where we were on the top floor is this gorgeous art deco glass floor. It's huge. It's like the top floor of a hospital. Beautiful art deco construction and a glass roof. Because if a child has a bit of jaundice or something like that, they'll have it exposed to vitamin D.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:21:16] Natural.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:21:17] Natural sunlight, natural vitamin D, they're not

**Maggie Dent:** [00:21:20] Stuck under a light.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:21:21] Yeah. Well yeah. So they they were up there for quite a period. But then it must have been the second day. So 48 hours old. We had to get the passport photos and they've got this Indian photographer came in and I shouldn't say an Indian photographer, a different human to me was touching my children, and he kept blowing in their eyes so their eyes would open.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:21:44] Oh, so he could get a photo.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:21:45] And I'm thinking, stop frigging blowing your filthy air on my kids, you know? But sure enough, they got their little passport photos. It was hilarious. And off I went to Delhi to get their [00:22:00] passports, and then we were on our way home. But, um, that was one. That was one little challenge, but nothing they did.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:22:07] So how have you found people's reactions to the surrogate birth of children? Are they just so glad for you, the ones who knew you?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:22:16] Yeah, of course, of course, you may or may not remember. But at the time the children were born, the conservative government of the day was going through, they were really politicizing surrogacy. And realistically, it's because and I don't know what your politics are, but I don't really care. They didn't want same sex people to have children. So the way same sex people have children is through surrogacy. So they banned surrogacy. It had nothing to do with anything except for their narrow minded right wing attitude. So that was difficult. But our kids are our life and my children are like anybody else's children. And I will say this, uh, Arabella has been told that her mother is not a real mother. But, you know, again, I don't back away from that. I'm in the middle of an e-book myself on raising resilient children. A little bit of adversity isn't going to be a problem. In fact, a lot of adversity. What I went through created a pretty strong person.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:23:12] And really the adversity of living with the uncertainty of your life. How do your kids deal with that? What do they know?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:23:21] No, nothing. They, uh.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:23:23] We get sick at times.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:23:25] Yeah, exactly. A couple of things there. You said, uh, living with the adversity of not knowing.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:23:29] No one knows, do we?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:23:30] I'm in the room with two. There's three of us in the room. Not one of us know when we're going.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:23:38] Exactly, there's no certainty.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:23:39] But I think the difference between myself and you is the is the simple fact that I have faced mortality. So I do cherish life, I cherish it, and I'm very, um, very thankful for every second and very conscious that I need more seconds, particularly with my children. I don't believe children understand mortality. Maybe

[00:24:00] Bennett and Arabella at 11,12 will start to work it out, but I don't. I don't believe so. So there's no sense talking about the fact that one day I might die. Yeah. I mean yep. You're right. Yeah. You know, I've had to go through treatment a bit and I've lost my hair and all stuff like that, and we just explained, like anybody with half, uh, half a sense of common sense would say, you know, daddy's daddy's not well today, but we're going to do everything to make him as well as he can. And we're not well, we're going to eat some good food. We're going to exercise a little bit more. We're going to not eat rubbish. And, and, and I talked to a couple of 11 year olds like they're 11, you know.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:24:35] That's right.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:24:36] Uh, I have listened to a few podcasts where people rave on for a half an hour about how they sat them down and told them that mummy was going to die one day. And I think, wow, that would have been water off a duck's back because they don't know what death is. You know.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:24:49] If they've been following me, they will because I keep telling families to get a guinea pig so it dies. They get a concept early.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:24:55] Chris Brown told me that as well. I think that's a great idea.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:24:58] Because otherwise it's a concept that doesn't mean anything.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:25:01] Chris Brown, the Bondi doctor, Chris Brown, one of my closest friends. He said that to me once, being a vet is often the first time that a child experiences mortality. So he's he's often there and it's taught him a lot about life as well.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:25:16] Absolutely, yeah

**Maggie Dent:** [00:25:29] What are your main worries about raising your two beautiful children in today's world? Do you have any particular worry? Leave your health away because that's like I said, that's just still a, yeah.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:25:39] I mean, I think, uh, I'm a pretty positive character. I do think about the world they live in. I do think that the technology age has really ramped up in the last ten, 11 years. And listen, I've got two Instagram accounts for both of my kids. They don't have them, I have them, and I'm logging memories for them now. And I love social media. I love all that stuff. But you [00:26:00] do have to monitor the amount of decisions you're not making. You can't allow things to become white noise, because then you lose the ability to resolve. If you lose ability to resolve, we weaken society. And if I've got any worries, it's it's society is becoming weaker. And my goal before I go is to do whatever I can to do to show society how to live better and to lead by example when it comes to my children.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:26:25] Absolutely. So I want to know, what did you learn from your own dad that is helpful to you as a dad today? What did you take forward from him?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:26:37] That's a you've asked a lot of good questions, and it's really interesting because I. I learnt self-confidence from my dad. He believed he could do anything and he had us believing it as well. I've told this story many times is that it wasn't until I was about 13 or 14 I realised that my dad. See, my dad would say, you're a Du Bois. You're the best at everything. Well, I actually thought because we were Du Bois, we were the best at everything. So that when I realized that he was just saying that to make us think we could do anything, that was a bit confusing for me, but. But it only took us 14 years to give me confidence. It lasted me a lifetime. I will take on anything. I'm prepared for anything. I've tried to instill that as best I can with the kids as well. I'd like to talk to you about it because you're more an expert than I am. But. We all say we don't want to mould our kids, but we're all trying to mould our kids. You know? It's as simple as that.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:27:38] Absolutely.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:27:39] Bennett is so much like me when I was a little kid. It's not funny. And I say that, okay, now I'm going to have to wind it back. I think about me when I was ten, I was so sensitive. I was such a dear little boy. Okay.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:27:57] You're a lamb. Yeah. Not a rooster. When [00:28:00] you grew enough.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:28:01] Okay, I like that. Yeah. Maybe I wasn't a rooster.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:28:04] Then you got to get a bit of rooster. And you did?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:28:06] Well, I became a massive rooster. Yeah, some might say.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:28:09] But you don't lose the lamb.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:28:11] Uh, I.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:28:12] Sensitive bit is still inside

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:28:14] Still there.. Yeah, but what I want to make sure, because Bennett is so sensitive, he doesn't, he he just will put everybody up before he puts himself up. Whereas my dad was a champion boxer as well. And so. So I could fight. And he taught us that. He taught, you know, when I was 12 we were hitting bags and I could throw a straight punch. And then I then the rooster took over the lamb, so to speak. And I'm very conscious with, uh, with Bennett particularly. What is it we do that like because so many of the little boys in his class as well, they're such sensitive, little gorgeous things. Why do we turn them into these little rough nuts? You know.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:28:54] And that's the conditioning, isn't it, of the world. They get all these messages.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:28:57] Yeah, these messages. So. So I'm very conscious that I'm very conscious of the messages that Bennett's getting.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:29:03] It can be both. You can be strong and you can be sensitive.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:29:08] Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:29:08] Whereas in the past, men and boys were encouraged to be strong, but sensitive was weak.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:29:14] And I'm going to ask you a quick question, and I believe that little boys get their their man body between 11 and 15, the shoulders and chest that I got and the strength that I got between sort of 11 and 15 is, is what I was always I had big shoulders. I was a strong guy. So just recently I've just started, it's been a real bonding thing for me and Benny as well. So we just do some push ups each night. We do a few sit ups together and stuff like that because I want him to.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:29:41] Have a healthy.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:29:42] Body, build his core, have a healthy body and he's a great little sportsman. I remember two years ago I showed him some video of my old boxing gym and some little kids in there going whack, whack, whack with their pads. And I said, daddy, that's that's one of daddy's old trainers, baby. He said, yes. Oh, [00:30:00] dad, that's so cool. That's so cool. I said, oh really? I said, do you want, do you want to go to that gym? We'll do a little. He goes no, I wouldn't want to do that, dad. No way. I wouldn't want to do that now. I was a little disappointed he said that. But then I thought, you know what? I hope he never, ever gets in that situation. But then the other part of me thinks, what if someone tries to take advantage of him? Or what if someone tries to push him around, you know, so it's a real that's it is a you know, I started off saying there was no struggle. That's my struggle. That's that's a bit of a struggle.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:30:29] Can I say one thing on that? Because, yeah, the fact that he feels so secure and safe with your relationship was he was okay to say no, he didn't need to please you to make sure you kept loving him?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:30:39] No, totally.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:30:40] Which I think is beautiful. But trust me, a couple of years down the track, when he's got a bit more testosterone going, um, it might it might be a very different thing.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:30:47] Testosterones the ingredient, isn't it? Yeah, yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:30:50] Because that's pouring in soon.



**Barry Du Bois:** [00:30:52] It'll start pouring in soon I'm sure if he's anything like his dad would be full of it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:31:00] You've told me some of the things your dad taught you, which was amazing. What was something your dad did that you've chosen not to do? So you've chosen to be a different dad? Obviously, there's one fairly big one.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:31:13] Yeah. I'm conscious of what all kids think of alcohol. I think we live in a pretty relaxed world when it comes to what we can do in front of children when it comes to alcohol. And like I said, my dad was the most beautiful human on earth. But he became a different human with alcohol and he didn't realize it. You know, so I'm just very conscious of that sort of thing. I said to myself, I'll never drink in front of my children. I just don't. And they'll tell everybody that I don't drink. But I remember we were at the children's godmother Lorna's, uh, Lorna's 50th birthday, and I love having a beer with Bill. That's her husband, Bill and Lorna. I do love having a beer with him because we have old fashioned good old chats, you know, and whenever we're with Bill and Lorna, [00:32:00] uh, the kids are always with us. So I've decided. Okay, well, Billy's having a beer, so I'm going to have a cider, you know, thinking it's not alcoholic. And then he walks into the room while I'm giving Bennett about his 10th swig of this cider. Effectively, Ben's drunk more of it than I have, but it's like a 6% alcohol. She said, what are you doing? I said, well, it's just cider. Don't worry. She goes, that's alcoholic. And I go, oh no, like my quest to not ever drink in front of him. In the first time I do, I'm feeding more into him than than me.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:32:34] That's perfect. Because my next question, let me just tell you a story. It's going to be when did you have a parenting fail? So we've got that covered now that was my go back and continue.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:32:42] That was my parenting fail. Funny, Benny still talks about that because his mother never let me live it down. But the other day this happened, I've got to tell you, this story is a cracker. And I love all Bennett's little mates. They're great, but one of his little mates gets in the car the other day on the way to basketball training. As soon as he gets in the car, they've always got something to tell each other. And he goes, Bennett, you know what I'm going to do as soon as I'm 18? Bennett goes, no, what? Like so excited, he said, yeah, I'm going to do a shoey because. Ah, yeah. Wow.

Bennett goes, what's a shoey? And I'm just driving. They're all in the back seat. He says, well, you go to a nightclub, you get in the middle of the dance floor, you take your shoe off, you fill it up with beer and you drink it there on the floor, you skull the whole thing. I'm just going, oh, God, you know, like you're killing me. Here you go. And and, um, Bennett goes, wow, wow. Like, Bennett doesn't really know what alcohol is. And he says to me, dad, did you do a shoey when you were 18? Can you imagine the things I did? Yeah. I said, well, I tried to steer away from stupid things, mate. You know, trying to say the right thing. Uh, and I'm thinking about now, like the yard glasses we used to drink from and throw up.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:33:55] Oh, God, I remember those

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:33:57] Al port and crap, but, um, all my mates fathers home [00:34:00] brew thing. We drank 12 bottles in one night. But anyway. Then Hugo says to Bennett. Bennett. You'll be 18, you can do whatever you want. And I went, arghhh So that was funny.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:34:17] I love it. Now I'm just going to throw a tip in there about keep picking them up and taking them for rides as you go over this bridge to manhood, because you can ask your son what's going on, how is he? Whatever. Good day. And then in the car, you catch up with everything. You just don't say anything. You keep driving, keep driving. You go the long way home, man. You catch up with everything that's going down. You just don't say anything. You just fantastic. Yeah.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:34:43] I love taking the boys to training and picking them up from. I stay at training and watch them train. I watch it all.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:34:48] We all have really big fears and worries. Is there one fear that that you hold about, you know, parenting and raising your parenting kids?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:35:00] The only the only fear I have is not being here for them if they need me.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:35:06] Okay.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:35:07] I think it's very different for someone who's been told he's got three months to live. And I understand what mortality is. I think most people in the world are blessed with the fact that they're not. And, uh, there's not a day that goes by. Do not worry about what it's going to be like the day I leave. Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:35:25] You're also an older dad.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:35:27] Sure.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:35:27] So tell me. Tell me, what advice do you have out there for that? The fact is, is there advantages at becoming a dad at that age compared to being a 24 year old young man who's become a dad? What are you what are your thoughts?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:35:39] I think I think one of the advantages I've got as an older dad and a dad that's, um, had the misfortune of facing mortality is that I do live every second. Like, it could be my last. And that's a gift. Mick. My brother is a grandfather of Bodie, who's the same age as Bennett and Arabella. [00:36:00] Most grandparents see more the grandchildren than they did of their own kids because they were working. They were trying to forge careers. Well, I did all that, and the only thing I didn't have in life was children. And now I have them. I, you know, my my only fear is that. I just want society to be stronger, because it does take a tribe to raise a family. And at the moment, we're not acting like tribes, we're acting like enemies. And that scares me. Yeah, I think the polarization that we're going through in everything that happens now is, um, it's horrific. It's it's terrible for the human nature.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:36:39] I bet you've got a tribe, though, around your family because you're conscious and aware of that, that it's not just mainly only raising these two children. We're all co co-parenting each other's kids, which is why you're picking them up.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:36:52] Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:36:53] And you're all part of each other's lives. I think you can recreate it in pockets. It just isn't going to be the whole neighborhood.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:37:00] Yeah, I'm not sure about that. I think we do what we do because we do what we do. I don't think society is as empathetic as it used to be.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:37:08] Oh, God no.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:37:09] I mean, we'll jump into a fundraiser. Sure. And give some money. But what I'm talking about is humanity. I think it's humanity that's taken a bit of a dive. Regardless of your politics, I don't think our morals are in the same place as they were. I just think we should be a little bit more morally sound. I think we should just be looking out for each other a little bit more. And whilst I get what you're saying that yeah, I'm in community groups and all those things, but, um. Unfortunately, I think at the moment when the going gets tough, the, the, the neighborhood gets going. Not my neighborhood and not a specific neighborhood. I'm just saying as a society, I don't think we're I don't think we're societally as strong as we used to be.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:37:55] I totally agree with you on that one. Now [00:38:00] it's time for a big dad brag. I can see you do lots of great things, but what do you think is your biggest parenting win? Either with either of them or both of them? What do you reckon you need that little trophy for? I can give you for being the best dad.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:38:17] One thing I've done, particularly I've been conscious of with both the children, is. Not saying to them too often that I'm proud of them. Yeah. I was told this by a friend, Kamal, who's a really nice guy, and I'm like all parents, I want to shower my kids in praise. But if a child then realizes that he's doing it so he's praised by you, then later on in life he needs to be praised by someone else, and then he needs to be praised by someone else and then someone else. But what I was very conscious of doing, particularly when they started school, was not saying, I'm proud of you for going to school today or proud of you for how you went in that competition. I would say I think you did really well in that competition. Were you proud of yourself? And it's something I've instilled in both of them for a long time, and they're very conscious that they have to be proud of themselves, and that's what'll make me happy.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:39:16] I think it was a great tip that was given to me, that you make sure that they don't need praise, they just need to satisfy themselves. That's been a real win, because a couple of months ago, it might have been last season, Bennett played

one of the best games he's ever played in basketball at the time, and they got beat by a team that were just better than them on the day. And Bennett, who who did used to have a tendency to drop his head, said to his team, guys, we should be really proud of ourselves today. Wow. Yeah. And I and I saw it. That'll do me.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:39:53] That is really

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:39:55] He said we played as good as we could play against that team. Let's face it, he was like [00:40:00] nine and a half when he said it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:40:01] So that's that's can you see that exact messaging you've been giving. Because when we we've still got too much behaviorism around that says if you're not praising the hell out of your kids and giving them stickers and stuff, then they won't grow to be okay. And that's actually works with rats. And it's the same as if I don't punish them when they're doing the wrong stuff. They won't learn and grow. And we know that's also rubbish because kids need discipline and teaching and guiding. But when we make them needing us to be proud all the time, that pressure is on. And that's exactly what I'm hearing from teenagers today, is the fact if Mum and dad aren't happy with me, then they don't love me. So I feel that's a horrible burden. And my other tip in that space is I think we need to focus on stoking the spark that's in our kids, which is what naturally gives them joy.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:40:51] Can you explain that to me?

**Maggie Dent:** [00:40:52] Yeah. So when we have a spark, it's something we're really passionate about. Like it's it's like Bennett when he plays basketball, right? You look at their face afterwards if your son or daughter loves music. So sometimes we get so hooked on this whole test- driven education system that we think it's the grades and the marks that will bring them what they need to get to the next level. But we know mental health comes from what are the neurochemicals in my brain doing? How am I feeling? And when I feel crap. If I have a spark and it might be racing a motorbike, it might be cooking, it might be walking your dog. In other words, it's not something that's measurable by a test.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:41:28] That's it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:41:29] It can make a lot of difference in the pressures of the transformation journey of adolescents, because there's so much change going on, and we've created a toxic world that we're marinating them in. And they are worried. They're incredibly worried.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:41:41] Yeah very scared.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:41:42] Very much so. So one of the things that came up during Covid when people were in lockdown was I kept on saying, you cannot work full time from home and your children do schooling from home full time. I'm sorry. It's impossible. It's impossible. And there are going to be times I want you to go. It's all too hard. We're just switching off for an hour or two. Go watch a movie on the couch [00:42:00] with your kids and with some popcorn. They'll remember that. They'll remember that from Covid. So we have to create those memories that matter. And often the memory stokes the spark. Because when I worked in full time counselling and I was working with a the teen who was expressing suicidal ideation. The spark had gone out, there was not a spark. And so they are fragile in that window.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:42:23] That's it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:42:23] So that's what I keep saying. Gestures of kindness, fun, laughter. We've got to be able to lighten up a lot more in that space, but.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:42:30] We've got to be very conscious of that too. With this working from home and all that sort of stuff, there's got to be a separation there. Work is not your life.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:42:38] Isn't that one of the biggest challenges for dads?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:42:40] Traditionally, yeah, it would be.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:42:42] Because they're still conditioned that my job is to do, you know, earn the significant even though that's you know, that's a pretty big generalization now where women are earning as much. But they tell me all the time, it's my biggest

struggle is I still feel that's my responsibility. And yet I want to spend more time with my kids. Have you got any tips for dads who struggle with that?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:43:00] Yeah, I do, I'll put it to you this way. There's always a back story, isn't there? When we were in World War One, the smartest guys in the room, let's call them the code breakers. They were trying to stop the war. In the war. I mean, these guys had more pressure on them than we could ever know. We could ever know. Well, those guys made between 250 and 350 decisions in a day. And they had to resolve all those decisions. And if they didn't, they had to re-approach them the next day. They were the smartest guys. And that was the toughest time in life. If we went through a world war now, we'd fold in a heartbeat. Whereas today you or me make between 30 and 60,000 decisions or face that many issues. So as a human species, we're losing the ability to resolve things. We're teaching ourselves that it's easier to just not bother with it. Don't don't engage in it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:43:51] Leave all the tabs open.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:43:52] You leave all the tabs open. Exactly. So what I'm very conscious of doing is before I go from one space to another, whether that's from work [00:44:00] to family, family to to work, from the dinner table to bed, I just do some breath work. I do some meditation, but I'll always give myself a 3 to 6 minute transition so that I can end that portion. I'll make some notes of what I have to do tomorrow, and then I close that book. That book is done until tomorrow, and then the same when I'm when I leave home. I think you just got to be very conscious not to bother taking on too much, that you can't handle it. If you're trying to do an email before you go into home, or you're doing one at the dinner table, or you leave the phone on in your house, or you're doing work in the house, and then walk into the kitchen and get a drink, and there's kids doing homework. We're just not separating these things. And we do need that separation and that structure.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:44:49] I think that's one of the trickiest things that's happened to modern parenting is that work doesn't finish. So you finish at five, it comes home with us. So we and then good people say, look, I'll catch up a few work emails while I'm here. So in other words, you're exactly right. We haven't left that space that's still in our

head while we come home to be a mother or a father. Yeah. And that's it's therefore we're not present.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:45:11] And then, sadly, I have seen parents say to their kids, don't you get it if I don't get this done, we don't have Christmas. Yeah, that's incredibly destructive. You got to separate that stuff.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:45:28] If there was just one thing, you're only allowed to choose one Barry. If there's one thing you want your kids to learn from you, what is.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:45:34] It that they can do? Anything.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:45:36] Great. Be anything. Do anything.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:45:38] Yeah, totally.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:45:39] I don't have to please you. Make you proud. No.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:45:42] They'll please me if they do. If they do, what makes them happy, they'll please me.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:45:47] Love it. If you could go back and give your pre-dead self before these little babies arrived. Some advice about being a dad. What advice [00:46:00] would you give yourself?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:46:02] I didn't become a dad till I was 52.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:46:04] I know, I know, but I'm just saying

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:46:06] I'd faced manic depression. I'd had cancer twice. I'd had 16 miscarriages. My wife had had cancer. I'd lost both parents.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:46:15] What would you say to him?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:46:16] And been rich.



**Maggie Dent:** [00:46:17] What would you say to him?

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:46:18] That guy knew a lot. I gotta tell you.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:46:20] Seriously.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:46:21] What I would say to him is that patience is your best tool. Just rely on patience and raise children at the speed of patience. And it was something I read in a book, but I love it.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:46:36] I try to do as much as I can with the children, but I don't try and achieve anything with the children. What I mean by that is. My Bennett and Arabella had their baby rakes from Bunnings and they just loved raking the leaves with me. But that would just be a disaster. So if I needed to rake the leaves, I'd rake the leaves. But if I want to be with my children, I say let's rake the leaves. And then when they go to sleep, I go out and tidy up the yard. Yeah, because you say, guys, I need to get this in a pile. No you don't. You need to enjoy every second of that little beautiful thing developing.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:47:13] An experience. So making memories that matter.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:47:15] Yeah. I mean, that's the motto of my life. Making memories.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:47:19] Barry. Thank you.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:47:21] Oh. Thank you. It's lovely, a lovely chat.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:47:23] It's a good chat. You and I could probably chat for a few more hours.

**Barry Du Bois:** [00:47:26] If you want to stay on the topic of my children, I'll talk forever.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:47:33] Barry Dubois, TV presenter and mental health advocate. Barry has become so wise over the years and had so many wonderful things to say that I

think it's definitely worth holding on to some of those. So let's grab a few of those wonderful tips for our good enough Dad checklist. The first one I'd like us to hold in our minds is that you don't have to praise every little thing [00:48:00] that your kids do, because sometimes that actually turns them into praise junkies. Rather than building resilience, we might acknowledge it. We just don't need to praise quite so much. The second tip was the best place. Sometimes to learn what's happening in your kids lives is actually in the car on your way home, so make sure sometimes you drive the long way home. And point number three sometimes when we're faced with our own mortality, we can review our life. And if that's one of the messages we get from Barry is cherish every moment anyway. Every single moment with your children is a gift. I'm Maggie Dent, and this is the good enough dad. You can follow us on the listener app or wherever you get your podcasts.