

# GED\_S01E22\_The\_Good\_Enough\_Dad\_Richard

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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 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 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 Richard Harris.

**Newsreader:** [00:01:06] The boys aged between 11 and 16, all members of a local soccer team, had set out with their coach to explore the cave complex near Chiang Rai, close to the Myanmar border. Their bikes were found outside the cave, but with heavy rains, the group became trapped by fast rising water. A round-the-clock search mission was launched with help from Australian and other international teams.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:01:32] That news bulletin is from 2018, when the world held its collective breath as rescuers attempted to save the boys and their coach. Thankfully, the rescue mission was successful with the whole team evacuated. Richard Harris was the anaesthetist who helped to get the whole team out safely in a feat so extraordinary, it inspired the Hollywood movie 13 Lives and earn he and his colleague Doctor Craig Challen the 2019 [00:02:00] Australian of the Year award.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:02:04] Diving into caves in pitch darkness is not how I would spend my downtime, but for Richard, caving was part of his DNA, and taking risks is a big part

of what he believes makes for a full life. Today, Richard is retired from the medical profession and he's recently released a book called the Art of Risk. He's married to Fiona and has three adult James, Charlie and Millie, all in their 20s. He's also, I'm told, called Harry by everyone. So, Harry, welcome to The Good Enough Dad.

**Richard Harris:** [00:02:36] Hi, Maggie. Thanks for having me on.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:02:38] Okay, so, Harry, tell us, where did you grow up and what kind of a childhood did you have?

**Richard Harris:** [00:02:45] A very fortunate one, I would say. I grew up in Adelaide. My father was a doctor. He went to England to capture an English nurse as his bride. As a child we always had a roof over our heads, food on the table, went to a good school. I really couldn't have asked for a more fortunate childhood, a bit of a silver spooner I would say things were great at home, very loving family. I had two older sisters and um, the best thing about my childhood, I would say, is that my father loved boating and fishing and camping. And for me, that opened this whole world of of adventure activities that I still, you know, age 59, I still kind of cling to and, and I tried to instill in my children and other kids as well.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:03:31] So the girls were out on the boat doing that with dad as well? Or was it just the son.

**Richard Harris:** [00:03:35] In fact, my the middle sister, Christina, she is widely recognised as the gun fisherman within the family. She cannot be beaten. She's very competitive and has a particular skill. Uh, the older sister was less interested. She always got a bit seasick. And so myself and Christina had a bit of a battle of, uh, you know, piscatorial competition throughout life. And she's clearly the winner. I'm happy to admit.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:03:59] I [00:04:00] love that. And I love it, that message that you've just given that dads, we, you know, we shouldn't be gender defining the sort of activities we do with our children because, you know, we're going to do something a bit risky or we're going to do something that's traditionally seen as a more male oriented activity.

And I certainly had that opportunity as a kid on a farm with my dad. Were you a risk taker when you were doing those activities as a kid, or did it develop?

**Richard Harris:** [00:04:26] I don't think I was a risk taker. In fact, I don't consider myself a risk taker now, to be honest. I know I do adventurous activities and I'm involved in an adventure sport, but actually, and this is the whole point of my book and my podcast, Real Risk, is that I think I'm a very good risk mitigator and risk manager. And that's what all good adventurers are. You can't be casual about risk in any sort of adventure activity, whether it's hang gliding or mountain climbing or diving or whatever you do, you know, you have to be very cautious and increase your experience very incrementally and slowly and carefully. Because, you know the old saying about old bold pilots, there's old pilots and bold pilots, but there's no old bold pilots that that really applies to all these sports. And that's kind of what I set out to find with, you know, writing this book and doing my podcast to talk to other adventurers who were doing stuff that I thought was reckless or crazy because I would find it so frightening, but actually to see whether they were like me, just actually quite cautious people. And I don't consider myself courageous or or reckless in any way. I just enjoy this particular pursuit. But I want to do it very carefully and safely.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:05:36] We actually know that our children are biologically wired to take themselves to the edge of their own fear, quite naturally, in little incremental steps, if our parents let us do that. I want to know a little bit about the adolescent window, because I'm a mother of four sons who all took up surfing or mountain bike riding and crazy things at times. Were there any significant injuries there? Because remember, you're an adolescent [00:06:00] and you're wired to take more risks without a prefrontal cortex. Was there anything different in that window of your childhood?

**Richard Harris:** [00:06:07] No, not really, I did, um, you know, I can actually say I've never broken a bone. I've had a few stitches, but, um, I did break my nose a couple of times playing rugby, but I, um, I never suffered those injuries that a lot of real risk takers do in that period of time. I'm sure I share the interests that you do in this current epidemic of adolescent mental health crises, and, you know, I'm trying to read and research as much about that as I can, because.

**Richard Harris:** [00:06:34] I'm absolutely convinced that that sort of risk taking in children and adolescents is critical to normal development and critical to expanding your horizons. So looking back on my own adolescence, I think I was reckless, like all boys between the age of 15 to 25 or whenever your brain starts to actually form.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:06:54] About 30 now

**Richard Harris:** [00:06:55] Yeah about 30, I'm told now. Yeah. And I'm, I think I see that in my sons. Um, yeah. But I think I took more social risks.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:07:03] You took a scuba diving course at 15, and it deeply impacted you. So tell me a little bit about that. And also did it light what I call a spark in you, which is, I think something every teen needs; to have a spark.

**Richard Harris:** [00:07:18] It did. But the spark was already there, to be honest, because, um, I grew up with these family friends who had boats and diving equipment. There was a marine biologist. There was a guy who ran a dive shop in Adelaide. So from my earliest memories were putting a mask and snorkel on and swimming around in the sea, looking at fish and wondering what they were. And then I remember taking up a spear, fishing and trying to capture the fish. And then yeah, I was really knocking at the door of the dive shop for a couple of years to be allowed to train, because I saw my sisters doing scuba, and they were older than me, and I was intensely jealous of that because I was the one I knew who really had the passion for it, but I was too young to do it. So finally, at 15, they let me do it. And that really [00:08:00] started the next chapter of this adventure. And I actually traded the spear gun for a camera. Very early on I was involved in the photographic club at school, and so my friend at school and myself went halves in a very old, dilapidated second hand camera. We couldn't afford any lights or flashes or anything, so just taking these terrible black and white photos and developing them in the school darkroom.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:08:23] Well before GoPro.

**Richard Harris:** [00:08:24] Brought me enormous joy. Yeah. Yes it was. Yeah. So and that and that also has carried on throughout my life carrying a camera with me.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:08:31] You originally wanted a career in marine biology but ended up in anaesthetist. How did that little turnabout happened? Because I'm curious as to that pathway you chose while you were still a teen.

**Richard Harris:** [00:08:45] Yeah, biology and science was always a strong interest, so I knew it had to be something along those lines, and it seemed like marine biology would be a natural fit. But actually my cousin, older cousin was doing marine biology at James Cook University, and he talked me out of it. He said no one could get a job. It seems to be going nowhere at that time. So he convinced me not to do it. So I thought, well, next best thing for me would be veterinary science working with animals. And I actually didn't achieve enough marks to do that just by, I was a couple of marks short to get into the Western Australian University and into Murdoch, where the main vet course was at that stage. But I did sneak into Flinders University to do medicine. So that wasn't actually my first or second choice. It was my third choice. But actually it's turned out to be a fantastic career choice for me. And um, anaesthesia because of the overlap with gases and diving medicine, which I've also been involved with, again, turned out to be a great fit for me. So yeah, I think I got really lucky by default.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:09:49] Let's wind back the clock a little, Harry. Do you remember when you first found out you were going to be a dad?

**Richard Harris:** [00:09:55] My wife, Fiona and I met at medical school. A bit of a cliché again, and we were actually [00:10:00] very good friends for many years before we became romantically involved. And it was towards the end of medical school that we sort of hitched up, I suppose. And then we got married in our mid-twenties, I think I was 25, and we decided to travel and work for another five years or so before we, uh, looked at being parents. We settled back in Adelaide after travelling for a while, and so Fiona was 30 and we thought, well, that's a good age. But we knew medically, you know, that's the age where you should sort of crack on with it, I guess. And like all great plans, there were some delays, some fertility trouble. So it took a while for Fiona to get pregnant, even though it was pretty low level infertility. That unexpected delay, I remember being a huge psychological stress, especially for Fiona. You know, that sort of monthly wait. And then disappointment was terrible. And that was a really important insight for me, perhaps to be more sympathetic for people who struggle with fertility. But we were lucky again, you know, we overcame it pretty easily without too much

intervention. And so that moment of knowing she was pregnant was extra exciting, perhaps because of that little delay.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:11:08] Now, even though you are a doctor and know all about it, can you tell me how you were impacted by that labor and childbirth?

**Richard Harris:** [00:11:16] Absolutely terrifying for me, and I don't know whether that was because of that extra knowledge of what was possibly going wrong. And actually, I was working as an anaesthetic registrar in the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide. So I was literally just finishing that term of doing the epidurals and the caesareans and, you know, anaesthetist only get involved if and particularly when there's more complex issues or some of the things that can go wrong. So I was kind of seeing that 5% of people who have some issues going on around there and don't quote me on the 5%, by the way, because that hopefully overstates the problem. But yeah, so I was seeing some stuff that was a bit scary. And of course, when my own wife's going through this, I, I was really, really [00:12:00] nervous about it. And that actual moment when our first son, James was delivered, you know, it'd been a long and slightly arduous labor. And I remember at one point being in a headlock from Fiona because, you know, I'd got too close, which is dangerous. You know, you never get too close to a woman in labor, and they grab all sorts of bits of you without, without, uh, with, without warning, and they don't let go. It's like this sort of reaction. And once they've got something, it can be quite painful. I think they want to share the discomfort with you. So I got a few doses of that. And I remember actually being in a headlock with my sort of head in the pillow at one stage, but I was happy down there. I didn't want to see, I didn't want to look. I was so nervous. And then to hear that cry, you know, it's, uh. What a profound relief.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:12:43] Oh, the profound relief. That's exactly. You know, there's so much packed into those few words, isn't there?

**Richard Harris:** [00:12:48] Yeah. And I remember because it was a long day and night. And I remember I finally got home about five in the morning and I felt on the verge of psychosis. I remember lying in bed, you know, I'm in this bed by myself. I know my wife and new son are in the hospital, and I was so tired and so full of adrenaline and

excitement. My head was just spinning. I just lay there going, oh my God, what's happened?

**Maggie Dent:** [00:13:11] Yeah, well, you described it beautifully. There's this massive thing that that has happened that takes our brain and our heart a little while to be able to get a handle on.

**Richard Harris:** [00:13:23] And you know, I cry in sad films. So you should have seen me when that, when that, when that boy appeared. I was a wreck. It was disgraceful.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:13:31] I've talked to so many dads who were really, really surprised with how they sobbed because they thought they were just going to Yahoo around the room, but that's something way bigger than what you plan.

**Richard Harris:** [00:13:41] Yeah, for sure.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:13:48] You talk about risk as being essential in terms of showing up your boundaries in life. Is that whole concept something you were consciously wanting to pass [00:14:00] on to your kids or teach your kids as a dad?

**Richard Harris:** [00:14:03] Yeah. Very definitely. I mean, the the cave rescue in 2018 was a kind of an awakening of my conscious thought around all this. I think, you know, I'd always deep down had this belief that we need to be outside and kids shouldn't be on their computers. They need to get out amongst it, and that's good for them. But I hadn't really looked at the data or clarified my thoughts about it.

**Richard Harris:** [00:14:24] And the reason I started thinking about it was when I first met these 12 boys and their coach at the back of that cave, and they were so calm and they appeared so courageous and resilient. I started to think to myself, why? Why aren't they like I would have been at 11 years of age? I would have been hysterical and terrified. But these kids honestly look like they were on a summer camp. They just look totally unfazed by the whole experience. And I'm sure that's not true at, you know, deep down. But superficially, that's how they presented themselves. And so I thought a lot about what was it that made these kids so awesome in that regard. And I kind of came to the conclusion that primarily it was the fact that they were tough country kids living in

a very remote area who had had some hardship during their life. You know, life wasn't all beer and skittles.

**Richard Harris:** [00:15:13] Their parents were mostly from a fairly small minority tribe in Myanmar, and they had come across the border to find a better life for their kids. But life was still quite difficult for them. You know, they weren't Thai citizens, so they had to fight for stuff. And I think that a little bit of hardship can genuinely be good for us. And that kind of underlies the whole principle, in my mind, of doing things that are difficult and challenging and not shying away from things that are uncomfortable. I mean, I definitely understand that a lifetime of chronic abuse or genuine hardship for children is genuinely destructive, and it has all sorts of horrendous physiological and psychological implications for young people. But a little bit of hard love actually doesn't do you any harm. So that was when I started to think [00:16:00] about this. But I think subconsciously I'd always known that and encouraged that in my children. But, you know, like all parents, I was protective of my kids and possibly overly so. I rode my bike to school or got on the bus every single day of my life rain, hail, or 45 degrees. But I didn't send my kids out in the same way, and Fiona was felt the same way. So we were more protective than I had been protected, if you like.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:16:28] It's one of the challenges I sometimes have at the seminars when I'm talking about resilience is I just ask the parents how many of you could go off and play for a couple of hours without your parents around? And how many of you rode bikes to school? The hands go up. And I said, now, okay, so put your hand up if you're allowing your children of a similar age to do the same. And there's this gobsmacking moment where they go, holy heck. And it is one of the biggest dilemmas that we can have as parents is how much is enough and what's not. So I just think we need to celebrate the ouchies, the ouchies, the cuts and the bruises, instead of seeing that as a possible form of poor parenting.

**Richard Harris:** [00:17:03] I absolutely agree with you. And every keynote address I give, I sneak that into my talk. Whether I'm talking to IBM or Telstra or or the Scouts, you know the least receptive crowds all seem to enjoy hearing it. And I'm not just talking to kids, I'm talking to young parents and people our age, you know, because it's never too late to start.



**Maggie Dent:** [00:17:24] How do you think it's gone? Because your children are in their 20s. So is it looking like you did a good job in that space?

**Richard Harris:** [00:17:31] Well, I certainly gave them the opportunities. And you know what they do with that ... At some point, you have to stop feeling guilty about being a parent, you know, did I do enough or could I have done better, or could I have avoided that problem? Or these problems that have arisen as they've gotten older and all our kids have had their ups and downs, and every time there's an issue or a struggle, you can't help thinking, oh, is this our fault? What Fiona and I have decided to do when those moments arise is just to think, well, we gave them love, [00:18:00] food and a shelter, which is more than a lot of young people in the world receive. And we certainly gave them opportunities by taking them boating, fishing, camping and all the stuff that I thought was important. But at the end of the day, they have to live their own lives and make their own choices. So I guess they're old enough now that we've moved on from that constant thinking about is anything bad about them our fault, or is it? You know, we've done our best and I you know, I think that's all we can do.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:18:27] I think there's another message in that, too. And that is our job to raise them, to leave home, to fly the nest. And there is no perfect in life. They're going to meet hardships and that hopefully when they meet those that they're still welcome to come back to the safe base and together we can help them come through those things. I think that's the other important message that they're not alone forever, that we're still there.

**Richard Harris:** [00:18:49] Yeah, I agree. And they do bounce back. Seems increasingly hard to get rid of the brutes.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:18:52] I call it boomeranging in the 20s they just boomerang around and don't worry, they do eventually leave.

**Richard Harris:** [00:18:59] But I do enjoy having adult children to have adult conversations with. I mean, they've become more like friends now. It's great.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:19:15] Was there anything in particular that you think your dad did that you said, yep, I'm going to definitely do that for my kids, that you, you know, really clear about.\.

**Richard Harris:** [00:19:25] The specific outdoor stuff was a passion of mine. So I knew I would be doing that and I hope that my kids would enjoy it. And sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't. So I didn't kind of force it upon them. But it's probably only one of the three who probably has picked up any of those specific pursuits, like the diving and boating interests, that sort of thing. But, you know, the others have got very much their own pastimes and interests and hobbies, which is great. So maybe what I did do is give them the option to say, you know, you can do things that are a bit different or a bit quirky. You know, dad's [00:20:00] a cave diver, but one of the boys has done a lot of downhill skateboard racing. One of the boys is a heavy metal musician and likes thrashing away with his band. So, you know, very, very different to me and my interests, but also pretty unique. And in the minority, perhaps compared to the average cricket and football playing or music musicians or I don't know, they've certainly made their own choices and that's been great to see.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:20:25] Is there anything that you've consciously chosen that you wouldn't take forward, that maybe your dad did without throwing him under the bus?

**Richard Harris:** [00:20:33] Yeah, um, dad was no, I mean, you know, I had a huge love and respect for my father. I was very, very lucky to have such an amazing role model. And the thing about dad that I love the most was his kindness to other people. You would never hear him say a bad word about people, and in some ways, he was a bit too soft. You know, he probably got taken advantage of, perhaps because of his generosity and kindness, or couldn't make tough decisions actually, when they needed to be made, because he was so benevolent and so generous and kind to people. But what I took from dad was, don't judge a book by its cover. You know, he had friends from professors to janitors and everyone in between. And, you know, if he shared an interest with them and he had many interests like his fishing or birdwatching and that sort of stuff, you know, he had all these friends from all walks of life who shared one of those interests. So we had this parade of really interesting people coming through our house. And that was an important lesson for me, that it's really those shared experiences or those characteristics of people that are the most important, not what their job is or their

income, or and I do see a lot of doctors surround themselves with people in the same class or the same occupation. And I think that's a bit of a missed opportunity. And, um, yeah, I just yeah, it's important to embrace people from all walks of life because there's so many experiences [00:22:00] and and possibilities.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:22:08] What do you think looking back, you know, you've got them in the 20s and they're half flying out and half flying back to the nest. What was the most challenging time for you as a as a dad?

**Richard Harris:** [00:22:18] I think very early on when my wife and I were both working pretty long hours and sleep deprived and young babies, and the sleep interruption was a very tough time. We went to New Zealand for a year, where I did my final year of training, and Fiona was a new mother for the second time. We had our second child in New Zealand while I was working at the hospital there, and being away from parental support was particularly hard for her and being a bit isolated and having a new baby, and who was a shocking sleeper by the way. So that was a tough time, especially for her. But then you move through that into that period where they're sort of between the age of two and eight, and that was the greatest time of all for us. I mean, they're so funny, so cute, and they come out with the most extraordinary things. And we also spent two years working and living in Vanuatu during that period, which was a massively successful family experience. And going back to what we just talked about, about skin color and children living and playing with kids from every country around the world in this international school, plus all the ni-vanuatu kids. I remember looking out the window. We had a little pool at the house we were renting there, and just seeing this sea of kids from all different countries in the pool and skin color just meant nothing to them, my kids at that age. So they left that country just having two years of that experience. And that was a very, very important life moment for them. I think in terms of the way they would think about other people for the rest of their lives. So if I could give myself one big pat on the back as a parenting triumph, taking the [00:24:00] kids to a country like that for two years would probably be it. It was amazing.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:24:04] Even though you're seen as a hero by the whole world, I know that you must have had some moments when you weren't the dad you wanted to be. So can you share for us a parenting fail so that we can see that you're real.

**Richard Harris:** [00:24:17] Yeah, I mean, you know, I'm very critical of our own parenting and constantly thinking about what we could have done better. I mean, a very practical example, which is funny, but could have been bad, was one day Fiona and I had to go down to Port Adelaide, which is about 40 minutes drive, and for some reason we're both taking separate cars. So we both thought each other had one of the kids. And so we drove off with two of the three children, and we got down to this destination 40 minutes away, and we go, where's Charlie? And, uh, Charlie's nowhere to be seen, so shit, we've left one of our kids at home and he was about, I don't know, six. So I quickly rang my mum and dad, who lived across the road, and they sprinted over there, and he was sitting under a tree in the backyard, sobbing, crying his eyes out. Oh, that was, that was.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:25:06] Oh my God, I'm you're making me feel so much better. Because I do tell people I left one of mine at the pool and same thing. Dad was at the pool. I thought dad had him. Dad thought I had him. Um. And he's still reminding us how terrible it was. And we live 40 K's out of town as well, so I'm hoping there's a lot of parents who didn't do the headcount, who are now feeling very seen and heard.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:25:32] Harry, I bet Fiona and your kids were incredibly worried and scared when you were in that cave. No matter how brave you are. So how have you navigated fears and worries that you've had about your kids, even as they're smaller and growing older? And have those fears disappeared? Or do you have new fears for your almost adult kids now?

**Richard Harris:** [00:25:54] Yeah the things you worry about for your children definitely evolve as they get older. And you know when they're little, you [00:26:00] worry about them falling in pools or disappearing or being left at home. When they're when they're a bit older, you worry about adolescence and all the things that especially risk taking boys can get involved with during those years. And you worry about their safety, especially after hours when they're out and about on Saturday nights, driving and alcohol, those sorts of things become the next phase of terror.

**Richard Harris:** [00:26:23] And then as they get through that, you just you know what? I think the thing I worry about most now is their happiness. That's all I really want for them is to find love and to be happy in their own skin, you know, and to be proud of

themselves. At different times all our kids have struggled with some of that, and I find that very sad when they don't seem to be happy and you want to fix it for them, but you can't any longer. You know, when they're four years old, you can do a lot to make them happy. Dad jokes go a long way back then, but their jokes don't really solve some of these existential crises that, uh, young people find themselves in. And I remember going through it myself, you know, as a medical student at a couple of phases where I just thought, what am I doing here? I don't want to be here. I'm not enjoying this. There's really difficult times for all of us. Yeah, but, you know, you just hope that they have that resilience inside them to get through that and move on to the or get through those hard times to, you know, come out the other side. But I think that's what I worry about most for them now. Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:27:26] Now one of the favorite parts of these chats with dads is the wins that they have. Now you've already named one. So now I'm going to give you a chance, Harry, to name another fine moment that you feel you really nailed it as a good enough dad.

**Richard Harris:** [00:27:40] Um, I think maybe another practical example was my oldest son, James the musician and I used to play the guitar very, very badly when I was studying. You know, I had half a dozen chords and a couple of very, very bad songs that I would strum away just to help myself relax. And one day James asked [00:28:00] me, oh, what are you doing? Can you show me some chords? And so I showed him my three chords, and about a month later he came back to me and he'd been practicing and downloading stuff and and like, he was already ten times better than me. And he's turned out to be an amazing self-taught musician, playing the guitar, the bass, drums. And he's barely had a lesson, you know? So I congratulate myself on producing the next great rock star because of my three chords.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:28:25] You lit the spark I talked about before without even realising it had a potential to turn into a bushfire. A good bushfire that's completely controlled.

**Richard Harris:** [00:28:34] Yeah, yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:28:35] If you could only choose one thing that you want your three kids to have learned from you because you are their dad, what is that one thing that you want them to have learnt from you?

**Richard Harris:** [00:28:47] I think don't give up on stuff. Things are hard and you have to push through and you know if the challenge is worth it, it's worth the fight, it's worth the struggle. And equally, just treat other people like you'd like to be treated yourself. You know, be kind to people. Who was it who said, was it Abraham Lincoln who said, I don't like that person, I better get to know him better? That's a very hard lesson to learn. And I think in my late 50s, I'm only really starting to learn that, you know, it's very easy just to be offended by someone or to not like them at first glance. But there might be a reason they were like that on that day, or why they're always like that. And maybe it's our job to delve a bit deeper to see if there's a bit of gold in there, which I'm sure there always is.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:29:28] And your last question. So if you could wind back the clock and go to you before you became a dad and you could give yourself some advice other than preparing yourself for the moment of birth, what advice would you give to yourself from this mature dad place?

**Richard Harris:** [00:29:47] You know what I wish? I think you know, if you ask me, what's one thing that I might be a bit ashamed of and that is, you know, the way you treat your parents in life? And if I could go back and just be a bit nicer and a bit kinder and a bit more helpful to my parents, [00:30:00] I think that's what I would do during my teenage years. I was a proper shit, I reckon in retrospect and um, you know, I wish I could change that. But equally, I'm sure it's a normal part of adolescent development that you have to go through that that phase where your parents don't know anything and you, you resent them for everything, and then you come out the other side. And I certainly did come out the other side and became great friends with my parents. But it took a while, so I wish I could have avoided that, that patch.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:30:29] Would you say the same to yourself before you have kids? Just remember, there can be a patch where it's going to get bumpy and I'm still going to love them regardless of what happens. Is that advice you might like to give yourself?

**Richard Harris:** [00:30:41] Well and you know what? I found it much easier to love my kids when they were being like I was. And looking back at my parents now, I understand why they had that unconditional love for me and just rolled their eyes and walked away sometimes, rather than kicking me out of home. You'd do anything for your children, basically. And they, you know, until they're a serial killer or something, it's pretty hard to look at them in any other way except with unconditional love.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:31:05] Yeah, I call it fierce, unconditional love. And that's just such a beautiful place for us to finish our chat today. Harry, thank you so much for your time.

**Richard Harris:** [00:31:14] Thanks, Maggie.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:31:17] Richard Harris, former anaesthetist and author of the Art of Risk.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:31:23] Wow, what a chat! Harry had some great ideas on how to be a Good Enough Dad, so we're going to add them to our checklist. Firstly, I think it was so good to hear: Stop feeling guilty that you might not have made the right choices, and that know that your kids are still going to walk their own journey, regardless that a few muck ups is still good enough. Secondly, that a little bit of hardship, a little bit of challenge and possibly the odd fail is absolutely okay when we're building resilience in our kids. [00:32:00] And that grazes and ouchies and Band-Aids and even the occasional broken arm off the monkey bar are all really okay because our kids learn to overcome them. It's not a sign that we're lousy parents. And thirdly, sometimes following something really little can light that spark that, I said, every kid needs to have those chords on that guitar. Look what it did. So please follow your kid's curiosity and interests, even if they're not yours. I'm Maggie Dent, and this is the good enough dad. Follow us on the LiSTNR app or wherever you get your podcasts.