

# GED\_S01E27\_The\_Good\_Enough\_Dad\_Sam Drummond\_240410\_MID31-50\_FINAL.mp3

**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 Sam Drummond. Sam is a discrimination lawyer, author of the memoir Broke, a partner and a dad to three year old Gwen. When Sam was young, his parents found he had pseudo achondroplasia, which is a form of dwarfism that impacts bone growth and the health of his joints. Sam, welcome to The Good Enough Dad.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:01:28] Thanks for having me, Maggie.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:01:29] So what happened in the family home this morning? Was it calm? Was it chaos with little Gwen? What went down.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:01:35] Today was kinder day, and I was on bedtime duty last night. My partner was at book club. And so my strategy last night for getting Gwen to sleep was that the sooner you go to sleep, the sooner you see mum. And so she woke very early in anticipation of seeing mum. I sat with her for a little bit before coming here. She [00:02:00] had some food and then off she goes into kinder. Bye, dad. See you later. I want yoghurt when you pick me up.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:02:08] I'll just give you a tip around the helping them get to sleep bit. What I've learned over the years is I'm really good at it. Is that our kids co-regulate with our breathwork. So a lot of fake yawning and a lot of deep breathing can actually really deceptively, I call it manipulation with love, can gradually convince them that they're wanting to fall asleep, but you could also fall asleep.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:02:30] I have almost did that. A couple of nights ago. She was asking what blood is. And we have these really deep discussions just before bedtime. It ended up last night in me having a nightmare that I only had 21 days to live because we go so deep, so, so deep. But what is blood and how does it get around our body? Why are we warm? And so I started..

**Maggie Dent:** [00:02:55] Wow she's three!

**Sam Drummond:** [00:02:56] Oh yeah. We haven't got to any of the deep questions that we discussed yet, but I just put my hand on her heart and started going, boop boop boop boop boop boop boop. And I traced around her arm and said, the blood goes down there into your into your hands and your fingers, and then traced back down to her feet and up through the other leg and up into her arm, up her head, into her brain, which I said has so many questions and it needs rest and then down into your lungs. And that's when we did the deep breathing and then back into your heart. And then she's ready for bed. It's a beautiful thing.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:03:32] That there is a parenting hack to be copied. Now, obviously there were unique challenges in your childhood. Can you tell me some of the happiest memories you recall of being a little boy?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:03:48] Ah. My parents split up when I was four years old, and I don't have a lot of memories before then, but it seemed like a bit of stability [00:04:00] and I really enjoyed that. And my younger brother came along when I was four years old, or actually six days before my fourth birthday, six months before our parents split up. And I think a lot of things changed then. I have a lot of happy memories of running around a footy in a cricket field, and I wasn't in any position to be as fast or jump as high

as the other kids, but I just loved having a ball in my hand and felt like everything was okay if I had a football or a cricket bat in my hand.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:04:40] And your little brother, like a built in person to play with and to beat really.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:04:45] Well up till a point, because he was, he was bigger than me by ... there's a picture of my mum's second wedding and I was seven and he was three and we were about the same size.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:04:58] Yeah. Right.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:04:59] But he never realised it. So we used to fight quite often and I'm not proud of that. But I think that's a lot of brothers do that.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:05:09] Oh yeah.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:05:10] And I don't think that he realised that he was stronger than me until it was much too late. And that's when I gave up. That's when I decided to be the mature one and didn't fight.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:05:24] That would be it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:05:30] All right so you mentioned Mum and Dad split up. Do you remember that time at all as a kind of shift in how life was?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:05:39] Yeah, we moved from the country to the city when they broke up. And I think it also coincides with a series of surgeries I had on my legs. So as you mentioned, my legs not only didn't grow as long, but they grew bent. And so by the time I was four, I [00:06:00] had bowed legs that you could put a bowling ball through. And my parents didn't have any experience with disability. They sort of go along to the hospital, as you're told to do. And these very important looking men in bow ties came around and said, oh, you know, this is what's wrong, and we're going to fix this. And it's, you know, you'll be right, mate. And with a pinch on the cheek. So when I was five, I had a first in the series of surgeries where they would break my legs and try to straighten

them, and the first one was in plaster. There's one of the reasons why my book's called Broke, and I woke up and it felt wrong.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:06:41] Like I felt like I woke up from my childhood right then at five. But it had probably been coming. That shift had been coming from when mum and dad split up a year earlier. So they're all the memories are in there as one really. But I started screaming, saying something's wrong. And I remember there was Uncle Jesse from Full House, was in town for the Logies and he was coming to do one of his hospital visits, and he was signing photos and everything, and he came, I was screaming so loud that I got my own room in a in a public health system, which, you know, there's some benefits. But then he came in, he walked in and signed a copy and then just walked straight out. He didn't want to be anywhere near the screaming kid. Mum was saying, something's wrong. Something's wrong. The doctors were saying, oh, he just can't deal with the pain.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:07:30] Which is pretty awful anyway.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:07:31] Well, that's right, they just broke my legs. But then my feet started going purple and they'd put on the plaster to too tight. And so they whipped me back into surgery. And yeah, I feel like that's a very, very formative memory and something that's shaped the rest of my life. As a five year old. I don't think that you should have to go through with that sort of pain, and sometimes it's absolutely necessary, but it really [00:08:00] informs a lot of my parenting choices as an adult.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:08:03] Can you tell me how that was?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:08:06] Yeah I think. Instantly in that moment. I grew up very, very quickly and so I felt like I was a happy go lucky kid, just prancing around fields of dandelions before that. And and then I'd grown up and you can see it in photos really early. There's this happy kid beforehand, and then instantly there's a smiling kid, but they don't look happy. So after that, it took a long time for me to develop trust with people.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:08:41] And when that happens, you don't accept help. You become fiercely independent and letting other people into your lives to do things that

help you is really, really difficult. And so I think in a parenting perspective, you're reluctant to let people come in and cook a meal or or to lend a hand with, you know, the gardening or just looking after the kid themselves. We're almost four years in and we haven't left Gwen, with one exception, haven't left her with a non-family member for the night. And maybe that's the right thing to do. Maybe there's lack of trust is sort of healthy, but that lack of trust for me was developed as a five year old, and I don't think that is healthy.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:09:37] Yeah. And you had repeated, things like. I mean, I just can't even comprehend that as being a mother. How did your mum cope with that as well as you? That's just like, whoa.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:09:53] Yeah, and I thought mum was a superhero. Like she lived alone. She lived with the two of us. She [00:10:00] had 5 or 6 casual jobs at any one time just to try and get some money. And, you know, dad was chipping in from the child's support side as well. But it's never enough when you're running multiple households. And I remember on the second surgery and I was ten years old when the legs had bowed the other way, and instead of plaster, they'd put on these this metal frame around my legs with about ten different pins sticking into the bone to keep it straight. And so I instantly became very, very heavy. And mum was responsible for picking me up out of the car and into the wheelchair, and then through the house and off the wheelchair, into my bed or on the couch. And I remember very clearly her back just going essentially. And she didn't want to show it. She didn't want to show the pain, but she she got on with it. And, you know, for a lot of women, I think she's reached what should almost be retirement age now.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:11:06] And she gave her all for her kids. And she's been left with a whole lot of physical impacts from raising us, not a lot of financial security and also lives alone once we moved out. I really worried about what the future would hold for her. And so I think there are so many women in that circumstance, and we really need to make sure we support them.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:11:31] Ah, here, here. Yeah, we're seeing more and more of it, particularly in our economic climate at the moment. You've said your dad contributed

financially. Did you have a relationship beyond when he was in the home and after mum remarried?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:11:51] Yeah. We'd go every second weekend to various parts of the state. Wherever he was, he was living. And I think [00:12:00] this is one thing about being a parent now. It's like we moved on average about every year. So by the time I was 27, I'd lived in about 27 houses, not including dad's, and dad was moving just as often. And that lack of stability does things to you. And I moved out, and I remember I moved out into this tiny little bedroom in a share house of eight people, and every few months I got itchy feet because I just felt like it was time to move again.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:12:30] That's my normal little!

**Sam Drummond:** [00:12:31] That's right. It's probably, I don't know, a six square metre bedroom with my single bed and a desk and a wardrobe, and I'd just move everything around. It was just to feel like I was getting a new perspective.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:12:44] Wow.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:12:44] And it took a year to move out of that house, and then a year to move out of the next one. And I just keep doing it. And it's really strange now because Gwen's almost four and she's been in the same house her whole life, and I just don't know what that's like. I'm trying to give an entirely different experience to this child, and I hear a lot of people say, my parenting philosophy. I just want to be half the parent that my parents were. I want to do the same things, and I'm like, I want to do the opposite.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:13:16] I want to stay put.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:13:17] Yeah, that's right.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:13:17] I love it. Do you remember? Did I have time to, you know, do dad boy stuff with you and your brother and what might that have been? And when you did those visits.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:13:28] I think it's really tough. It's tough for the single dad, and it's tough for the single mum because the single dad gets to do the fun stuff every second weekend. But for the for the single dad, they are missing out on essentially 6/7 of the time of their children. So they're working, work, work, work, work work. And then you get this little snapshot. But we used to play footy or cricket or whatever season it was. We'd set up matches and my brother hated sport at that time, so usually he'd [00:14:00] sit on the sideline just reading a book or doing some colouring in. He was much more studious than I was. But dad as a fast bowler and still has a go in his mid 60s, his dream is to play in the over 70s Australian team because he reckons it'll be the only fast bowler left. He used to sit me down in the in the nets and try and take my head off. He used to live in this sort of stone shack in the middle of the bush that his neighbours had built by hand, and there was one of those old style trampolines that we used to jump up and down on with no safety equipment, without the edges with, you could put your foot through.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:14:46] That's it, and break it. No worries. Yep.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:14:48] Got it. And plenty of kids came home with trampoline injuries after a weekend, but mine was a bit unique because we'd put it up as a backstop for cricket, and he was trying to bowl bouncers at my head, which actually isn't very hard for someone standing at about, you know, 110, 120cm, but one ball in particular. He must have put a bit more effort into it because it hit the trampoline, and then the trampoline just started falling forwards and that big metal bar around the side hit me on the cheek, and so ended up in quite a significant bruise. And I think there's a lot of worry for single dads where if their kids come back injured and there's this photo of me accepting the junior school council, um, badge or whatever it was from grade four with a massive bruise from coming home from dad.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:15:42] Badge of honour.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:15:44] That's right. You don't get that with today's trampolines.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:15:47] Well, I'll tell you something that I heard, and it could be incorrect by now, but they actually, in, um, emergency departments report seeing just as many kids nowadays because they think the edging is going to keep them safe. So

they're actually [00:16:00] not learning to navigate their own sense of safety. And they're not taking that risk analysis. So it might have happened anyway. But the whole trampoline falling on you, you know, that's definitely a bit dodgy a bit dodgy for sure. All right. So do you remember anything in the way that your dad was being a dad for you, even though he only had one seventh of it was. Were anything you recall?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:16:20] I think every parents, whether they like it or not, your parenting style is informed by the way that you were brought up, and he was brought up as one of the middle children in a family of 11. Oh, so there's not a lot of sympathy that you get there. I think he would be quite happy to hear that emergency departments are getting more trampoline injuries today, because it was more of a just throw him in the deep end and he'll go. He'll be right. And I think that's probably an important lesson for any kid really, but particularly kids with disabilities. Is that there's this risk of cotton balling them. And it's from a place of love and wanting to protect. But it can have really negative consequences. Yeah. And so I remember one time in particular we we went camping a lot. And that's something that I really appreciate because you get a, a sense of. Life outside the house and what it's like to be in the Australian bush, which I love, and what it's like to be bitten by a bullet and, you know, recover.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:17:39] I still hurt.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:17:41] One of our favorite places was the Grampians in western Victoria. It's. Probably two and a half three hours drive from Melbourne, so pretty difficult for a family to get there. But once you drive over the hill, you just see this enormous landscape [00:18:00] of hills rising out of just what is flat farmland, essentially. And there's one walk there that has. We went with another family and it has different challenges along the way and ones it's called the Pinnacle Walk. And I think there is one little bit that is called something really scary, like the Bridge of Death. Someone will correct me and you walk out there and it's a sheer drop. You walk out on rocks, there are about a foot wide and it's a sheer drop on either side. And then there's this little lip. To the peak of it where you can jump out. And I've said, I'll have a go. And the other families that were with us were. I remember one mum in particular was terrified. She said, you can't do that. You'll die. And dad's like, nah, you'll be fine. He's not going to go out. And so of course I just walked straight out there and and they're all yelling at me to come back. And dad's just standing there with his arms crossed until I made to to jump



over to the to the end of it, which almost certainly would have been my entire death. My real death. Uh, and that's when he sort of called out saying, time to come back now. But I think that sort of philosophy only comes from being in a family where you can get in a car to go for a trip and forget to do the head count, and then remember halfway that you'd forgotten the symbolic, like it's every person for themselves. And there's something positive about that strength that I appreciate in that form of parenting to an extent.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:19:43] There is a really beautiful gift your dad did to you that sometimes today's parents are not just with children with disabilities or you know that a challenged, but it is that children are biologically wired to take themselves to the edge of their own fear. If we stop [00:20:00] getting in the road because they're actually working with their own body responses, is this enough? Is this enough? And and when parents well-meaning say that's enough and it isn't, we don't take ourselves to the edge. But I am really glad you dad did observe there was a potential dead moment coming. What a lot of parents would have done was not like the mum not let you even attempt that, right? So each time we do that, we actually get a little bit braver and it actually helps our capacity around anxiety. So I want to celebrate your dad's big moment there. Do you think you would do the same with Gwen in that situation? What do you think you would do in that situation? If you're up, up on the Grampians again.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:20:37] I'd absolutely let her. We spent a lot of time in the bush. We go camping. The difference is that she takes after her mum and she's a rule follower. So she already she was writing her little tricycle to a music lesson yesterday. And there's a dangerous intersection and I'm keeping my eye on her. But I know that she's going to stop at that intersection, and I don't have to tell her because she knows that's the rule.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:21:08] And it's so hard, though, isn't it?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:21:10] Yeah. I'd be I'd be really happy for her to take risks, because I think there is a dignity in risk. And it's something that I'd really like to encourage her to do, because when you're out of your comfort zone, I think that's when you're really living. Yeah, but there are some risks and some that I've taken that I

wouldn't, I wouldn't want her to take. Mhm. Um, you only learn that from growing older and taking those risks. So maybe she should take those silly risks. And there's a.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:21:43] Great lesson in the natural consequence isn't there, that um sometimes we're also. Oh no, I don't want them ever to hurt themselves. But sometimes in that moment, that's the moment that the whole consciousness goes right next time I do this, yeah, maybe I won't leap. Oh. Given [00:22:00] that your mum was six seventh, the main parent, what do you think you might take forward from how she parented you that you might maybe use as you raise your daughter? Because you can learn from your dad as well as your mum on how to be a parent. So what do you reckon?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:22:18] Yeah. As I mentioned, I think I went into parenting going, I'm just going to do the complete opposite. Like whatever they did that went completely wrong. But then you start reflecting on it and start reflecting on what did work. And we had a really close knit team of three people in that house. And everybody had an equal vote, although there was a casting vote. But we had a say, we had a voice and we felt listened to. And now I'm in a team of three and not looking to expand that. And want to make sure that everyone still has that say and that she feels like she has agency, because I think that's what mum gave us. Is agency over our future and that I don't care what she does as a grown up, as long as it's a choice that she likes and that she's using it to be nice to other people, essentially not a way that's pursuing just her own agenda, but seeing things from other people's perspective.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:23:36] Sam, your mom was just so ahead of her time. That is not what was normalized. It was kids did as they were told. You know, we are the boss. Oh my God. I just, you know, like, well done. I mean, it's something that I intuitively did because I felt I was never heard. But we know that the kids who have some agency and are part of negotiations actually manage adolescence a lot better because [00:24:00] they're used to having a bit of say instead of suddenly demanding, let me do my way. So well done. Well, I think.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:24:06] Perhaps it was a do over for her as well. Her mum died when she was 14. She was left with a military man father and one of her other sisters as a 14 year old in this house, which must have been really, really tough. And so I think mum loved being in that household and saying, I'm not going to make it like my own

father made it. And there are positives and negatives of that. It's like you have to take that balance. I don't like saying, now I'm going to do the complete opposite, but I'm not going to just copy my parents because I think we can all learn lessons.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:24:42] That's it. We take what will work now and we're going to leave the bit we feel just. I don't need to bring that with me now, Sam, let's be honest. People can be incredibly judgmental around children and people with disabilities, and they can make really big, dumb assumptions. So you never thought you would be a dad? Can you tell me where you came to that thought?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:25:05] There's just an underlying assumption from very early ages of what a family looks like, what a valued member of society looks like. People are having kids. We want to recreate that view. And I think we see that in the portrayal of people with dwarfism in the media. Like when I was growing up, the representation of me was like this. This yellow faced Oompa Loompa, who didn't have agency, was being paid. Probably nothing, but definitely less than minimum wage to work over the other side of the river for the whims of this weird guy making chocolate for kids. Or I was mini me in a sort of similar situation, this hyper sexualized being, but definitely not reproducing.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:25:54] Yeah, no.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:25:56] When that's the representation of me. As [00:26:00] a kid. I'm saying I don't want to be a dad. And so the equation for me was if I was going to have kids, it's a 1 in 2 chance that they're going to inherit my disability. And I thought about it for a while. Um, went overseas for a pretty long time with my partner. And. Thinking about the diversity that those other cultures, the value of those, and that everybody in this world is different. And there's a real beauty in that. We were going into houses and walking into local communities, and first of all, they'd never seen anything like me are like the white people at all.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:26:47] You're breaking a stereotype right there, I know.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:26:52] And learning from each other and just going, this is great, and we can just have a chat trying to learn some of their language. They're trying to

learn some of our language. And I just thought about diversity and going, what is really at the core of me not wanting to be a parent. Is it that I don't value myself? Is it that I don't want to face the same choices that my parents faced as a kid? Like, am I holding myself back because I think, well, at some point my kid might need surgery, or the doctors say that they need surgery. And at that moment, I'm going to have to make a choice about whether they are about to lose their childhood or whether I'm doing them more damage because they'll be in pain a long way down the track. Or is it just okay to be in a wheelchair like we've been sold this lie? That disability is a bad thing and that it's a disaster to be in a wheelchair. But actually, it can be really great to be in a wheelchair. And sometimes I've seen people go into wheelchairs, and it's the most freeing thing that's happened in their life.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:27:53] And all they need is a ramp to get into their workplace. So all these questions and assumptions that I've had about parenting and then [00:28:00] started talking to my my partner and she's she never wanted kids, but for different reasons. But we hadn't had the talk and we just talked it out. And, you know, we laughed and we cried and we decided that to have a being in the world that could bring joy in our into our lives, yeah, was much more important. And then you go on that journey and, you know, from those very first stages of life, we went in for the first scan and the sonographer said. So your disability is not genetic. Then I said, no, it is. And he turned to my partner and said, oh I'm sorry. Yeah. And she said, no, it's not a bad thing. We're happy either way. And whatever happens to this child, we're going to accept that. And that goes into genetic screening or the testing that is so common these days. It's like they scare the bejesus out of new parents.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:28:56] Oh gosh. Yeah.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:28:57] Saying, here are all the bad things that could happen and we're gonna do a test because that's a bad thing. And there is some value in some of those tests, but also it's just sending this fear of disability when actually I think we should be embracing it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:29:12] Yeah, we are so much more than a body. We're whole beings that have capacity for deep and meaningful lives despite our bodies. You're already an example of that.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:29:24] And I think you see that. So this morning I dropped Gwen off at Kinder. And if I did that at the start of the year, there's all these kids coming up to me or pulling on their parents t shirts saying, look at that small man. Look at that funny looking man. Whereas today, after eight months, they come up and sit next to me and have a chat to me, or start opening up their lunch box and showing me what's in it like. The more that we make disability about difference. Then [00:30:00] the less we accept it, but the more we just normalize it, then we just go along judging people on their personalities. And you know what? I have a terrible personality sometimes, but judge me on that. Not my disability.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:30:12] Yes. Can I just share you with you? A story that I hope is you can take it for exactly where you've come from. So once I had a two and a half year old son and I was at the shopping center, and he suddenly pulls my arm and goes, mommy, look at this short, fat lady. And I'm going, oh no, just pretend I'll ignore it because I don't want to embarrass her. And so I ignored it and he's going, mommy, louder! Look at the short fat lady. And I'm going, no, no, no, no, no, we're just going to go. And in the end, he screamed so loudly and I have just about like the ground has swallowed me up and oh my God, I was devoured. Anyway, I'm in a lot of community groups and I'm there one day, about eight months later and this lady is there and I've, I've gone over to her and said, look, I think I owe you a profound apology. And I said I was the mom of the screaming out boy at the shopping center, and I didn't handle it well.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:30:59] And she just burst out laughing. She said, oh my God. We got home and we nearly wet ourselves laughing about how poor you. You were so cringed and I said, so. What I realized is, he's so curious. So I now know that I would kneel down next to him and say, yes, there are some people who this is exactly how they're going to be because their bodies are different, but they're still real people and they've still got hearts. And so I knew exactly what to do from there on, but I, I thought you'd appreciate it because here I'm trying to be as politely whatever. And I ended up absolutely cocking it up. But her and I worked together on a lot of projects, and you're absolutely right. Nobody batted an eyelid because we work so closely together. So when we allow that to happen, it becomes the new normal. Yeah. Oh. You once wrote, you would grieve if Gwen inherited your disability and you would grieve if [00:32:00] she did not. Um, can you explain that? It's a little confusing for me.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:32:07] Yeah. Uh, and it's it's still confusing for me.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:32:10] Okay. We're all right, then. It's it's just being confused and and move on.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:32:16] Because human emotion is difficult, but there are opportunities that you miss out on if you have a disability and there are opportunities that you miss out on if you don't. And so for me, having a disability has allowed me to see the world in an entirely different way than someone who walks past me on the street. Yeah. And it's been a great thing. Like, I'm really proud of my disability. It makes me who I am. So Gwen does have my disability, and she wants to run as fast as the other kids, and that's not going to happen. So she loses that opportunity, right? But. She has this temperament that I've never seen in any other kid. And other kids will be running around screaming. Out of control, and she is there listening attentively. And part of that at least, is, I think, because of a disability. She sees the world in a different way, and she's going to contribute to the world in a in a different way than anyone else on this planet. And I love it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:33:31] I love it, absolutely love it. And you're so right. So what sorts of assumptions do people make? Do you think about your parenting ability due to your disability? What sorts of messages do you get?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:33:44] Yeah, well, it definitely started from those early doctor appointments. One of the things that my partner and I were talking about when we were discussing whether we'd have a kid. So I was terrified. If. The kid could run faster than me, that [00:34:00] they would run out on the road, and there was nothing that I could do to stop that. And I think that's that is something that you would have to think about. But I, I work part time now. I took 18 months off parental leave and just tried to do everything that I could to throw myself into this parenting world without, you know, without it, without a textbook or anything like that. Just saying. Let's just go back to basics. And there were some horrible things about lockdown, but one of the things that allowed us to do, and me in particular, was to go back to basics and say, let's just spend time with this kid. And we and I did what a gift. There were no distractions at that point. As much as they're helpful, no grandparents coming in, no parties to go to, no, um, you

know, second, third birthdays. It was just us. And we got to get to know each other. And that was fantastic. People got to know me as that guy who pushes around the pram in the neighborhood. Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:35:13] Tell me about that.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:35:15] And there was some things where, um, it was the only way that she fell asleep. Yeah. Uh, in the pram. And, uh, I would push her around and push her around. And I think a lot of parents do this. Just push them around the neighborhood until she fell asleep. And then I'd race back home and put her inside and not even lift the lift her out of the pram. But eventually my joints gave way. I couldn't walk any further, so I said, all right, that's it. You got to fall asleep in your bed. And that's the opportunity, right?

**Maggie Dent:** [00:35:48] You're right there.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:35:49] You're not doing something doesn't work. So you got to do something else. And that that suddenly worked. I think it took four days. And then she never had a problem falling asleep in her own bed again.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:35:58] New habit.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:35:59] And [00:36:00] it's becoming more widespread now. But I think there's still challenges around a primary care as a dad. Part of it's on dads to make the space part of. It's on employers to make sure when they're when a dad asks to take parental leave, that they say yes like they would if it was a woman. But also there's just physical challenges there with the maternal health clinic. Yeah. And so we were in all these moms groups and during lockdowns, their WhatsApp group is going, yeah, just bananas. And most of it I can't reply to because it's things about physical problems after birth that I just cannot. You didn't even know they can't relate to, so I just mute the conversation.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:36:53] That's a little bit more than I needed to know. But the oversharing. Yeah, okay, I love it.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:36:58] So there are all sorts of assumptions that people are coming at me of this dad with a disability. It's just not society's view of what a stay at home parent is.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:37:07] I just love that what you were doing, even though you were in pain walking your daughter around, you were really absolutely modeling in a very real space how to be a good enough dad because you were nailing what was working until you went to the next step and you were in pain with it. Let's be honest. So would you have any advice for any other dads who live with a disability that you can still be a good enough dad with a disability?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:37:31] Yeah. Well, absolutely. And actually you're going to be better at it because you can problem solve in another space. And parenting is about problem solving.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:37:41] You're very good at problem solving, being living with a disability. As long as you.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:37:45] Don't think the kids are the problem. Yes, they're the problems are not the kids. No.

**Speaker4:** [00:37:51] I love that.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:37:56] What do you think was your most challenging [00:38:00] time or experience as a dad so far, given she's nearly four?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:38:05] I don't know if there's a most challenging time. I think the return to work is always going to be difficult. Yeah, um, but I've spent more time with her than any other human on the planet. And she doesn't appreciate it.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:38:22] Oh, no. Seriously.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:38:25] And so it's this really funny thing that a lot of parents talk about how they swap from one parent to the other. And today, dad or mom's favorite. And the other day, mama or Papa's favorite or no one's favorite. And it's just grandma.



My daughter, when it comes to love at the moment, is going through a very, very sexist period.

**Speaker4:** [00:38:49] Yeah.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:38:51] And she says to me multiple times a day, I don't love you because you don't have a vulva, right?

**Maggie Dent:** [00:39:00] That is a very sexist opinion.

**Speaker4:** [00:39:03] Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:39:03] Not into the penis at all. Just what's the vulva?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:39:07] And not only I don't love you, I will never love you. Oh, she's only love giving. Yeah. Um, and that's a real challenge because my partner works full time. Needs to be on. Yeah. Also works from home quite a lot of the time. But then the burden, the burden of that goes on to her because she won't let me put on a jumper and it takes half an hour to find the right clothes to go out, and she will say, never you. I don't love you. Only mum and my partner's in a very important meeting and has to come out and find the right jumper that I could have done. Yeah, my views around, I think very basic concepts of gender have just been changed by the parenting experience.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:39:56] So I might debrief you on this a tiny bit, [00:40:00] because what we actually find with some children around three and four is that their capacity to be completely attached to two loving parents isn't quite there. So she's desperately just mum is the favourite parent. It's actually not the vulva. It's actually no, it's not because dads can be the favourite one and mums the excluded one. And when she's saying those words, she's trying to say how big her feelings are towards this one because I can't do you as well. But the good news is that this is not permanent and that there are times that you can put in that. Yep, I know that you would love mummy right now, but she's actually doing that. We've got to do something funny. That means it's going to be a fun thing. I'll come and do a fun thing because instead of sitting there feeling wounded, because you don't have a vulva and she doesn't want to include you, she's going, you're going to do something that makes her laugh. And when you make you

laugh, you're actually more fun to be with. And so therefore gradually towards sort of four and a half, five, there's this. Okay, I can do both of you. But mind you, she's a girl and she's, by the sound of it, pretty clever. She's still going to work. How I can split and divide and who can I, who who gives me the best chance of getting what I want? So welcome to having a daughter. And I think.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:41:16] That's another, just another challenge is that from my childhood, where we couldn't have everything that I wanted, that just weren't the resources to provide that to now being in a position where I can't really see anything that she would want that we can't provide, and that's a really lucky position to be in. Yeah, but I don't want to give.

**Speaker4:** [00:41:39] It to her.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:41:39] Great. Thank you very much. Right. The spoiled overentitled child is a real thing. And what we actually know in terms of play is that more toys you have, the less that your children become creative. Play, play beings and play is actually so incredibly important. All [00:42:00] right. I got Nyla with one of your biggest mock ups okay. We all mock up. Can you give us a significant parent fail with Gwen, please.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:42:09] Are there I think there are a lot. Like.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:42:15] If I could tell you how many times I've heard that on this podcast. I just asked for one.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:42:19] I was talking about this yesterday with a group of dads that for some reason come to swimming lessons on a Thursday, and one made a really good point, is that you just in the day to day of parenting all the time, so you never celebrate your wins. Yes, you don't actually think of your wins, but all of the failures really add up. And you think of small things like, we were in an event. I never had a cheese board as a kid. I didn't know they existed. I didn't like cheese. I had those what I now know as plastic cheese in the in the plastic packaging. So the the concept of going to an event where there's a cheese board is, is, I don't know, confusing to me. This is how small these little things get into your head. Yeah. And the speeches came on and she was being very good in the front row because. The speech is about the most boring

concept of a strategic plan, and there's this three year old learning about a strategic plan of a medium sized organization, and most of the adults in the room wouldn't care. But she's three and listening to this, but my partner sort of poked me and said, can you go over and get something from the cheese board? And I brought back, she likes little things, so she likes cherry tomatoes, she likes dates, sultanas, she likes to eat little things. So I found this little cheese stuffed pepper and brought it over very happy. And she puts it in her mouth and it took about two seconds. And then she just said, water, water, water spat it out. Oh my god. And just that stayed with me. Yeah, that's.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:43:55] A public one two really.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:43:57] She was so good. But I was so [00:44:00] silly that it's a reminder. To me that there aren't there aren't a lot of big fails. But you remember the little fails.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:44:12] What is your biggest fear when it comes to being a dad? Raising Gwen? In today's world.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:44:19] It's the same question that I had when I was deciding to have kids. Uh, no doubt that when my parents were faced with the advice from doctors that I needed surgery, they weren't given a choice. It was surgery or nothing. And we went with surgery, and it has impacted the rest of my life. And I still don't know. What the right answer to that is. When I was a teenager, I used to play the trumpet, and this old jazz musician, who was probably 80 years old, smoked like a chimney, would come into the band practice and he'd pick out kids. To come and and jam at his place. His name was Alan Watson. And so I got chosen to come and play trumpet in his Little Teenage Jazz Ensemble. So we went to his house and it just stank of smoke. The walls were yellow, but all these teenage kids who some of them have become really good musicians, we were told, you know, now's your time to solo. And Alan would say there's no wrong notes, just better choices than others.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:45:34] Oh, I love that.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:45:36] And I never made the better choices. So I didn't continue with the trumpet. But the same thing stays with me. And I think if a doctor came to us

and looked at Gwen and said. We would like to operate on her. I see it as a choice. I have the benefit now of having [00:46:00] experienced that and having a choice between putting this kid through surgery or waiting, and there are other consequences, one of which might be not walking. And I don't think that that's necessarily a bad thing. But knowing that there's no wrong choice, there's only better choices than others. And my fear is that I don't. I make the same choices that I did in my trumpet solos, and they're not as better as the other ones. That's my biggest fear.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:46:31] All right, now's your moment for a dad. Brag. What do you think has been one of your greatest parenting wins with Gwen? Please get the trumpet out.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:46:42] Yeah. This is. Well, this is harder than the fears, right? You don't remember them? No, it's harder than the. It's harder than the fears. It's harder than the fails.

**Speaker4:** [00:46:51] Why?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:46:52] Because you're just in. You're trying to get through the day and anything that will get you through the day.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:46:59] But a win. That's what we should be sharing with our mates instead of our disasters. But go on.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:47:03] Exactly right. And we never celebrate it. This is a good question. Yeah, there are a few. I mean, one is that one of our lockdown activities was to play our record collection when she was 4 or 5 months old. We started playing our record collection from A to Z, from ABBA to Z.z. Top. But we never got to W and played the Wiggles.

**Speaker4:** [00:47:24] And.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:47:26] She does not know what the Wiggles are, and she requests on loop the b side of the Beatles Abbey road. We listen to it three times yesterday, and I hear parents saying that they listen to The Wiggles that that much or

some other kids track, and I'm listening to something that still sends shivers up my spine. I'm really happy about that. But I think the biggest one, perhaps, is she's gone through the Y stage and she she came through that very early when she just turned one, [00:48:00] when my mum's cat died and watched it buried, she started asking why and she started talking about death. So as a lawyer, I made this rule for myself that I would argue it out to the end. And if I'd said because it is, then I'd failed. Yeah. And we get into there's quite often happens just before bedtime. I'm sure she's just trying to put off bedtime. But we get into these discussions that I don't even I never thought I'd get into with an adult, let alone a three year old or a two year old. She asked me the other day, do trees think? And it would have been so easy to say, of course they don't. What a silly question. But actually.

**Speaker4:** [00:48:44] Maybe they do. Yeah, yeah.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:48:47] There are studies that say they do, right? Yes. She's asking last night. She's she's saying why do some people not love each other. Wow. And I'd had a really tough day. I was a bit grumpy. And you could just dismiss the question or say something like, sometimes people just, you know, move apart. But we actually if you analyze the question and going back to your your concept before of having this space to love. It became this really beautiful discussion of the importance of loving each other. And suddenly my grumpiness floated away because I we talked about why everybody in in the community deserves love and what it means to live a successful life. And it was just beautiful. And so I think when you argue out why? You end up learning a lot yourself.

**Speaker4:** [00:49:47] Ah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:49:47] I just people do not understand how incredibly curious. Our little ones are, and that yes, they can take things at certain levels, but they [00:50:00] store it and then it will sometimes come back out a little bit later. But some of our kids are wired to be these deep thinkers. I was such a deep thinker. I was doing that with my dad early and he was just looking at me going. He thought she was an agricultural scientist so he could give me quite a bit of information. But one of my sons was like that and one of my grandsons, I'm listening to him come out every now and then towards bedtime. So what's happening is the brain is deconstructing the day and this little

curious thought. And then if they haven't got a safe grown up, who can. Yeah. No. You know, go and ask your mother. Whatever. Um, let's just explore that and have a thought about it. You are expanding brain cells like you wouldn't believe. The other bit is the music, the two things together. Kids need those for them to become. You know, that brain is growing at such a fast rate. Well done. Another one of your big wins. You're two big ones there. Now stop being greedy, okay? You've got one thing. I'm only going to let you have one thing you want Gwen to learn from you. What is it? You can only one thing. This is what my dad taught me.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:51:03] I think we have a really specific value of fairness in our house. And we've been talking about working with a team within your family and everybody having a say. But I my one thing in thinking about that of what she has to offer the rest of the world, is that. Her have strong value of fairness is not just that everyone has an equal opportunity in life, because I think when we say the fair go in Australia, that's what we mean. But that fairness means an active pursuit, that if you see someone who's less well off than you. Then you give them a voice. And that you say, all right, we're not just going to give this person an equal opportunity, but we're going to work towards real equality for this person so that nobody's left behind. If she's an adult, whatever she [00:52:00] does, if she's an adult and can do that whether I'm here or not, I feel like I've succeeded.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:52:06] Absolutely. All right. So if you could go back, you know, the wisdom that you've already got. And gosh, she's only been around four years nearly. And go back to talk to Sam about to become a dad. What bit of advice would you give to him before she's even arrived? That might have been helpful for you to know back then?

**Sam Drummond:** [00:52:25] Oh, I was so scared. It was such a scary experience. I remember bringing her home that first night and not sleeping because. You think they've stopped breathing.

**Speaker4:** [00:52:42] And then.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:52:42] You only breathe when? When this little being breathes out and you go, thank goodness. And that just. Enjoy those moments. There are some

things that are going to frighten you, but it's all part of it. Just enjoy it, I think. Be present because they are valuing you. Being present.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:53:10] The greatest gift you can give is the presence of presence.

**Speaker4:** [00:53:13] Yeah.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:53:14] Sam, thank you so much for your time. Thanks for.

**Speaker4:** [00:53:17] Having me.

**Sam Drummond:** [00:53:18] What a pleasure.

**Maggie Dent:** [00:53:21] Discrimination lawyer and author Sam Drummond. Wow. Sam certainly had some great ideas on how to be a good enough dad, so we're going to add them to the checklist. Firstly, it's so much easier to remember to focus on the fails and not the wins as a dad. So please focus on the wins and it's okay to brag. Secondly, the importance of giving kids agency. That means choices. Yes, sometimes it is. Do you want to wear that top or that top? And that's why sometimes [00:54:00] they'll melt down over the wrong coloured cup that you chose. This is healthy and this is normal. And yes, it can be frustrating. Thirdly, we need to recognise that families come in all shapes and sizes and can still thrive and raise amazing kids. So be careful about making assumptions on those who are different. 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.