

TGED_Matt Okine_Final.mp3

Speaker1: [00:00:02] A LiSTNR Production.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:06] Now, I've come to realise that no dad wants to be a lousy dad, and aiming to be a great dad is really admirable. You know what? Being a good enough dad is so much more important. I'm Maggie Dent, parenting author, educator and champion of boys and men, and this is The Good Enough Dad where I chat to smart, funny and loving dads about the ways they've discovered to be good enough at this parenting gig. Well, at least some of the time. My Good Enough Dad today is Matt Okine.

Matt Okine: [00:00:41] My friends called their baby Sienna because that's where she was conceived. And, you know, beautiful Tuscan town in Italy, Sienna, and my partner and I thought we'd do exactly the same thing for our daughter; quest Wollongong.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:53] Matt is a stand up comedian, musician, author, actor and the other half of The All Day Breakfast podcast duo Matt and Alex. But most importantly, he's a father to Sofia, who's aged three. G'day, Matt.

Matt Okine: [00:01:08] Hi, Maggie.

Maggie Dent: [00:01:08] Now, who we were as kids and how we were raised by our parents can have a really big impact on how we raise our own children. So, Matt, what sort of kid were you?

Matt Okine: [00:01:19] I think I was cheeky and funny and I was fairly sort of book smart. I duxed to my primary school. I cared about getting good marks and wanting to impress my parents. We lived near a park. And we spent a lot of time in that park going through the bush and, you know, playing with the next door neighbours.

Maggie Dent: [00:01:47] Wild and free.

Matt Okine: [00:01:48] A little bit like that. I was very much a mummy's boy and I really stuck, you know, beside my mum for the majority of my childhood until she died when I

was 12. So [00:02:00] that flipped my relationship with my own dad completely on its head because before he'd sort of just been a periphery player in my sort of upbringing, I'd felt, and then suddenly it was just me and him. And it was a really I mean, you know, my sister was living overseas at the time, and she was 19 when it happened. So she had a completely different response. Whereas I was just ramping up into puberty and becoming an adult, but still very much losing mum at the point where, you know, I was most child, you know, 12 and I would still like she was still perfect in my eyes. So I hadn't, I hadn't learned that she was an adult with faults yet and everything like that. And so suddenly I landed with my dad and then my dad copped a lot of those realisations of, you know, the fallible human. And you're the, you know, everything's your fault.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:54] But also what we find is even in my one of my surveys around one of my books, nearly 60% of grown men say the safest, most significant person in their life was mum during the adolescent years.

Matt Okine: [00:03:06] Yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:03:06] When they were just floundering.

Matt Okine: [00:03:08] Yeah. And so that's it that I lost that and then. So then, yeah, Dad had to sort of cop all the just all of the crap really. And I look back on it and I feel really guilty or sad about it because, you know, now understanding what he would have been going through, what he was going through in that time was not in my mind at all. It didn't occur to me that his life had been completely flipped on its head. And now he was a sole parent to this teenager that was angry all the time and all that sacrifices that he would have had to make and his life completely changing and everything.

Maggie Dent: [00:03:41] And grief in most men and boys comes out often as anger. And so you already were going to be a pretty pissed off teenage boy for all sorts of reasons. And now you had this massive grief on top. Well done, you.

Matt Okine: [00:03:56] Well, I mean, well done to my dad for and both of us for being [00:04:00] able to to get through it. And now we're such good friends. And it's really a relationship that I treasure a lot and something that I've taken stock in what he his

presence for me and all those times and I want to relay that and have a really good relationship with my daughter.

Maggie Dent: [00:04:17] Was there a time that you can remember either mum or dad had to be really firm or tough on you? What was it and how did they deal with it?

Matt Okine: [00:04:23] I remember my mum slapped me once. That was a little bit of a shock. That still comes up.

Maggie Dent: [00:04:29] What was your crime?

Matt Okine: [00:04:30] Well, I'd lost my money bag. I think she'd warned me not to lose it. And then I'd lost it. And it had my house keys and my money in it. And I remember I told her, and she just gave me, like, a slap across the face. I think she must have been going through something on that day as well. Whatever was going on. I mean, they were probably breaking up at that time. I remember it was a big moment and I remember getting really upset. And then afterwards she came over and said, like, you know, if I ever do that again, please tell your dad and just don't, I don't ever want to do that. So there was that. That's always sort of stuck out to me as quite a big just a weird moment, you know, in my upbringing. I remember Dad kind of like, discipline, like smacking me like just as a as a parent used to back in the day very like you know, not non not in any.

Maggie Dent: [00:05:27] Not with the belt.

Matt Okine: [00:05:28] No, no, no, no nothing like that. It was always just little smacks and like I mean he did that once or twice that I can remember and it was never anything that I really, that I even care about. I mean, yeah, nothing when I was really little that I got in too much trouble for except for, you know, one morning when my sister was going to roller skating classes, I was riding around the house on my little skateboard and I ran straight into one of our big windows and that smashed. And that [00:06:00] was one of those things where I look back now and I'm like, Oh.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:03] But how did they handle it in that moment? Because it's that reactive moment, isn't it?

Matt Okine: [00:06:07] Oh, I mean, you know, Mum yelled at me and was angry and was as angry as anyone would be if that happened to me right now, I'd be furious, you know what I mean? Especially like on the way out of the house and like, Are you kidding me? Like, I just. Yeah, I can't believe that I didn't get thrown out with the rubbish on days like that. But. But no, there wasn't any huge, huge issues when I was, when I was a small child.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:29] Okay, so Matt, do you think the the way that you were disciplined had any effect on the way that you discipline your little Sofia?

Matt Okine: [00:06:38] Absolutely. I you know, I don't do any sort of physical disciplining at all. And I always felt very supported and loved by both my parents. And I feel like I try to do the same thing with my daughter. I'm actually a little bit nervous about the way I've been disciplining recently because I feel like there's been, I wonder too much whether I'm leaning too much on the bargaining aspect of discipline. Yeah, Yeah. And the Oh, well, if you don't do this, then you won't get that. Or if you don't do this. So you know, because, because I find myself really leaning into it almost every time at the moment, because it is an instant, you know, it usually does work.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:22] You do realise that's based on Skinner-ism, which was based on rats training. Rats.

Matt Okine: [00:07:27] That's good to know that I'm passing that on to my daughter.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:31] And it's really, really common. Come on, it's a lot better than shouting and yelling and hitting.

Matt Okine: [00:07:35] I'm also sort of working with her to get her to understand that she can get the power of negotiation that will be useful for her for her whole life. So I try to have these conversations where where I'm like, look, if you want something, you need to tell me. And then we can figure out a way that we both get what we want.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:56] So good. We know that the kids have actually had an opportunity to be heard and negotiate [00:08:00] things in their life are much less

rebellious as teenagers because they got heard and they had some choices and they had some autonomy. And the second thing what I'm hearing is your parents disciplined you, not just punished you. Discipline is teaching and guiding our kids to make better choices, whereas the punishment is, I'm just going to make you hurt so that you won't do it out of sheer fear.

Matt Okine: [00:08:24] Yeah, that's interesting.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:28] So now let's wind the clock back just a little bit. Just a few years. What was the toughest part of parenting Sofia, in the first year of her life?

Matt Okine: [00:08:38] Being fairly helpless was a very tough thing. Just having nothing that could make her feel better. Belle would be like you. My partner would get so like tired. Tired of having this little thing hanging off her all the time. And so, you know, I would want for her to go to the shops, to go to do something to get out of the house. And you'd be like, Yeah, we'll be fine, We'll be fine. And then she would go, and if Sofia started crying or something would go wrong. There was just nothing I could do. I just had, I had nothing that I could possibly provide that would calm her. And what she needed was the boob, you know, and she really wanted it. And I just couldn't give it to her. So that was a really hard thing. And I remember we spent days and days like, I remember going, that's it. I'm going to, we're going to get a bottle happening. We're going to do the bottle thing. We had so many different bottles. We had so many different teats, you know, and and trying everything. It was, I remember spending like a full day going from park to park around Glebe where we lived, just trying to get her to drink the smallest little bit of this bottle. And she just cried the whole [00:10:00] time. And people walking past looking at you and you feel like there's judgment and you feel like you're just doing such a bad job and you just don't understand why, why they won't just take this stupid bottle, you know?

Maggie Dent: [00:10:13] So one of the things that dads have told me a lot is that, you know, we're wired to be the fixers and protectors and defenders and that powerlessness, you know, in that moment, and it's also when they're having a massive meltdown, it's like, how the hell do I stop this and fix this without understanding that it's meant to be happening. And it's not you being a failed dad or a failed man. Parenting as a team is a whole new phenomenon. It wasn't around before, right? And so many dads

told me that working with their female co-parents can be tricky. And I often remind audiences there's two ways to change nappies and they're both valid. And who cares if the onesies are on the outside of the leggings instead of on the inside, you know? So how have you found that part of being a dad?

Matt Okine: [00:10:56] The collaboration is very eye opening and very real, and it does come somewhat as a shock when you do it for the first time, when you start becoming a parent and you start understanding that every single decision that gets made requires a negotiation on some part, and it really does. You, as soon as you have a baby, you just go, Oh, this is why people get divorced. I completely understand it. The minute it happens, you're like, Oh, now I understand how relationships fall apart. I get it because every single little thing requires a negotiation. So you're there going, well, you know? And then of course, the stakes are so high at the beginning and no one's done it before. So everyone's learning on the go and everyone's tired and it's 2:00 in the morning and no one has the right answer. No one knows how to fix it. So you're there going well, Have you tried this? Yeah, of course I've tried that. Well, I don't know. I'm just trying this. I don't know. And what, what the time really calls for is for you to put the baby down and [00:12:00] hug each other and go. I don't know either. Like, I'm so lost, I don't know what I'm doing.

Matt Okine: [00:12:05] But of course you can't because there's a crying baby. So you're carrying this thing around and you're, you know, and it's just so, it's so intense and it never stops. It never, ever stops. And so it just starts coming down to every single thing. Big decisions, little decisions. Here's a great example for dinner, right? If we've got a little frozen meal, right? A little frozen meal for Sofia to have. My partner will like to add extra things to the frozen meal. So she will cut up some some baby spinach and blanch it and get out some lemon and get some parmesan and put some cottage cheese in. And so if I'm making the meal. I'll just make the meal. But she'll be like, can you can you cut up the, can you do the thing? And I'm like, It doesn't matter. Do we have to do all that stuff? Like the whole point of the frozen meal is that it's easy. But what we're actually doing here now is we're cooking a meal, even though the whole point of the meal is to not cook the meal. But she really wants to get all those those extra things in. And make sure that there's greens in it and, and all those things.

Matt Okine: [00:13:17] And so, so we might, we might have an argument about that or it's like, well why does it matter? You know, it's like, well it matters to me, so that's valid. So then you're like, okay, well I need then I do need to lift up my standards. But also it doesn't matter to me. So should I? Should I lift up my standard because I don't care. And so, you know, TV, the amount of TV that our daughter watches, we will have arguments about that where it's like, well, you know, you should do something because, you know, she's been watching too much TV and it's like, well, I don't think it is too much TV because there is, I'm sure there's a clinical amount of too much TV, but an extra half hour or an hour is not a thing that is actually, there is no guide on the Internet that says this is too much or this [00:14:00] is not enough or whatever. It's just like, I don't know, we we do stuff. We're going to go to the pool later on. Why don't we just watch 30 minutes more TV and then we'll go and do the fun thing?

Maggie Dent: [00:14:08] So what we noticed with women is that they're always wanting to up the game of everything they do, and that's why they don't fall asleep very well at night because they're just going through everything they did saying, I could have done that better. And they didn't eat broccoli and oh my God, I didn't get that load of washing done and heavens, will they get to university. And we just this overthinking stuff is something that guys just don't have to worry about too much. So every now and then, you know, just being able to go, Yeah, Yes, dear, I know it sounds so corny, but sometimes for peace rather than do we negotiate everything, you know exactly your viewpoint. She knows hers sometimes just because she's really got that decision overload that I don't think most guys can understand. Yeah, we'll just do it your way because it's right now. But when it's a biggie, let's have a conversation about it. And if we change the word argument to conversation.

Matt Okine: [00:15:03] Ah, yes.

Maggie Dent: [00:15:03] Okay. Got that? Yeah, the reframe. It's beautiful. Okay, I'm going to ask you to fess up now. What has been your worst parenting fail so far? And you're talking to somebody who's left their kid at the pool, you know, forgot book week. Really terrible things. So what? So far you've only had three years to fail badly. What do you reckon it might have been?

Matt Okine: [00:15:22] So the other week we had a little like holiday away and we were trying to get out of the house to get on the road quickly. Well, I was, my partner was sort of packing up. And again, we have different approaches to time management and those sort of things. So I wanted to get on the road really quickly.

Maggie Dent: [00:15:44] You didn't want to mow the lawn, do you, just before you go?

Matt Okine: [00:15:46] No, no. But my partner was like making sure that everything was okay before we left the house, whereas I felt I'm sure it's going to be fine. Let's go. So and you know, thankfully for her, like, I'm very thankful for her for being, you know, making sure that [00:16:00] these things are like, you know, by checking all the boxes and making sure because I think we work well in a team as a team. But in this particular instance, I was kind of like, come on, can we go? And my daughter was in the back seat and I had turned the car on to get the air conditioning going and to have the music playing. And eventually I was like, Come on, let's go. So I got out of the car and I went into the house to say, Hey, what's going on? Like, what's the holdup? And in that time, my daughter had gotten out of her baby seat and gone to sit in the driver's seat with the car on and pretending to drive. And I saw that and realised like. The handbrake would be difficult to get off, but you just never know. And I just seeing her with this car on vroom, vroom, vroom, pretending to drive. And I was just like, Oh my God. Like, I just couldn't believe that I had turned my back for that long and let her get in the front seat of a car that was revved and on, you know.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:06] There's one thing I've discovered over the years about parenting, but especially about dads, is that they can be really, really hard on themselves when they muck up and they make mistakes. And being a dad, it doesn't mean you have to be a super dad and a super human and that you never, ever make those mistakes. So you just need to be good enough and also accept that there will be days where you just muck up and it's it's part of being human. So we know that one of the biggest challenge areas, especially with toddlers, is getting those sweet little babies to sleep, to stay, to sleep. How are you doing there?

Matt Okine: [00:17:47] Oh, my God. I think, I look back on our daughter as a sleeper for the first three years. I would. I would rate her probably a four out of ten sleeper because my sister's son. [00:18:00] It was like from the moment he came out of the womb all

night sleep like, just did not wake up once. Even still to this day. She told me the other day I had to drop him at daycare. I was like, Oh, you know, So will I be able to get them to be able to drop them off at 7:00 so that I can go home and drop my own my own daughter. And my sister was like, Oh, yeah, But, you know, he doesn't usually get out of a wake up until 7:30. What, 7:30? I've had to go, by 7:30, I've already been woken up by Sofia. We've had to play some sort of games because she gets like, you know, she just wants to do things. We've had to go downstairs and have breakfast. She wants to read a book or play Snap or whatever, and it's like, that's all done by 7:30, and this kid's just slowly, gradually getting up. So Sofia has always been a like a not a great sleeper, and especially in the early days, waking up several times a night. And as she got older, she'd get better.

Matt Okine: [00:18:57] But it was still, you know, would wake up once or twice a night. And now we've fallen into this terrible trap of a routine where she wants me to tell her stories every night. But they're not just any stories. She wants me to make up these specific stories featuring these two characters that she's like, it's just so ridiculous. She saw a sheep crying in a book once and she's like, Why is that sheep crying? And I was like, I don't know. Maybe it asked its friend to go to its birthday party and the birthday didn't get an invite or whatever. And then she's like, Oh, okay. And why else is it crying? And it's like, okay. So then I started telling these stories about why the sheep was crying. And now every night she won't go to bed unless I tell three stories about why this sheep was crying and three stories about why this little picture of Mickey Mouse is blowing raspberries. And so I have to tell six stories every single night before, and if I don't, she'll lose it. She'll get so angry and she'll [00:20:00] be like, no, you know, and it's like, and so I'm there every night. I'm like, How the hell am I going to come up with three ideas to just, you know, get get her to bed.

Maggie Dent: [00:20:12] By the sound of it you're doing an absolutely brilliant job.

Matt Okine: [00:20:15] I don't feel like it. Not when I'm lying. And then I sing this old man and have to pat her, you know? So I'm, like sitting next to her bed for like half an hour telling stories on top of book on top of...

Maggie Dent: [00:20:28] So let me give you the good news. The good news is this is consolidating her language, stimulating her unbelievably amazing brain, taking her into

a really calm, predictable place, which means that she will drift into a really good sound sleep. The only person getting peed off, is you.

Matt Okine: [00:20:47] Yes, absolutely. And that's something that I'm finding more and more, though. I try to do my best not to let that happen because it's not just in that moment, but there's often times when she will ask to do something. And I don't know if this is the right thing or the wrong thing, but she'll ask to do something. And. I'll often say like, Oh, no, no, we don't do that. You know, we don't take all the books off the bookshelf and throw them on the ground. And then she'll say, Why? And I'll be like. And I realised, well, the actual reason is just because I couldn't be bothered picking them up or doing, you know, so, so often she'll ask to do something. Can we do this? And if I find myself going, well, the reason is because I couldn't be bothered. Then I start going, well, actually, should we be doing it? All right.

Maggie Dent: [00:21:38] So let me talk about that swagger. So the parental swagger, which is exactly what you have to have, and you can do this now with that bedtime stuff and go, sweetheart, you know, I love doing these stories, but we are cutting them back to three because I've got to get out there and help clean up. And I've got some jobs out there that I need to help mum with. There is a reason, but at the end of the day she can react to that and be unhappy about it. But you cut it back to three, right? [00:22:00] That's what Swagger is, right? And you don't you don't buy into the fact she might get upset for a couple of days and then it becomes the new normal. So when they do this, this why bit, oh my gosh, a couple of my grandees. Why? Okay. So there are times that pulling all the books off the bookcase isn't really helpful because books are meant to be on a bookcase. We just take one off, we're going to read it. And the why is that's just how it is in our home. So they're just how it is in our home is setting up those values and expectations in her home rather than needing to, you know, otherwise you're there forever and it will pull your hair out because I don't want you to because it pees me off. Which is going on in your head. But at the end of the day, that's not something that three year olds need to be doing, pulling all the books off the bookcase. That's why we have toys for you. That's why we have, you know, blocks and that's why we have things like that for you to be engaged in. If there is a meltdown, we just go, That's exactly her expressing her big feelings about not getting her own way because she's biologically wired to want to get her own way because it develops a sense of self, pees us off, but

it's also healthy, and then we realise this is developmentally normal. Does that make sense?

Matt Okine: [00:23:11] Absolutely. I love how easy you make it sound. I mean, I remember a couple of, probably a year ago or whatever, like, I just wanted Sofia to have a sip of water before her nap. Man. This showdown could have turned into a movie. I mean, it went as long as one I mean, there were so many stages. There was a full blown standoff.

Maggie Dent: [00:23:44] Why did she need a drink of water?

Matt Okine: [00:23:46] It was just one of those things where I was like, you should have a drink of water before you go to bed. Otherwise you're going to wake up dry mouth or whatever. It was a total, it was a totally in my head. She was probably like, I don't need one. I feel totally thirst quenched. [00:24:00] I'm fine. But I was there just going, what it turned into really was just please do what I'm asking you to do. That's it. And that's really all it was. It's an ego thing for me, but it didn't make it any. I was like, I just don't understand why you won't just have a sip of water. Water is good for you.

Maggie Dent: [00:24:17] I love it because you know what is what. Our job as parents is to meet the needs of our children. However, what we think they need doesn't always fit their needs. Yeah, and that's really one of the classic parenting dilemmas, because we think we know better than they do. And they're pretty savvy pretty early, especially girls. Oh heck, it's so hard helping our kids learn about boundaries and why they matter. Really, really tricky. And you feel like you're being a really tough ass parent because we really want our kids to love us. However, what we know is that we need to embrace the fact that they would love to make all the choices in their life, however, where their safe growing up, and those boundaries help them learn to predict the world. Yeah, there's going to be a bit of pushback from her, but if you're consistent, if you're kind and yet you're still firm, she will respond to the new boundary.

Maggie Dent: [00:24:17] All right, so, Matt, do you have any, like, practical challenges that you might like some suggestions about?

Matt Okine: [00:25:25] We are struggling for her to do poops in the toilet. She just, there's a blockage there. And it's taken a long time for us to even get the toilet trained thing happening. And I don't know, there's something. I don't know what the blockage is, but it's like she just refuses to do it and we don't know what to do or how she'll overcome it or when she'll overcome it or what might prompt her to overcome it.

Maggie Dent: [00:25:53] Okay, so there's some really easy and good things that can work in this space. So at the moment it's not that much fun. Toilets, pretty boring, [00:26:00] right? Because they need to sit for a bit for it to get ready to come out. Is there a favorite song? Is there something I think even, you know, the Wiggles have got something that you use when you're sitting on the toilet. Sometimes that's enough to make it fun because it's the only time they ever have that opportunity so there's just one poo a day or one every second day. Then you're not going to create a digital, you know, dependency, but it might break the habit. Another thing that worked is putting all those stickers and star things all over the seat. When she goes in there, there's all these things that are fun because we want it to be fun until she nails it, right? And then there is that minor incentive. This isn't rewards because rewards. I'm really mindful of that. When you give them stickers and you know stuff forever, it demotivates them. It actually doesn't give them the self-determination. But around this stuff there's an incentive whether it's, you know, one smartie. It's not going to break the bank, not going to ruin her sugar total. But sometimes there needs to be an incentive for me when I've completed it so that some of those can break that space. But the more pressure you put on her in order to achieve it, the more they resist because it's going to that autonomy space. But once again, don't judge it by anybody else. But as soon as we put pressure on because it's important to us, they pick that up. Push back.

Matt Okine: [00:27:17] Yeah, that's what I'm suspecting as well. I feel like she's, you know, anytime we suggest do you want to use the toilet or anything, it's almost like she, she will take one more step back.

Maggie Dent: [00:27:27] And there's one other secret. Find another little girl the same age. Come for a play for a few days and hope she poos while she's there. Because as soon as she sees another girl pooing, she'll be onto it.

Matt Okine: [00:27:36] Yeah well that's the other thing. I mean, that's exactly what happened. She wasn't doing any wees in the toilet. And then one day her cousins over and we're like, Where's Sofia? And then they're both upstairs doing a wee. And I'm like, What the hell are you?

Maggie Dent: [00:27:47] Can they come back, you know, do some poo training? We've covered some of the practical challenges, Matt, about raising a child today. Is there anything else that kind of worries you about raising a daughter in today's world?

[00:28:00]

Matt Okine: [00:28:00] You know, it's a tough one. Like, I guess, wanting to raise someone who is strong and not setting out to please anyone for the sake of it. And who will question authority, but not my authority. You know what I mean? Like, I'm like. I'm like, Hey, I don't want you to just do things that anyone if someone tells you to do something, you just do it. Like, I don't want you to be a robot. I want you to be an independent thinker. But also, I want you to put all your toys away now. And I want you to listen to me when I say that. So it's like, how do I how do I say don't? Yeah, You know, like, don't don't trust and listen to everyone except for me. You have to listen to me.

Maggie Dent: [00:28:44] The good news is it's a gradual process. Absolutely a gradual process. And that those values that we have in our family that we talk about around the tea table and the dining table is we try not to hurt yourself. We try not to hurt others and we try not to damage the world around us. They are the core beliefs of what we want. However, we want you to become the best you that you can be, not one that the world says you're supposed to be. That's going to be a big challenge, isn't it? Because the world keeps telling us how our kids should be.

Matt Okine: [00:29:11] Yeah, that's it.

Maggie Dent: [00:29:12] And they're all unique. There's only one of them and they've only, no one's ever going to be that child ever again. Same as no one's ever going to be you. But no parenting books been written about your child. That's the challenge, isn't it? Because simply the fact that that concerns you means you're going to be able to create the environment and the opportunities for her as long as you're okay that she falls out of

trees and grazes knees and wears clothes with rips in them sometimes that says, Yeah, she's given life a bit of a crack. So every parent has hopes and dreams for their kids. Seriously, we dream seriously big stuff. But what are your hopes and dreams for your little Sofia in the future?

Matt Okine: [00:29:55] One of the biggest hopes is that she grows up feeling loved [00:30:00] and appreciated by us. It makes me feel really sad when I think about, um, people who didn't get that sense from their parents. And I don't think that I like I never I never didn't have that feeling from both of my parents. And so I really want to make sure that Sofia understands that she has our support and our love and can tell us things, you know, and be open with us and know that we are, well, I'd like to, you know, think that we won't judge her, but, you know, who knows in the future. But certainly I'd like to sort of stay. Stay as supportive as possible.

Maggie Dent: [00:30:41] So what we really want to is in those teen years when they make some really lousy choices and get stuck vomiting at some party or they're running away from some creep that they want to call mum and dad.

Matt Okine: [00:30:52] Yeah. And let me let us know what happened or why they're a bit quiet at dinner that day because something is going on at school or they're getting bullied and they you know, I want her to feel super supported and know that she's loved no matter what.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:07] So she'll turn to you.

Matt Okine: [00:31:09] But I also want her to know that she she is somewhat in control of her destiny and her trajectory and her future. And I just. I want her to know that she is genuinely I want her to believe that she is genuinely capable of anything.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:26] Of being her.

Matt Okine: [00:31:27] Yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:28] All right. Take the stage, Matt. Bow down. Share one of your best parenting wins so far.

Matt Okine: [00:31:35] Well, it depends. Like, can I, can I take credit for some of these things? I don't I don't necessarily know.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:41] No, definitely, you've got to take some credit.

Matt Okine: [00:31:41] I mean, Sofia is very good at talking and reading and writing at this stage, so she knows all the alphabet and can draw all the alphabet. And we do a lot of stuff in the shower. And she, you know, she draws on the drawers, the all the letters and stuff like that and can [00:32:00] spell certain words and everything like that. And I feel very proud of that in that, you know, I talk to her a lot. And, you know, tell those stories. And I am around as much as I can be. And actually, here's the one thing. It's a win. By pure accident and I wouldn't have it any other way. And that was I was due to be away from my partner and daughter for, I think like three months, I guess, from the start of 2020. And then Covid hit and I had to cancel my tour and it was the best thing that has ever happened because suddenly me and Sofia were with each other every day. And, you know, my partner and I were having to split our workdays up and I was taking Sofia every morning until two and then, you know, working at night and all those things, But I have been there and I've been really present and it's something that I'm really thankful for because I feel a bit embarrassed about how not present I was going to be and how much I would have missed out and I would never have known. I would have just thought it was normal and okay. And in hindsight, I feel like I would have missed out on so much and a really, really good relationship that we have now.

Maggie Dent: [00:33:15] And it's absolutely foundational connection, what we call kind of attachment. Unbelievably important in the developing brain of young children. So you tick that box. Thank God for Covid hey.

Matt Okine: [00:33:26] Yeah. And I mean, with all the things that happened, all the bad stuff, I mean, I'm sorry for anyone who is suffering through that. But for me, it was actually a real blessing in disguise that I got, I get to have that relationship with my daughter now.

Maggie Dent: [00:33:38] Even though you're, you know, you were in two houses after you were seven. What do you think you learned from your dad as you reflect back, is

something that you would like to take forward as being helpful? Or what have you chosen to change?

Matt Okine: [00:33:52] Well, I mean, my dad, it's funny because you don't really, I was talking about this with someone recently. Whether that absence [00:34:00] or being around whether they do remember it, because I was sitting down with my dad the other day and he was like, I was like, oh, so where were you working? You know, when I was sort of growing up? He's like, I was working at, you know, working on this dental train that was going through Queensland, I think, and I was like, Oh, okay. So when did you stop doing that? And he was like, Oh, that was 1991 or something. And I was like. When I was six. You would, wait. You weren't around that much until I was six. Like in my head, I thought he was in the house the whole time, but he was. He was like, not even there for heaps of it. And I don't even remember that, you know, I just thought he'd always been around. But he was working out of town for so much of that time when I was growing up. And so I've done the complete opposite where I have been around and I really want to stick around the whole time. But now I'm like, well, does it matter? Because I don't really remember him not being there. So yeah, it's just one of those funny ones where you don't really know. I don't know. I know what I'd prefer to do and I'm wanting to be around more. But I also don't begrudge my dad for not being around when I was really young because one, I don't remember it. And two, it was a different time. And he was, you know, he was a provider.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:10] What we know is that the minimum is one significant figure of attachment that's safe in a child's life for them to thrive. And the other as long as it's not a toxic it wasn't a toxic figure in your life in those years.

Matt Okine: [00:35:22] No, not at all.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:23] That's why.

Matt Okine: [00:35:24] Yeah, right. Interesting. Yeah, that is interesting. So, look, I'm actually really proud of what my dad, how my dad managed everything. And I do look up to him and his abilities as a dad and the values that he instilled in me. And I want to do the same for Sofia.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:44] Can you tell me what those values were that really mattered to you?

Matt Okine: [00:35:48] It's funny, there's like a few sort of sayings that he would always say to me, you know, and one one of the things that he would always say would be, you know, it doesn't matter whether you want to be a garbage man, just [00:36:00] make sure that you're the best garbage man that you can be. And so you roll your eyes and go, oh, whatever, dad like. And sorry to all the garbage men out there and garbage people. Good job. Very important. And I would always, I'd always sort of roll my eyes at whatever, dad, but like. It's true. And it's really important that that support has always been there. And even when I wanted to go to drama school, when some parents and even some parents in our family are like an extended family, I know when their kids had opportunities like that. They had said, no, you've got to go to university and do something safe. But Dad had always encouraged me to do what I wanted to do. There's always been a sense of independence. There's always been things like he wouldn't let me go play skirmish because, you know, when all the other kids did and I'd be like, Oh, I really want to go. But he was like, I don't support gun, gun and war games and stuff like that. And that's not everyone's view and that's fine. It's just that that was something that his, and my partner the other day was saying she's like, I really like that your dad was like that still, because she feels the same way. And we know that we would instill the same sort of values on our daughter. And there's just, there's, there's, yeah, things like that.

Maggie Dent: [00:37:12] I'm just really glad that you've remembered them. And can I offer you a tip as you head towards the later years of your dad's life? Write them down. Because when my dad died, it was a bit it was sudden and he was very much one that came out with these gems all the time. Quite a few of them were funny and I hear them sometimes come out with some of my own boys, which is kind of sweet because we don't really lose them. So you know that that influence of our dads, even if Mum's the larger figure most of the time, but at the end of the day, it's those presents. He's consistent, he's reliable, he's predictable. Yeah. All right. My final question, if you could turn back time, as Cher would sing, what advice would you give to your pPre-dad self those few years ago about being a dad?

Matt Okine: [00:38:00] I [00:38:00] would tell pre-dad me. Oh, God. It's so embarrassing what you used to think. Hey, this is honestly what I used to think being a dad would be like. I remember thinking, Oh, it'll be great. I can't wait to spend time with my kid. What I'll do is I will look after my baby all day and they will just sit on my lap while I make music. Oh, and it'll be such a creative relationship. I'll be sitting there making music and they'll just sit there and listen to all of these great songs that I'm making. Are you kidding me? What a fool. I just had no idea that any independent decision making choices or anything would be completely taken away. And you were at the behold of this, of this, completely irrational. Yeah. Monster that just, nothing makes sense. None of the things that they want to do, what any normal adult does. It's just like it's impossible to do anything that your whole day is gone. Just following around this little person who just. Who's unpredictable.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:12] Everything messy.

Matt Okine: [00:39:13] Yeah. Nothing. I would. I would just say, like it is. I would say it is a whole other job. What you're actually doing right now is embarking on a full time career that is going to be more time consuming than your current job. So if you feel like having a job.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:33] With no extra pay.

Matt Okine: [00:39:33] Yeah, exactly. So if you feel like having and just the most wacky little co-worker who doesn't care about anything that you want to do, doesn't care about the workplace, doesn't care about any of the rules. Yeah. So if you want to have that job with that, with that person. Yeah. And have your other job or jobs that you're already doing. Just be aware that that's what this is. Coz you're going into full time job, now.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:58] There are those moments when they look [00:40:00] in your eyes and your heart just melts that you couldn't put a price on.

Matt Okine: [00:40:05] You would never know. You don't know. You don't know the feeling until it's happened.

Maggie Dent: [00:40:10] Hey, Matt. You're a dad who makes up bedtime stories. You can heat up a meal. You're meeting the Tricky poo challenge, and you're committed to raising a smart and independent daughter who might already be well on her way to getting her driver's license. Thank you so much for coming on the show. And you really are a good enough dad right now already.

Matt Okine: [00:40:30] Thanks so much, Maggie.

Maggie Dent: [00:40:33] That was musician, host, actor and Good Enough Dad Matt Okine. Matt had so many great insights to share, so here are three that you can add to your Good Enough Dad checklist. The first one is recognising that being around our little ones really does matter. I mean, Matt was a bit lucky. Covid hit. He didn't have a choice. But you do matter. And it's the skin to skin. It's the face to face. It's the talking, the sharing, the reading. Even if it's the endless stories at bedtime, it really matters. The second one is there's no perfect in this journey and that there's no, it's always going to be right this way. And I hope you heard how it can be tricky co-parenting with another human who has a different view of the world and that rather seeing that as arguments, we see it as conversations and sometimes we need to be okay if the onesy is the wrong way round or if you know they're reaching something that is possibly not on the good list. We need to let things go a little because you're all doing the best you can. And that third one again, about the memories that Matt had from his dad are those little gems that men often drop out just because they really believe [00:42:00] in them and they matter. They don't have to be a lecture or long story. Just little reminders about the values that really matter in your family, about life, about failing, about striving to be the best human you could be. All of those are really beautiful little gems to remember. And anyway, I reckon that was a pretty good chat. I'm Maggie Dent and this is The Good Enough Dad. Please follow us on the LiSTNR app or wherever you get your podcasts.