

Maggie Dent

Hello, it's Maggie Dent here, parenting educator, author, and champion of boys and men. And this is The Good Enough Dad, a podcast 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.

Maggie Dent

My guest today is someone who has been omnipresent on our TV screens for over four decades. In fact, he won a gold Logie last year, and let's be honest, at long last. Larry Emdur has hosted Family Double Dare, The Price is Right, The Wheel of Fortune, Weekend Sunrise, and has even appeared on Dancing with the Stars. And of course, on The Morning Show where I know Larry from appearing as a guest from time to time with Kylie. And it's kind of nice for me to be the one asking the questions today, Larry. He and his wife Sylvie have two adult kids, Jai, who's 30, and Tia, who's 25. So Larry, welcome to the Good Enough Dad.

Larry Emdur

Lovely to see you. I'm a bit scared now. You've got your questions, you put your glasses on. I feel like I'm on the spotlight. Great to see you.

Maggie Dent

Okay, so let's start with:

What are some of your favourite memories that might come to mind when you reflect on when Jai and Tia were little?

Larry Emdur

So lots, I mean lots and lots of nice memories. I think generally speaking our household was a pretty positive, happy place. And I remember I grew up, when I grew up, we lived at Bondi Beach. And so we just had summers at the beach. And it wasn't fancy. I know when you say Bondi now everyone goes, yeah. But it wasn't fancy then. It was just very urbane and really community minded. And it was lovely, family and friends everywhere. And I think I tried to bring that into the kid's life, that it was just nice and laid back. So, I mean, the early stuff, even when, you know, when Jai first started walking, I remember that, you know, swimming in the pool, all those nice, nice memories. And then peeing in the pool. Peeing in the pool, of course, that was me, not him. And, you know, just, I think they're lovely, normal, traditional memories. And then when I look at that stuff and I go, well, that was, I remember my dad pushing me around the swimming pool at North Bondi on an old surfboard. And then I did that with Jai, and I'd go fishing with Tia, and I remember my dad fishing with me. So I think I tried to, well, I never set out to replicate my childhood with them, but I think it was just inherently how it happened.

Maggie Dent

Especially when it's a good one. So I've got very adult kids, but I wanna know from you, what's it like now they've grown up, and how often do you catch up with them and things like that?

Larry Emdur

It's strange. It's really strange. It's beautiful and it's perfect and it's amazing, but I walked Tia down the aisle last year. It was just, I still get teary if I talk about it too much, to be honest, but it was like such an amazing moment in time that was, it was like as we were walking down the aisle, I could see all the faces that I remember being, that used to be young and we used to be young together and were friends from school and now we're parents with grown up children, but there was a moment where I thought oh this is this is all good you know.

Maggie Dent

I hear that was St Mary's Cathedral. So here's an interesting coincidence, so my mum and dad got married in that one on the side altar because he wasn't Catholic. You know during the war, fell in love yeah there you go.

So, how was it having two sisters? Because obviously you're male so do you remember that?

Larry Emdur

Yes, I do and it had a huge impact on me and I believe I didn't kind of work that out until a little bit later when I realised how I treat women. I mean, I think that had a huge impact on me. And I'm stuck in the middle. Nikki and I are born in the same year. Yeah. So Nikki was born January the 9th and I'm born on December the 9th, the same year. that's pretty hard work.

Maggie Dent

Yeah, yeah, yeah. That close together. yeah, okay. Your mum's a legend.

Larry Emdur

That's a nice way of putting it. I think we got home and mum said, I think the last thing the doctor said before I left hospital was, Faye, you're okay for now, you can't get pregnant. So anyway, here we are. And then Martine's my baby sister, so I was sandwiched in between these two girls doing their physical culture and their, you know, all all the, fun stuff. And I was trying to break out and go surfing and be a bloke. But I realised as I got older, that was really high impact for me on how I would, for the rest of my life, relate, respect, women.

Maggie Dent

There's no question how handy that is because when you've actually been around that in your family, when you meet females later in life, you understand some of the quirky behaviours that girls tend to do a bit more than boys. Sometimes they are a lot of emotional vulnerability about little things that. Don't always bother a boy, but how quickly they move and fade away. It's brilliant. Wasn't Sylvie lucky?

Larry Emdur

Wasn't she? I tell her every day, Maggie, I don't believe she believes me. You know what, when she hears it from you, she'll believe it. But when I say Sylvie, you're so lucky. I don't think she believes Yeah, no, no, definitely. Definitely.

Maggie Dent

Did the kids like having a dad that was on TV? Was that a cool thing or not so cool?

Larry Emdur

It was cool for a time. No, it was fun for a time. And then it became not so cool. with a name like Emdur, because it's just us. There's my mum, there's one of my sisters, me and our kids. There are no more Emdurs. So the name is instantly recognisable, not instantly recognisable, but if you recognise their name, you recognise my name.

So I think in later life, it's... In the teen years, was it a uncool? Yeah, quite possibly. Yeah. Yes. Yes is the answer. But when we were young, when they were young, we're going to all the fun things, the Disney openings, the VIP at Disneyland, where like all the good stuff was happening. But certainly there was a time where dads doing, and I do stupid stuff on the morning show every day, as you know. And now it's on the internet. Now it's on Instagram.

Maggie Dent (07:31.758)

So would it go through their feeds? You know, even now No. You know how it How does it?

Larry Emdur

No, it doesn't. Well, I don't think it does, but their friends will reach out and your dad just did this dumbest thing. That's the feedback. At least it's a consistency you've got.

Maggie Dent

OK, so I know you talked about your own dad having taken you to do lots of those things, but what do you think you might have learned from him about being a dad?

Larry Emdur

He was away a lot. He was a traveling salesman, essentially. And he was away a lot. And I think if I learned anything, was the don't be away a lot. Do know what I mean? And I, when we, when Jai was born, I was working in Melbourne, I was hosting the Price is Right. And every second week, I'd go to Melbourne for four days. And Jai had a quite a serious reflux issue when he was born. And so for the first nine or 10 months of his life, he couldn't lay down. Yup. Be on seated position.

So I would go to Melbourne for four days and do my show and have to be in the highest of spirits and the happiest guy in the world and then come home to Sylvie who hadn't slept for four days. The cup of tea that she made three and a half days ago is still sitting on the kitchen table. It's been in the microwave 20 times and she has and you know, but then that said when I was home, I was home. Yeah, I wasn't going to work at six in the morning, coming home at 10 o'clock at night like some of my mates. So I was present when I was there.

What I learned from my dad probably more than anything was to don't be traveling. And he didn't have, it was his job. It was his job. So I was very, I've been very grateful that most of my career has meant I could be at home. I can do the school pick, when I'm home, I'm doing the drop off and the pick up and all the good stuff.

Maggie Dent

So good, isn't that? Okay, so when he was around. JWhat sort of a dad was he? Was he an old school dad or was he one that kind of was comfortable at playing with you?

Larry Emdur

Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I think he was, I remember him being a really good dad. We had, as I said, we grew up a Bondi, so we were outdoorsy as a family. So we'd have an early dinner and then we'd go to the beach and have a swim because it was just down the road. Do you know what mean? So I remember, I remember that. I remember fish and chips on the beach and I remember us all swimming and having a great time together. And dad had a little crappy old boat that we'd go on and the girls didn't like it because it's it's stunk of you know fish and petrol and stuff so that was a lot of time with dad that was a lot of boy time with dad which I really appreciated and I learned a lot from him then.

Maggie Dent

Tell me what was it like traveling with them when they were younger and then did it get better when they were older? Because it was sort of before screens could keep them quiet on

Larry Emdur

Absolutely, and I'm so grateful for that. guess we're going to talk about social media at some point, but I'm so grateful that we just scraped through, as you mentioned, Jai's 30, Tia's 25. There was social media around, but it wasn't what it is today, right? So we had, gosh, we had some beautiful trips. We loved going to Bali.

Jai and I would go surfing and Tia and Sylvia would do lots of fun stuff. But it did change, of course. As soon as the kids got to an age where they're like, OK, now we're in Bali, but we can go to a nightclub. We lived overseas for a while. We lived in LA for about a year, about nine months when Jai was three. So that was a great, was a great fun experience. Oddly enough, he just remembers so much about that.

Maggie Dent

So were you near Malibu, near surf still, or were you in LA?

Larry Emdur

No, no, we were at Marina Del Rey, which is very close to along the Santa Monica and Venice beach. So that was a lovely time. And we were going there to live. wanted I'd finished with the Price is Right. And we went we were set up to go and live there to live. And I was going to try and work there maybe. And then the week before he left, Sylvie found out she was pregnant with Tia. So we decided, of course, the baby was to be born back in Australia. But we had a great time. You know, lots of Disneyland, lots of probably too much Vegas for a small child, but good fun.

Maggie Dent

Now, one of the hardest things it is for us all is when our kids want to leave home, that big moment when they do leave home, it's happened twice, was one easier than the other or was it hard?

Larry Emdur

Yes, yes. Yes. And I'll tell you why, because when Tia was 16, she's always been fiercely independent, beautifully independent. I look at her now and I listen to it and I go, what you are, I don't know where this is coming from. You've been here before, but she's so independent and fierce about it. When she was 16 years old, she came to us, she said, mum, dad, I wanna talk to you after dinner. We sat down, she said, when I'm 18, I'm moving out of the house. I was like, why would you do that? She goes, because I wanna be independent, I wanna get a job and pay rent. And we were in a relatively nice setup at home. She had a whole lot of space on her own. I said, are you sure? Because there's a fridge full of food and there's everything you need here and there's your swimming pool and your this and that. And she went, no, I want to be independent. And so, and we were on the clock. We're on the clock from 16 years old.

Maggie Dent

I love it. You know, she's a rooster. So that's a rooster. Roosters have the temperament where bring her down. I'm ready to make my own way in the world. They're fiercely brave. They love challenges. Mine was in a big hurry too and I was quite glad.

Larry Emdur

Well, I didn't want, I mean, and I don't think Sylvie did either. We didn't want our baby daughter to go, why? I think I was like, why? Why would you? But she just had this thing, this mindset and to her credit, she went out, she got two, three jobs, paid rent, she got an apartment with a friend and she went off on her independent merry way. She did come back for a short time. There was an area of the house that she could close the door and be independent from us. There was a bathroom in it. And she said, now I'm coming home, but don't call me out for dinner. Don't talk to me. It's like I'm not there. And we'd go to bed, Maggie. We'd go to bed at 10 o'clock at night. You'd hear the door squeak open, little footsteps. to the fridge, the fridge door had opened. She'd go be like shopping at Woolworths and then creep back into the room. So fiercely independent, but still liked the fridge.

Maggie Dent

And so what about Jai? Was he, as you know, sometimes they kind of appreciate having things done. So what age was he when he flew the coupe?

Larry Emdur

Jai went traveling. He was working overseas. He was traveling, then working around Croatia as a DJ, and he was working on boats. so I knew from my time traveling, when I went backpacking, I came back and I was so independent. And I was like, Mum, please don't tell me what time I've got to get home. And please don't tell me to, you know, not make the bed like that because I've been traveling and I'm a big boy now. So, so I said to Sylvie, you know, when he comes back from this, he's going to be, you can't tell him how to dress and how it's going to be different. But he came back and he wanted to hang out. He was ready to stay with us a bit longer, eat the food.

Maggie Dent

Before the kids have grown up and flown the coop, what do you think was one of your biggest fears about raising them?

Larry Emdur

Well, I'm sure I share that with every parent, know, just that they're not going to achieve their goals, not mine, not ours, but their goals. And then I have to think, see, I'm the most axed man on TV. And Maggie, I wear it as a badge of honour. I wear it as a badge of honour. It's okay now. I'm at peace with that because I'm 60 years old. I've got two great jobs and I'm still here. But there are so many times this bridge could have broken along the way. I'm, so I've always said to people, have a go. You know, have a go. But I know plenty of people in TV who have done a show, been axed, and we'll never hear from them again. So I guess I'm really, really lucky. But from my kids' perspective, my message to them was always the same. You know, have a go. And it doesn't matter. Look, look at Dad. You know, he's still here. And I don't mean that in a condescending way. It's just like, you can try different things. You can hit brick walls. You can get hit in head with a big wave and get back up again. So I consider myself very, very lucky that that's happened to me 20 times.

But it's still a reasonable lesson. Jai and I share a tattoo here that says, if not now when? I love it. And that's something very, Jai and I will say that to each other every week. Just face different challenges head on.

Maggie Dent

So that was one of the things my dad said to me as well is, it's not whether you're gonna win, it's do you turn up and have a go? And then do you get back up? That old brush the dust off stuff. And isn't it interesting, you're heaps better at it now and now you don't need to have it happen ever again. Look at you.

Larry Emdur

Well, you never know in TV, right? So you're the master of your own destiny in TV and they could, I could go in there tomorrow and they could go, we're changing things up. And that has been my life. But I think it's made me stronger and it's given me a very good overview on things.

Maggie Dent

I think that TV game is exactly, media in itself is very, very unpredictable. Life is too. Of course. And it doesn't matter our age or whether we've got everything it looks like it, there's days we fail. And I'm wondering, did you encourage your kids to fail when they were younger? What sort of rule did you have for pass the parcel? Did you have the old ones or the new ones?

Larry Emdur

It was really try, you know, try, try your best. It was that kind of concept, I think. We were never particularly, we weren't pushy parents. We weren't dance mums and dads or anything like that. And we really did want them to find their own way and find their own strength and be proud of that. So they weren't overly competitive, either of them, I don't think. But they both became strong in their own ways, which is lovely to see as well.

Maggie Dent

Well, that's actually what real resilience is, is that we get stronger within ourselves so that we can deal with the setbacks of life. Right. So that we can adapt to them and overcome them. Yes. Not be collapsed as you said at the foot of it all. Okay, so now, you know, bring out the trumpet. I want to know what's your big dad brag? What do you think has been your, one of your biggest parenting wins as a dad?

Larry Emdur

Well, I have two parenting wins, one's Tia and one's Jai. Look, I think, and I'd like to share this with every single dad, and I think it's like, you don't know, right? Like, I love the name of this podcast because, and moms are the first time moms particularly, and first time dads, and you're like, what do I do?

Larry Emdur (19:00.046)

No manual. This crying, pooing baby. I know this is sort of old school talk, are you... And because, you know, going back to when Jai was born, there are no... Didn't have the resources we have now. Didn't have podcasts like this. Didn't have information around. So I think... I think the best results came from just being present, maybe.

And then being open to ideas and listening to other people. Because I know some parents who are very set in the ways because their parents were parented like that and their parent was like that. So we were learning as we go. We had two very different parenting styles. I grew up in a very cruisy surfside family, pizzas and fish and chips and swimming and you know, that sort of thing. Everyone got on and I know that's not everyone's story. I do know that, but I was very lucky to have a happy family upbringing.

Sylvie, growing up in Poland, single mum trying to do three jobs to keep Sylvie fed and at school, very different scenario. So I think combined, it worked well. You know, Sylvie will call me a very soft dad. know, would go to Sylvie and say, I want a new pair of shoes. And Mum would go, no, you've just got a new pair of shoes. And then Tia would come to me and I'd go, okay. I was that guy. But it was a good combination in the end that somehow worked.

Maggie Dent

And that's it. How do we make that work? The co-parent part really. Nobody's history is the same. We all think we're right. Don't we? And we all love being right. But really what happens and what the best ones are is that we work together to work through how do we make it work for our kids right now with us two dudes as the parents.

Larry Emdur

But there wasn't the, I don't think there was the information. No. There was certainly no focus on dads. No, none at all. Certainly. And I think if you ask me my greatest achievements, I'd look at both of them and go, they're both here going great and they're beautiful human beings. And I think that's nice to see.

Maggie Dent

I think they've probably got a reasonable sense of humour, do they? Yeah, they're pretty good. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because one of the things we know that lightens up homes is the sense of the ridiculous and the laughter. Sure. So my dad was that. Yes. Not only could he fight well, he just was funny as hell, right? And I think my sons have benefited from the fact that I am the idiot in the house. And that there were times that I probably could have stepped up and growled at them for things, but I ended up laughing because it was so funny at the time. So sometimes I think we think we have to be serious as parents. And there are times definitely we do. But I do think when we lighten up, we actually take a lot of pressure off our kids from being kids. Because, you know, let's be honest, they're messy. You know, there are...what I call shituations, don't they? At times when they're younger. We wish they slept more. We they didn't throw their food. And I wish they didn't have tantrums. All of them are very developmentally quite normal. So if you don't laugh, then what do you do? Cry.

Larry Emdur

And completely opposite too. Anything that we tried to do with Jai was not the same as for Tia. So we thought we learning along the way and we thought baby number two, Tia, this is good, we're parents now.

Maggie Dent

Completely different. Totally. So that's not just gender, it's actually temperament. You don't know what you're going to get. Now, of course, do jokingly say this at seminars sometimes, I know you didn't quite get the one you were hoping for. But you know, the one you've got is probably the one you really need and we'll leave it there, don't we?

Larry Emdur

And also, I mean, I was really, I guess, looking at it now, just really grateful that we came through in a time where we could parent. There weren't too many surprises.

There weren't things that we hadn't gone through as children ourselves, right? But now when you look at the people trying to deal with the internet and Instagram and TikTok and what that means and porn and all those, those sort of, we didn't have those challenges in parenting. So I'm just so, because when you can deal with something that you've experienced as a child yourself when it comes to parenting, I suppose that's easier.

Maggie Dent

It's incredibly difficult. But now we're- it's a moving feast. Right. And that's what- you know, so many parents, you know, pull their hair out because they don't actually know what their kids are being exposed to. Yes. Because you'd have to be watching as they doom scroll and see what's on there. And I think you would be horrified as we are now finding how different those algorithms are for girls and boys. Yeah. And that so many of our kids are now struggling with their sense of self.

Larry Emdur

And we do segments on the morning show all the time. Yeah. Every other day on this topic and I sit there the whole time and I'm just so grateful that we're not in this space now.

Maggie Dent

One day there'll be grandkids. Right. Yes. That's where my worries are at the moment.

If there was just the one thing, you can only choose one thing that you want your two kids to have learnt because you are their dad, what is the one thing?

Larry Emdur

This is easy for me.

It's so easy for me because it's what my dad used to say. Just be nice to everyone. Be nice to, and it's so simple and it's so free and it's so easy and you can do it 24 hours a day, seven days a week and it's nothing. And I've done it all, I've tried to do it all of my career, certainly. It shows. And I've really tried. I've worked, I was going say I worked hard. I didn't have to work hard at it. It's a thing. It's who I am and it's who my kids are. And I love that about them.

They're a little feistier than I was, but that serves them well, But it's just, be nice to everyone. My dad was a salesman and there is no part or very few parts of the sales process that happens if you're not a good human being. Or that's where the sales process breaks. So he was just, a good human being.

Maggie Dent

Yeah, and then he modelled it as well as told you, didn't he? Yes. See, my dad was an amazing humanitarian. And I watched him just treat everyone exactly the same with respect and affection. Yeah. Aren't we lucky? We are lucky. Yeah. OK, so this is your lucky last question. feel like I've got the quiz show going on. Yes, yes, Are you ready? All right. OK, so if you could wind back the clock to before you became a dad, especially with one with reflux, what advice would you give to young Larry the dad?

Larry Emdur

Apart from wear a condom? Gosh, I don't know. Oh, well, that's a great question. How old would you have been? So I was 30. Yep. At least you have a prefrontal. That's a good thing. Yeah, that's right. 27 to 28. That's great. come in there. So, oh, gosh, I really don't know. I may have gone maybe listen to podcasts or read books or thought more about it. Because it came as a, was a bit of a surprise for us. I don't think Sylvie was necessarily had that on her plans for that year and I didn't. So it all happened very quickly and like all of a

sudden we're parents. So maybe I would have gone, and maybe it wouldn't have worked for me, but to find out more about it. Read some books.

Maggie Dent

Which is really wonderful because that's one of the things over the years when I first started running seminars, it's a long time ago, 25 years or something, no dad was there. And now I can have up to 40 % dads willingly turning up because they don't all want to read parent books. I mean, there are many that do, but there are many that just don't. So they prefer to hear it in a verbal context, which is kind of another reason why we do this, because sometimes they can listen to this while they do something else.

Larry, thank you. Thanks for coming for a chat. And it's been great for me to be the one that asked you questions Yes, you're a very good question asking person. I'll have your job next day. Yeah. Lovely to see you.

TV host, Larry Emdur, amongst everything he said, and isn't he a funny guy, there are still some really fantastic points I think we should throw into our Good Enough Dad checklist. The first one is that every one of our kids turns up different and unique, and that our job is to support them to become whoever they are and follow their dreams, not necessarily our dreams. And secondly,

The best results come from being fully present and also learning from others and other people's experiences. And the third one wasn't a magic simple message that his dad had given him that he's now given his kids. Just be nice. I'm sure there's someone else who's other ways of saying don't be a whatever, but really just be nice. I'm Maggie Dent and this is the Good Enough Dad.

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