

# Ep #92 Creating change and increasing confidence: Part two

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This is episode 92. Let's begin.

Smarter Parenting welcomes you to our podcast series, The Parenting Coach for ADHD. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach Siope Kinikini.

Hey everyone. How are you? I hope you're doing well. I'm doing great. Thanks for joining me today. I am going to continue our conversation on Role-playing. This is part two. [We talked about Role-playing in the previous podcast. And if you haven't listened to that podcast, go back and listen to it because it's important.](#) During that podcast, I talked about the three things that Role-playing teaches your child that are important for them to learn. Role-playing can help your child learn those three very specific things.

[Episode 91: Creating change and increasing confidence: Part 1](#)

The first one is it teaches your child sociability skills, how to be social. The second thing is it teaches your child the vocabulary that they should use when they're engaging with other people. It gives them parameters on how they can communicate and communicate well. And then the third thing is it teaches them empathy. So we're going to actually focus in on the third part of that, empathy, developing empathy, and the reason that developing empathy, having empathy is super important for your child, but also for yourself.

It's one of those skills that is a life-changer. I mean, [Role-playing is a life-changing skill that you can use, but this part of developing empathy is such an important part of being a human being and being a decent human being.](#) Because when we're able to empathize with other people of different beliefs or different backgrounds, what that does is it allows them to exist in their sphere and us to exist in our sphere without judgment, with a lot more mercy and acceptance. And this is very important for parents to be able to do not only in their relationships with each other or with other adults but also with their children who are seeing the world in a very different way.

So when we talk about children with ADHD, their world is structured in a very specific way because they're struggling with ADHD, right? The hyperactivity. The inattentiveness. Whereas a person like a parent who doesn't have ADHD would experience the world in a very different way. Developing empathy allows you both to exist in the same world, right? Approaching the world in different ways, but in peace and harmony. Think about that. You're not making your

child conform, but you're allowing them to exist in the way that they can and helping them along the way to find their way to be successful.

So you may be wondering how does Role-playing makes that happen? I am going to tell you how to make that happen and why it's such a powerful skill. Now we're going to be covering a couple of things during this podcast. So I'm just making sure that you're aware, we're going to be talking about attribution bias. So we're going to talk a little bit about attribution bias and if you don't know what that is, I will explain it. And we're also going to be talking about an experience that I had last year when I was working with couples.

Let me start with that first. And then we'll talk about attribution bias and then bring in the Role-playing piece of it and how it transformed a couple's perception of each other and also of their child. So to preface this whole thing, last year, and often this happens, I am asked to do a workshop for families and workshops where I work with couples who have a child with behavioral issues. Agencies and churches in our area will invite me to come in and give workshops on how to communicate effectively. How to set up a structure in their home that will help their children. Resources. So I provide these to the community fairly frequently, whenever they ask and specifically when they are populations that are underserved, I'm more than happy to do that. So I'll go in and I will do an assessment of what's happening in the group.

So I was invited to do this for a church. A church had invited me to go and speak to couples who had children with behavioral issues. I walked into the building and in the inner part of the building or the foyer area, I saw a couple. They were sitting on the couch, the female was sitting on her phone on one end of the couch, and her partner, her spouse, was on the other end, but he was just tuned out.

So if you've heard me talk about [Observe and Describe](#), if I were to Observe and Describe them, I would state and again, this is all without judgment, what I observe and then I would describe it. So I would say, "Well, she was sitting on the couch. She's on her phone. She's engrossed in her phone because she has it really close to her face. And she's paying attention and typing. Super focused."

If I were to Observe and Describe him, "He looked disinterested because his shoulders were slumped. He kept looking up at the ceiling and checking his phone and just staring off in the distance. He was facing towards the opposite direction of the female with half of his back exposed to her where it almost appeared as if he was trying to cut off his vision from her."

So that's what I observed. I went into the room and started to prepare, and we started this retreat, this workshop. The other couples came in. There were roughly around 20 couples in the room, and this couple came in and they came and sat in the front row because everyone had taken the back seats. Which is usually what happens when you're doing a presentation is you have a lot of people who want to sit in the middle and in the back and not necessarily in the front.

So they came to the front and she sat in one chair and he skipped two chairs and sat by the window. And he was looking out the window and he would sigh and she was paying attention and taking notes. So my observation is that she was interested and that he really did not want to be there at all.

During these workshops, I always try and get to know the couples that are there and we talk about issues that they're facing. I always start off with a question and answer, because I want to know what things they want to focus on during our time because I want to make it useful for them. People were giving me feedback and talking about their issues and things that were happening. I usually don't take very long to do that. Maybe about 15 minutes. And this gives me a sense of how to prepare and present what would be helpful for them.

[It's not any different than a coaching session.](#) If you were to call me up, I want to know a little bit of background first and what specifically you need and then we can address those issues. So it's exactly the same only I'm doing it with a group and face-to-face in this room. Well, this couple didn't respond at all. They didn't have any questions or any feedback, but they were just soaking it in.

We started to talk about [Effective Communication](#) as a skill. We pulled up the skill from the Smarter Parenting websites so they could take a look at it and they understood the steps. And then what I do during these presentations, just like I do in coaching, is we Role-play them. We practice them, right? So we started to Role-play Effective Communication between the two.

And what I'll do is I'll have a couple of volunteers first and I'll demonstrate it so they can see what it looks like, and then have them practice it in front of everyone so they can get a sense. And the reason that I do this is I want them to be able to integrate what it is I'm teaching them into their body. Into the way that they see, hear, and feel what I'm teaching them. I want this to be a sensory experience whenever we are engaged in learning a new skill, just the way I recommend that parents do it with children who struggle with ADHD. You want to involve as many senses as possible and teaching something because it sticks better.

We had a couple come up and do that. Well, this couple, after I had the volunteer couple come up, then I choose a couple and I chose those two to come up and sit in chairs in front and then to do the communication skill.

Now, the husband looked shocked because he was kind of not paying attention. And yet at the same time, he did really well during the Role-play and during the Role-play I had them practice the steps, using something very simple because I could tell in their communication body language that I observed walking in the building and inside that classroom, they were not ready to deal with things that were heavy-duty or difficult. So I chose an easy topic that they could communicate about and we had them practice. So they would listen to each other and repeat what they heard and nod their head in acceptance and understanding. After we practice this a

couple of times, they seem to get it and seem to be making more eye contact with each other, which I thought was great. Absolutely great.

So, I always like to switch things up as well. So with this couple, they were getting ready to get up and go and sit back down in their seats. And I said, "Whoa, whoa whoa. We're going to do something a little bit different with you too. What I want you guys to do is now we're going to reverse Role-play." And they were like, "What is that?" And I said, "Well, I want you to take on the role of your wife and the way that she sees the world. And I want you as the wife to take on the role of the husband and respond in kind." I could see the horror in both of their faces and I could see the blood draining from his face as he's like, "Oh, what?" And I understand why, I've done this enough that I understand exactly why this happened. It's because people tend to be operating in their own mindset and they see the world in a very specific way.

And so when you're asked to take a step back and look at the world in someone else's shoes, especially somebody that you love and that knows you, and that can call you on your crap, whatever it may be, it can be very intimidating to do. So his face drained, she was like, "Wait, what?" And I said, "No, you can do it. You can do it."

And I did, this is kind of funny because sometimes I'll get couples who are like, "No, I don't want to do, I don't want to do it," and they will refuse. And so what I do is I encourage the other audience members to encourage them. Now I don't say, "Hey, everybody encourage them." I just say, "Oh, you can do that. Right everybody?" And everybody's of course saying, "Yeah, yeah. We'd love to see them try." It's a little manipulation on my part, but it's not really because this is where the work happens. This is where the work happens.

So, feeling that they needed to do this and needed to do it right on the spot was a shocking thing, but it was a good thing. It was a very, very good thing. So they sat back down and we went through the same scenarios that they had before only we switched it and we had them responding as each other during their communication. And what I started to see where the walls of apprehension and where the walls of miscommunication started to come down little by little, by little, while they were communicating as each other. Now there were some tense moments, and yet, we started to explore some of those tense moments while we were engaging in this activity. And we started to talk about the apprehensions and the perceptions of each other during this Role-playing activity and exercise.

And while we were doing this and examining their perspective on things, we started to recognize some cognitive biases in the way that they were engaging and interacting with each other, which in turn fed into their interaction with their child who had behavioral issues. And that's where I wanted to talk to you about attribution bias. So, attribution bias is a cognitive bias. And the belief is that when you have attribution bias when something goes right for a person, that person tends to internalize it that they were the ones that did it right. And when something bad happens to that person, they tend to blame external things for the reason that it went bad.

Let me give you an example. I played a video game with my daughter last week. She would always win. She would always win, but I won once. We were playing Mario kart, she won one. I won one game. And when I won the game I'm like, "I am the best. I'm number one. Check it out. I'm so good at this game." And then when we played again, I lost and when I lost, the first thing that came out of my mouth when I lost was, "It must be this controller. Or it must be the distance I am from the machine. Or there's a glitch in the game." So I was blaming the external for the problem. And when things went right, I actually took all the credit for it.

We tend to do that. So when something's going right for you, you tend to think, "Hey yeah, it's all me." And when something goes bad, then you're like, "Oh man, no, it's because whatever doesn't like me, or this happened." Or we tend to externalize it. What happens with attribution bias between couples or between parents and children is we flip it. We flip that on another person. So when something goes good for another person, we tend to externalize why it went good for them. And when something is wrong or something goes bad with the other person, we tend to blame the other person. Like it's a personal thing that things did not go well. Let me give you an example of that.

Say for example, someone is auditioning for a part in a play. If that person gets the part in the play and you're auditioning too, If you get the part you're going to say, "Oh, it was me because I'm so talented." If you don't get the part and somebody else gets the part, you look at the other person and you're like, "Well, they got it because they know the director or because they already are well known. Or they know them really well. Or they've done productions here before," or whatever it may be. So we tend to use external things to explain the good things that have happened to them and then for the bad things that happened to them, we tend to say, "Well, yeah, they deserve it because they're just a rotten person." Right?

So we started to explore during this couple retreat, this dynamic between attribution bias between this couple. And by bringing it to the forefront in the Role-play and having them understand that that's how they are viewing each other they started to realize that they needed to develop more empathy. More empathy. So instead of excusing them to go sit back down and moving on, we ended up doing a lot of work that night with that couple on developing empathy with each other. Now, I could have gone on and focused on the skills of Effective Communication or establishing an environment in the home related to Effective Negative Consequences or Effective Positive Rewards.

But I chose to focus on empathy, on helping them develop empathy and recognizing when they're using attribution bias in their relationship with each other in order to help them understand how they're using that with their child as well. And that work ended up being probably one of my favorite things that I've done in these types of retreats and these types of trainings. Because what it did was it provided them with a lot of empathy and forgiveness towards each other and then towards their child.

We first explored it with them as a couple and then we started to see how attribution bias was bleeding into the relationship with their child. So whenever something went wrong with their child, they tend to blame the child or when their child acted out, they blame the child. When something was going good, they tended to pat themselves on the back saying, "I'm a great parent."

So once they were cognizant of that, they were able to make some adjustments to their thinking and understanding, "Hey, he's going to have good and bad days. I get it. Is this him? Is the behavior really him?" No, it's not. It's a behavior he's going through, it's a mood he's going through. It's something that we can work through and that we can process and that we can accept the good and the bad externally from blaming other things.

I loved it. I loved it. They loved it too. In fact, after the session, it's interesting to pack up and then to get ready to leave because you'll always have people who stay behind and want to talk or have additional questions and I am more than happy to do that. And they came up afterward and we ended up talking for another 30, 40 minutes about things that they can do to integrate this and Role-playing it.

And I recommended that they Role-play with their child to help their child develop more empathy. And what I found through the process in working with them was that it was through the skill of Role-playing that they were able to really step outside of their perspective and see the world through the eyes of a different person. Somebody that they loved and then learn to embrace and accept that reality.

So, during this course, we continued to talk about attribution bias. I had to explain it over and over again to them and also to the other people that were in the class. And it was important for me to be sure that they understood this concept so I had to break it down into very simple terms as I worked with this couple on more Effective Communication using the skill of Role-playing.

So, basically I explained it this way. Attribution bias, on it's simplest terms, is a way that we that we perceive our place in the world and the way we perceive other people's place in the world. For an individual, when something good happens, we tend to attribute that to ourselves. When something bad happens to us, we tend to blame environmental factors. However, we flip that when we look at other people. So for other people, when something good happens to them, we tend to think it's environmental factors that made the good thing happen to them. And then when bad things happen to them, we tend to blame them for it. We tend to attribute it all to them.

So it's this kind of flip dynamic that people carry, and this couple had it. So we started to talk about the things that were going on in their relationship and we were able to weed it down specifically to an incident where his wife got in a car accident. Now she was driving down the road, it was early in the morning, and the sun was coming up and she got into an accident. This is where you're going to see the attribution bias and how we used Role-play to address this issue.

So she was explaining what happened, and according to her, the bad thing that was happening were all environmental. Again that's part of attribution bias. Is that we tend to blame bad things on happen on external factors. So for her, the reason that the accident happened was that the light changed too quickly. There was a glare because the sun was coming up in the sky. The road was being paved again and adjusted. The lines were not clear. It was difficult to see. So all of these different factors came into this car accident. That was her perspective.

Then we jumped over to his perspective. His perspective was, "Well this bad thing because she just a terrible driver." That's his perspective. Again, that's the flip side when we look at external things, when we look at other people, we tend to think bad things happen because of them and we blame them for it. Somewhere in the middle of all of this, they broke down in the communication that they were having with each other.

We began the Role-play by having them use the skill of Effective Communication in the practice, in our Role-play, and express their thoughts and have them repeat back. Then we had a reverse Role-play where we had them communicate as if they were the other person and explain and actually take on that role.

Now I had mentioned that this creates empathy. Absolutely does create empathy because your forced to look at the world from that other person's perspective and understand how their thinking and are established and created in their mind in order to make sense of the world.

We Role-played this initially and it was a difficult thing for them to Role-play because this was for them, at least, they talked about it being the beginning of the break down of their communication with each other. She felt minimized and blamed. He felt as though he was not being respected and listened too. And it caused financial grief in their family and so that added onto the burden.

So we started to peel away some of these layers of communication. I will tell you this that during that practice back and forth between the two, I was able to see such a transformation in their communication with each other through Role-playing because, again, Role-playing is so powerful in helping everyone understand someone else. Comprehend someone else and their experience.

We initially started with that and we moved onto other things, including their child and their perception of raising their child and who gets the credit when the child does well. You know, and who do they blame when the child does not do well. And is their really a medium in there. Are they able to recognize that sometimes attribution bias keeps us stuck.

This was a new concept for them and for the entire room, but it was a very effective way to help them all communicate better and to practice communicating better using the skill of Role-playing.

And that helped to open up the communication between them and also help them develop ways that they could do that with their child. So I made the recommendation that they Role-play with their child, but then have them switch. So he can Role-play as the parent and they can Role-play as a child so he can get a feeling for what it's like to ask and ask and ask to clean your room. And what it feels like to have a child be defiant. So, he has that experience in his head and he can be like, "Oh, that's what it feels like. That's what it feels like when I act this way. That's what it looks like when I act this way. That's what it sounds like when I act this way."

It opened up so much communication between the couple just during that session. At the end of the session they left and they were laughing and making eye contact and talking to each other and I could see, physically, in his shoulders a relaxation happen. There was a tenseness that was there at the beginning that was completely gone by the end. And this almost kind of reunified redetermined desire on both of their parts to really work together to make things happen because they love their child. They just didn't know how to go about helping their child because they were both stuck in their own perspectives of working through things. So again, we focused on attribution bias. I told them to be very aware on where you're placing blame for anything good or bad. Where you're attributing success and be very careful of that.

Very, very productive evening that night and it's one of those evenings that I will probably always remember, only because there's something magical that happens when people open up and become more vulnerable and open to suggestions and Role-play allows us to do that. The skill of Role-playing allows people to do this. Which is why it's such an important and integral part of what we do at Smarter Parenting. [The Role-play part of it is really where the magic happens.](#) We can teach you all of the skills and all of the steps, but if you do not Role-play something with your child, if you do not help them see, feel, experience what it is that you want them to do or want them to change, what you're teaching them is not going to stick.

I know that's kind of a harsh reality. There are parents out there who hate Role-playing. I get it. And yet it's the one thing that in all the skills that we teach is going to make it stick. It's the thing that's going to be imprinted on their brain so they know exactly what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. And so you cannot skip this step. Don't teach them everything else and then skip and skimp on the Role-play. This is where you want to put a hundred percent your effort in the Role-play of what it is that you want your child to do and then do some reverse Role-plays to develop additional empathy and teach them how to empathize and see the world from a different perspective.

I know this, this went way deeper than I thought it would, as far as the importance of Role-play in developing empathy, but it's important. And it's something that's very important for parents to be able to do well. You have to be able to Role-play well in order for your children to get it because again, they need guidance and they need your guidance to be very direct and very specific. Being able to do it is going to be far more effective than lecturing them. Drawing them

diagrams. Showing pictures. You have to do it. This is where the work starts. [So Role-play.](#)  
[Role-play.](#) [Role-play.](#)

You can find the skill of Role-play on the Smarter Parenting website. There's a video there and we walk you through examples. We walk you through what you need to do, how to do it. So we give you everything that you need. We give you everything that you need and then you can start to use this in your own life and start to use it with your spouse.

So be sure to jump over to the Smarter Parenting website, check out that video because it's super powerful in teaching you what you need to do and how to do it. I just want to express my gratitude again. Sharing this information to you through this podcast, on the website is something of a dream for me. Being able to reach out and help people around the world is powerful. So grateful. I'm so, so grateful. Thank you for joining me today on this. And we will continue to talk about some additional skills that you can use to help your child improve their behavior, but also to help you, as a parent become a better, more well-rounded parent in your approach to helping your child.

That's it for me and I will talk to you later. Bye.

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