

The Fear Fix

David VanNuys Ph.D. Interviews Sarah Chana Radcliffe, M.Ed.

David: My return guest today is Canadian Psychotherapist, Sarah Chana Radcliffe. We'll be discussing her new book, "The Fear Fix: Solutions for Every Child's Moments of Worry, Panic, and Fear."

Sarah Chana Radcliffe is a registered Psychological Associate in Ontario Canada. Over the past 30 years, she has counselled thousands of parents, couples, and individuals in her fulltime private practice in Toronto Canada. She practices emotionally-focused therapy for couples, process experiential psychotherapy, energy psychology, EMDR, and cognitive behavioral therapy for parents.

Her newest book is "The Fear Fix: Solutions for Every Child's Moments of Worry, Panic, and Fear." She also is the author of "Raise Your Kids Without Raising Your Voice". She conducts parenting classes, keynote, lectures, and workshops locally and internationally. Her articles and comments appear in numerous print and online journals, including the New York Times, the Toronto Sun, and The National Post.

She can be found on YouTube answering parenting queries and on iTunes with her own biweekly parenting podcast. Sarah Chana has been a guest on radio and television shows in the United States and Canada. Her website can be found at www.parenting-advice.net. It offers education and practical advice to the international community on all aspects of parenting. She was also interviewed on Shrink Rap Radio, number 193 and 148, as well as on my Wise Counsel Podcast.

Now, here's the interview.

Sarah Chana Radcliffe, welcome back to Shrink Rap Radio.

Sarah: Thank you so much. I'm thrilled to be here.

David: It's great to have you back on the show. I think you're one of my listener favorites and one of my personal favorites as well.

Sarah: Thank you.

David: We're going to be talking about your latest book, "The Fear Fix." I think this is your seventh or eighth book on family life? Do I have that right?

Sarah: Yes. Something like that. That's true. I've lost track myself, yeah (laughter).

David: Wow. I believe it's your second one that is specifically about child rearing. Is that right?

Sarah: I had actually some Jewish books I wrote on child rearing a little bit earlier. Yes, that was "Raise Your Kids Without Raising Your Voice" was my general overall parenting manual, I would say, and then this one, more specifically in-depth stress, I think.

David: Yes. I remember interviewing you some years ago about your book "Raise Your Kids Without Raising Your Voice."

Sarah: Yes.

David: I was very impressed by the clarity of both of your writing and your thinking as I am in your current book.

Sarah: Great. Good.

David: Yes.

Sarah: I was hoping to be clear. I'm not sure because I know I put a lot of stuff in this book here. I'm glad it came across as clear to you.

David: Yes, you really did put a lot of stuff. We're only just going to scrape the surface ...

Sarah: Sure.

David: ... a little bit of the beginning part of the book in our discussion here. Of course, you know what you're talking about not only as a result of your many years as a therapist, but also as a mother. I'm trying to remember how many kids. Is it four?

Sarah: I have six kids, all grown up now.

David: Six?

Sarah: Yes.

David: I was afraid to go ...

Sarah: I have grandchildren.

David: ... right that far out. I thought it might be as many as 6. Good for you. That always impress me; six kids and you're doing all this psychotherapy, you're writing all these books.

Sarah: Well, I have to get out of the house (laughs).

David: How many grandkids do you have now?

Sarah: If all goes well in the next couple of days, it will be 9 (laughs).

David: Wow.

Sarah: I'm expecting one right at the moment as we talk. I know I have aged, but you don't think of ...

David: Yes. At least, what we know, some people who will be buying your book or you'll be gifting ...

Sarah: That's right.

David: ... it to them.

Sarah: That's right. My own "little empire" is really good.

David: Yes, right. In the book, do you make a distinction between fear and anxiety? Or do you see them as pretty much the same thing?

Sarah: I think it's an interesting question because of the field that we're in in psychology. I think we use this term "anxiety" in the world at large to mean something like fear; I'm anxious; I feel I have anxiety about some work I have to do. We use it in a non-clinical sense.

In psychology, we use it in a very clinical sense as an anxiety disorder, some sort of disease that is disturbing our existence. I can see it as an emotion that runs along a continuum from ... It's a human emotion. Everybody feels anxious at

some time. Really, that's what the book is addressing, the everyday anxiety that everybody feels, including parents, and children, and teenagers, and everybody.

Then the anxiety disorders that are intruding on a person's ability to function or the health and the physical level, those are really outside what this book is about. There's an indication to the book out if you see such and such symptoms, maybe you'll get an assessment and pursue it differently with clinical help.

When I talk about fear in the book, anyway, it's the fear that we all feel.

David: Yes. Do we ever at times?

Sarah: Yes.

David: When I stop to think about it, it strikes me that fear is so very primal.

Sarah: Yes.

David: I think I remember sometime when I was particularly low or maybe feverish. I don't know what it was. As I went down, it felt like fear was at the bottom, as if we're going all the way down.

Sarah: Right.

David: There was fear. The fear circuits in our ...

Sarah: Yes. It's life and death.

David: Yes. The fear circuits in our brain or perhaps the fastest of all. Clearly, that speed has played an important role in our survival as a species.

Sarah: Right. We need it here. Yes. We use a certain amount of it.

David: Yes. As a matter of fact, as you point out in the book, fear can have a very positive function, but also may have a downside. Maybe you can say something about those two aspects.

Sarah: Right. If we didn't have fear, we'd be at risk all the time. We just got to come to the edge of a road or a bridge, let's say. Just walk off of it, because if we were fearless, or something, or stick our hand on the fire because we like the color of

it, and then watch our hand shrivel up. We need fear. We need fear to protect ourselves. It's a very useful emotion.

It's the unnecessary fear that we will be addressing in the book, fear that causes us to have more trouble than it's worth kind of fear that interferes with our performance, or makes us feel sick, but it's not really serving any good purpose. It's fear that gets in our way. We couldn't live without fear, but on the other hand, we have more than we need.

David: That's right. I'll endorse that. Are some childhood fears developed mentally normal, for example, I'm thinking of night terrors, which seem to be pretty common, which are, I recall, my own children going through?

Sarah: Mm-hmm (affirmative). There's a lot of fears that little kids, 3, 4, 5-year-olds have and will grow out of by the time they're 6, 7, 8. Night fears, you know, there are 15-year-olds who have night fears. There's grown people who don't like to stay in their house by themselves. Every fear that a child has, it could persist. In my private practice, I've helped 40-year-old people get over their fear of kittens and cats that you might say that's common for a three-year-old, and most people outgrow it, but then some people are stuck with various fears; fears of heights, and fears of amusement park rides, and fears of going through a tunnel.

We see people at every age having every fear. Yes, a lot goes away by itself, but then we're always left with our own special, our little selection that we hold on to.

David: Yes. How is a parent to determine whether their child's fear is normal or indicative of some deeper problem and maybe needing to seek outside help?

Sarah: I think here it's a matter of how much stress the fear is causing the child and possibly the family, too, fears that slow a child down, such that she's not able to get out the door to school in the morning, because she's afraid to leave her home, or afraid to leave her mother, or she is obsessing in an OCD type way of type of compulsive disorder way, so she can't get her socks up. It's taking too long to get them to line up evenly. Or fears that stop you from being happy, being carefree as you should be in childhood, like relatively carefree. Or fears

that stop you from doing things that are important for you to be able to do in your age group.

Everybody else can go to the sleepover party, but you can't. Or everybody else can go to camp, but you can't. I'm not saying it needs clinical attention if it's only limited to one thing, but you might find that clinical tension get you over that hump, and you're able to do whatever everybody else can do. Kids who are having social anxiety and can't start dating when all of their peers are dating, or can't go to parties when everybody else is going to parties, because they have social anxieties. Anything that stops you from doing what the group is doing.

There a parent might try and help a child through this. Children don't always articulate that they want that help. They might just say, 'Well, I'm going to avoid the problem. I'm not going to take my driving lessons. I'm not going on the airplane. I'll take the bus across the country.'

By avoidance, not only children, but we adults go like, 'Well, I'll solve the problem that way.' If you're the parent of a child who's doing some significant avoiding, you might try to intervene and get that child some help, so they don't have to avoid anymore.

David: Based on what you just said and also what I read in the book, I think initially, I might have thought from the title that this book was for parents of very young children, but it seems like maybe you have a broader age range target in mind for your book.

Sarah: Yes.

David: Because you include examples, not only of little kids, but with teenagers.

Sarah: Yes. I'd say the parents reading this will find much in there to help themselves as well. It's more of the Fear Fix I've ... Yes, it is addressed to parents to help their children, because if you give children the right toolset, they will have a much happier, calmer, and probably productive life if we start in childhood. The tools that we'll come across in that book will help anybody of any age, certainly teenagers and college students. The parents themselves, too, will find lots in there to help themselves.

David: There are so many tools in there and so many practical pieces of guidance that you give that it occurred to me that a person wouldn't have to be a parent, an adult would not have to be a parent to benefit from this book. Then I got the idea – you're going to love this – that maybe there's a second book here that with just slight revisions to this, you could produce a second book and reposition it for the general adult audience.

Sarah: You know, I'd love to do that.

David: What do you think of that?

Sarah: I would actually love to do that, because I totally agree. I know from working with people what stresses we're all carrying, all the worries that we all have. I'm also a human being, so I know my own journey of fears and stuff. Yes, this book is not really a parenting book, although there's much in it that will definitely help parents help their children, like I do see this. I would like to reposition it just like you're saying. If you would just give my publisher a call after this, it will be fine.

David: Sure. I'll be happy to do that. Now, you've got a whole chapter on what parents can say to their child to help them deal with specific fears.

Sarah: Yes.

David: I love how your book has so much practical guidance. One of the things that you advocate is naming the fear. Why is that important? How is that helpful? Can you give us an example or two of that?

Sarah: Yes. Naming the fear is sometimes called "emotional coaching." It can be a general technique of naming feelings. There's so many values to that. One thing is that if we stay with that approach of naming the child's feelings, it helps the child to regulate those emotions, because the name of the feeling actually shrinks the feeling.

As soon as you say to the child, "You worried about that, honey?" Or, "Is that stressing you out?" Or, "You seem concerned." Or, "You seem really scared." As soon as you say it, even though you're naming scary feelings, the feeling actually shrinks to fit the container of the name, so to speak. It's just before that, it was

amorphous. It was large. You're drowning. It's got no name with the black pit, but now it's got a name, and that makes it somewhat smaller.

It also shows that you as the parent understand what's going on inside the child. This is one of the things that builds that very important quality of emotional intelligence that identifying what's going on inside, you're acknowledging an inner world. That helps the child to make friends with her own inner emotions, and to understand other people's emotions, and to relate more intelligently to that inner world. That is the basis of social and emotional intelligence, which is a life skill that leads to much success and health in every area.

The naming of emotions and showing that you understand, also positions you to help the child. Because if you're in the group of parent who like to minimize the fear like, "Oh. That's nothing to worry about that. You're making a big deal ..." If you do that sort of thing, then you clearly don't understand the child's fear. Now, you have lost your power to give the child any advice, or guidance, or instruction, or help with that fear, because you are not in their trusted inner circle. You've alienated yourself.

Just by naming the feelings, you've positioned yourself to help in more ways, more ways beyond naming the feelings. Naming the feelings takes us away from the dreaded common popular intervention that we all really want to do, which is offer reassurance to the child. If we know that we're supposed to name the feelings, it will stop us from our instinctive response, which is to convince the child that there's no need for the fear.

David: Yes. Tell us about that. Because reassurance does seem like the first line of defense, and you suggest that it's actually a wrong thing to do.

Sarah: Yes. A particular example, let's say, a kid who is 13 or 14, and about to have some test or examination. This is an A+ student who always does really well, and she's wringing her hands, and she's saying to her parents, "It's such a big test. I'm going to fail. I'm going to fail. I know I'm going to do terrible on it," and the parent says, "Honey, don't worry. You know you always do well. You'll be fine. Just go in there and do your best. You'll be fine." That's what we want to do. That's called "reassurance."

We answer the the question of the book. How come the parent is so confident that the child will be fine? How come the parent is so relaxed and so confident, but the child after all her years of success, and all the A+ that she's received, she doesn't have that confidence inside of her? Part of the answer lies in that reassurance, because the parent has the answer in his brain, maybe, but the child is lacking it in her own brain.

What we want to do is avoid reassurance, so that the child builds a little wire in her own brain where she reassures herself, that she gives herself that information that she needs, and then she's good to go for everywhere for the rest of her life.

If the parent just said something like maybe the feelings like, "You seem really scared." The kid goes, "Yes. This is the hardest test ever and the meanest teacher ever. This is going to be terrible." The father says something like, "Wow. I can see why you're so upset." Just absolutely refrain from finishing it off with the happy ending. Eventually, the child will finish it off with the happy ending, because there is this itch that we all have to end the conversation on a good note. The parent has it, but the child also has it.

If you just never fill in the happy ending for the child, the child starts thinking rationally herself. There's another example in that book, which was an actual dialogue I had with somebody about a headache they had. We'll say here that the child says, "I have a headache, and I'm really worried about it. I've never had a pain like this before." The parent wants to say, "Don't worry, sweetheart. It's just a tension headache. It's probably nothing. Go get a little extra sleep. Have a cup of tea. Take a Tylenol," but the kid says, "No. No. This is like a pain I've never felt before. This is really different. This really hurts."

Now, we're talking about a person who had lots of pains all the time, so the parent is offering this reassurance to get them out of this anxious cycle. If the parent stops doing that and just says, "Wow. You seem really concerned about it," eventually, the kid says and it goes – this is exactly what happened, the dialogue – the kid says, "It's probably just a tension headache."

Now, that came from inside the child's own brain, and as the child is beginning to build that little wire of reassurance inside his own brain to calm himself down,

and that's where we need it. Because if the parent holds the key to reassurance, the child has to come to a parent over and over and over, and sometimes throughout the entire lifespan. We see 50-year-olds who are going to their 70-year-old parents still for that reassurance. They never got it inside themselves.

David: Yes. It's interesting that you mentioned the 50-year-olds, because, again, expanding this to the adult world and thinking how many times I've been in the situations where a friend is having a problem, a spouse, I should say, a spouse, but a spouse (laughs) ...

Sarah: Yes (laughs).

David: ... is having a problem. I know I go to reassurance often as kind of the first thing. Let's think of an example with adults, an adult friend, a spouse. Instead of reassuring ... Maybe you can come up with a situation on the spot. I'm not sure I can.

Sarah: It could be anything. It could be a business problem.

David: Good.

Sarah: I think I even have something there about somebody really worrying about a job that it looks like they're downsizing there and people are being laid off and they want to stay. Even if you get laid off, don't worry. You'll get another job. It will be fine.

David: Right.

Sarah: If you stick with the emotional coaching, it's interesting. I mean, in my mind, this is what people are paying huge dollars to their therapist for, because therapist will do this emotional coaching and nobody else will. Everybody starts doing it for free, and we, the therapist will be out of business (laughs). Don't tell anybody.

If you just let your friend talk it thought and you name the feelings, you say like, "Wow, that is unnerving. Yes. I could see. You must be really stressed about that." The person goes like, "Yes. I don't know what I'm going to do. I mean, if get downsized, so I also got my mortgage. I got this. I got that. I can't even focus

for a month.” You say, “Wow. It’s a lot of pressure.” You just name it back to him what you think he’s feeling. Eventually, the guy will talk himself into a position of, “Well, you know what? If this doesn’t work, I’m just going to go get myself a better job.” You’ll say, “Great.”

You knew that 10 minutes earlier in the conversation, but he’s got it where he needs it, and then he throws his arm around you, “Thank you. You’re the greatest listener. You’re really helped me work that out.” You say, “No problem.” You did nothing, really, but listened to his feelings, and helped him work it out in that way.

David: That’s great. Shades of Carl Rogers, I must ...

Sarah: Yes.

David: You should give him a little bit of credit.

Sarah: Yes. Yes, we should.

David: But I like the way that you’ve stated it. In addition to naming the fear, you also emphasize that it’s important to accept the fear. Tell us what you mean by that. Who’s doing the accepting, the parents or the child?

Sarah: You know, eventually, your acceptance helps the child accept his own emotions as normal and not scary. We get afraid of our fear. As we do that, we actually produce more fear chemistry. If we’re looking at the process of a panic attack, for example, and you start having a little bit feeling of panic, and your heart starts fluttering, and so on, you can become very alarmed from that, and then your brain says, “Look. She’s alarmed from that. Let’s give her some more fear chemistry.” It starts everything going much more intense, and now you can’t breathe. You’re feeling dizzy, and you’re getting really alarmed from that, so you get more fear chemistry.

Fear builds upon itself, where if you use one of these mindful approaches, these things go onto a lot of different names, but you’re simply watching your body. You’re watching your heartbeat, and you’re not getting involved, then you go like, “Yes. That’s fear. There’s a part of me that’s afraid. Let me see if I can do something for that part.” As you know in the book, there’s a million different

interventions we can do for that part. If you have one part of you that's drowning, you need another part that's standing on the shore, feet on the ground, you're now able to throw a net, a safety net to bring that frightened part to the shore. You don't want to jump in with a scared part. "Yes. It seems terrible." We have the fear, and then we have our reaction to fear, and we want a calm kind of witnessing and helpful reaction to our own fear.

The parent starts off by modeling that. It's funny, because a parent was telling me that she read the book, and she's really good. She says to her child something like ... She's naming the feeling, she's naming the feelings, and then she says to a child ... What she says to me, actually says, "Then I told him, 'Don't be afraid.'" I said, "Wait a second. You don't talk to me there," because we did the emotional coaching for five lines and it ends with "don't be afraid."

What we want to say is more like, "Well, it's okay to be afraid. That's fine. I understand you are afraid, and that's fine." That's also the image I have in my mind is like when a woman's in labor and she's in transition, and she's freaking out, and she's screaming until the midwife is there. Now, you don't want the midwife to start screaming, too. You want the midwife (laughter) ... You want the midwife to be very calm and to help you through it.

Same thing when you're on an airplane and you're afraid because there's turbulence and your hands are shaking, whatever. You don't want to see a panic look on the stewardess' faces walking down the aisle. You want to see that everybody else looks calm, so that helps calm you down. Yes, the child is afraid, but when the parent entered with, "I'm not afraid of your fear. I don't have an urgent need to get rid of your fear right at this minute. I can tolerate you being afraid and taking your time to work it through, and we're going to help that." which, by the way, is not what almost any parent feels.

The fear of a child is something quite close to the cry of a child. You know when babies cry, we have an urgent need to do something for that baby.

David: Yes.

Sarah: When the child expresses fear, we have an instinct to stamp that out quickly. We even have to counteract our own instincts in this matter, and just go slow and let

the child have its fear knowing that all fear rides this wave. It goes up and then, up, and then up, and then it goes down, and down, and down, and nobody stays in this frozen moment of fear forever. You can just help the child find techniques that will help him end that wave more quickly and more thoroughly. That's probably what I mean there.

David: Yes. You draw on so many sources. I'm impressed that you draw upon so many sources and integrate them into your work, because you did talk about the wave coming and then the wave goes. Right away, that makes me think of meditation training.

Sarah: Right. Exactly.

David: I can say, "Oh. This is an interesting application of that basic idea, that basic learning."

Sarah: Right.

David: Now, earlier, you mention emotional coaching. It sounded like you were saying naming it is emotional coaching. I'm wondering if there's more to emotional coaching than that. That makes me wonder well, where our parents going to develop those skills.

Sarah: The emotional coaching is going to be ... It's part of the skill that the parent needs. It's not really like a therapist. You just need to be able to join with the child by naming what the child's experiencing, and then you're going to do more for the child in terms of it might be followed by problem solving, but now, like I said, before you situated yourself to maybe help a child with finding a solution to the fear.

It's maybe two or three lines or four lines, maybe as it's naming the feeling, but you got to do more. For example, let's say a child is afraid to sleep in his room by himself or something. He wants to sleep with you. Now, we need to be careful with avoidance, because avoidance builds and maintains fear. If you want a child to overcome fear, you have to help him develop techniques that make him feel comfortable in the face of fear.

The child's in his room and he's calling, "I want to come out. I want to speak with you. I don't want to be here," and the parent greets that with naming the feeling, which is really essentially emotional coaching. You're just saying, "I know sweetie. You want to be mommy and daddy." We're just naming that back to the child, "Yes. I don't want to stay here. It's dark." Mind you, we have the night light on for the kid and everything. "I don't want to be here. There's monsters. I don't like it here." We say, "I know. You don't want to be in your room alone." We're okay with that.

The next thing we're going to go to is, so let's find some ways to see what we can do to make you more comfortable here, because sleeping with us is not an option. Now, that is, I'm going to say ... In my mind, if the child is 2 or 3 years old, I don't care if they sleep with their parents. I had all my kids sleeping with someone in my room when they were little. The children can have these fears when they're 8 years old, and when they're 10 years old, and when they're 14 years old. They don't want to be in the house or whatever. They want to be in their own room.

They really suffer from that, by the way. They maybe cry themselves to bed every night. It can be intense for them. Or whatever the fear is. I don't want to go to swimming lessons, or I don't want to go to the dentist, or I don't want to go school. Whatever fear they have, it's all in the same thing.

We name the fear, and then we're going to move to how are we going to help you deal with the fear, because you are going to swimming lessons, you are sleeping in your own room, you are going to school. Mommy and daddy are going out for the evening. We cannot solve this by making the problem go away.

Then there's all these fear busters, but part of them are helping the child to calm his own physiology and his imagination. There's a bunch of techniques in there that we use. Basically, to be afraid means that you're conjuring up a lot of very horrible scenarios in your brain. People have develop that habit of doing that whether they are just afraid in the moment, like afraid of the monsters in the moment. They have to be thinking about these monsters or to be worrying about something. They have to be conjuring up dismal outcomes. Like if they're worrying about what's going to happen if they don't get accepted into such and

such educational programs, the college that they've applied for. They're worrying about it. They actually have to be picturing what's going to happen when they're rejected.

To have fear is really to be negative. We do want to teach children how to use their brain more effectively. Some of these things we won't be able to do in the moment. Like we're on a subway with a child or we're on an escalator with a child, or something the child's afraid right now, and the fear just came upon him where we came. Went to the elevator. All of a sudden he feels claustrophobic, but we have to get in right now.

There are certain things that we cannot fix right now. The only thing we can do is give the child parental presence that is, "I'm with you. The elevator doors will be opening soon." After that episode, we will prepare for future elevator excursions by doing certain kinds of work at home. Perhaps, you remember some of the sections of the book we talked about installing certain techniques and so on.

David: Yes. You talked about a problem solving earlier. You mentioned problem solving, and that's an important step in many of these scenarios that you described. Going back in your initial example of the child who doesn't want to be sleeping alone. I think you said something like, "You're not going to be able to sleep with us. What can we do to make you more comfortable being by yourself?"

Sarah: Right.

David: Did you then leave it in their court? Or are there ...

Sarah: No.

David: The kid's problem ...

Sarah: You are the parent. Especially at the beginning ... I mean, eventually, once you've given your child some basic tools, like when you teach a child how to calm the body with a wide variety of body calming interventions and teach him how to calm the mind, once he's got the drift of things, he will be able to join you in that problem solving process.

At the beginning, no, so you're going to lead the way. As we say, this is a 6-year-old, or 7-seven-year olds who we just want him now to stay in his own room. We might offer certain things like, I can give you parental presence – that's one of the things that's soothing – for about 10 minutes. I suggest you close your eyes and fall asleep within those 10 minutes, because I'm leaving after that.

We can also have certain things he needs to hold onto, certain things to calm your body. There might be some essential oils like lavender and chamomile, which help relax the body and mind and the child drift off to sleep a little more easily, and a little bed time rituals which includes some herbal teas that also relax the body and mind.

It could be that the child is having fears of the dark, then you see there's a whole section of the book on Flower Remedies. If that is the child's issue that he's afraid of things lurking in his room, there's the remedy called "Aspen," but then if he's afraid of separation from parents, that's a little bit different. There's remedy called "Mimulus," with both of those as a remedy for panicky feeling, which is called "Rock Rose."

I explained all of those things in the book, so that a parent can say, "Look. This is what I can do for you." We give you ... Or Rescue Remedy, which is a general "fix all," which a parent should always have in his purse or his briefcase, whatever it is for himself and for the child when you're going on outings, because it's an adrenaline buster, that Rescue Remedy.

I can do some herbal things. I can do some natural things. I can give you some comfort tools. I can show you what to think about instead of think about the monsters, I want you to think about the angels. Let's picture these angles flying all around the room here. We can set the scene. I can stay with you for 10 minutes. I can show you how to calm your breath down to help you fall into a pleasant sleep while you're thinking about those angels. There are different things. Of course, we'll leave the night light on, and so on. Those are some kinds of things we might do.

David: This is one of the things that always charms me about you is I think ... I hope this won't sound offensive. Based on the photo on your site of you and so on, and your number of kids, I think of you as kind of like a soccer mom, and you're the

soccer mom who is into all these far out things like Bach flower remedies, and herbal essences, and energy healing. It's such a wonderful mix. It's such a surprising mix.

It's wonderful to hear these examples that you're just giving, because there is a very down to earth way that you bring them out of maybe their weird origins ... That's my judgement into ...

Sarah: You know, one of the things ... I'm very serious about those things even though, yes, they have their little eccentric, weirdo side, but if you read what I said later that if we don't give children the idea that there are things they can do to calm their nerves, then they will, during adolescence, discover all things that they can do to calm their nerves, like alcohol, and all the drugs, and the cutting, and the starving themselves, and all of those dysfunctional, horrible ways of calming their nerves. They will discover that.

There are many adults who don't have anything better than their marijuana to take every single day to calm their nerves, or their alcohol. I don't mean like the real addicted people like who are not doing well with addiction, but I mean regular people who are using these things to calm their nerves, because they don't know about Rescue Remedy, let's say, which is a very healthy thing developed by Dr. Edward Bach who is our medical doctor trying to take stress off of the body for people who got sick. Very harmless, good for pregnant ladies, and nursing mothers, and newborn babies, and old people. If you don't know about that, then you're going to find something else. Teenagers are especially at risk for that, because they will find what relaxes them.

David: Yes. That's a good case that you've just eluded there (laughs).

Sarah: Yes, I think so. There's so many ways to calm our nerves, but parents have to show children. Something I mentioned in the book, too, is that most of the stress and anxiety that children feel occurs when they're not with their parents. This is like teaching your child to swim before you drop them off to beach somewhere. Where we're dropping the child off in the door of life, he has to have some tools here to survive all of the scary, and stressful, and overwhelming moments when mom and dad are not there. The child should have Rescue Remedy in his own

briefcase, or what you call backpack, or whatever it is, and know that he can take that.

I point out there, too, that when an adult gets on a plane, and an adults doesn't like the takeoff, the landing, or the turbulence, or whatever, or just has total fear of flying, they may go to a doctor and get a prescription for some drug to help them do their flight. With children with the same intensity of fear, we give them nothing. To know about these little remedies that can calm the child, and do it very, very well, this is just a gift to your child.

David: Yes. I notice in a number of the examples, you have the parent touching the child lightly on the shoulder and speaking quietly. What can you tell us about the role of touch in these scenarios?

Sarah: Yes. We have a whole body system and energy system that responds in different ways to touch. One of the things I have there is the "heart hold," which is in young children, the parent can actually touch what the acupuncturist call "the sea of tranquility point" which was on the chest around the heart area. It's like a little bit up from the bottom of the rib cage about three widths up and CV 17, I think that is.

If you hold that and put pressure there, it calms the stressful feeling, and you can teach a child to do that for himself as well.

One thing I didn't cover, but which is really good is reflexology, which is the massaging of hands and feet, and something that a child can do for himself while he's waiting for an examination to begin and so on, where touch affects the zones in the body called "the reflex zones." It all goes to the brain, and to the heart, and calms everything down.

Interestingly, that part of the parenting calm, if we look at the research, the heart math system, where we see that our own heart rate variability produces a beautiful calming waves that reaches many feet outside of our body. When we are generating that calm wave, the other person's heart will entrain to it. Because they are all chaotic with their panic response and we are producing a nice calm wave near them that will calm them down just being in their presence.

It's not a fairy thing. It's a scientific principle that could be mapped. We're doing that. It's a gift for people, too.

Sometimes therapists notice this, like people will walk into a therapeutic room and they were all anxious a moment ago and they'll say, "I just feel better just being here." Partly what they're picking up is the, I don't know if there's an aura in the room, but they're certainly probably picking up the wavelength, the literal wavelength that the therapist is producing, and the person is just calming down in the presence of somebody who is calming and soothing.

David: Plus, you're going to need acupuncture, reflexology, heart math.

Sarah: Yes.

David: As I listen to you, I think you ought to have your own training institute for therapists.

Sarah: I think so, too.

David: Yes. Because you integrate so many things, and there's an underlying wisdom that I hear that really, I think you have a lot to offer. In the next phase of your life, maybe that will be something ...

Sarah: Thanks. It's highly something to think about definitely.

David: Yes.

Sarah: Can I tell you, one of my favorite things in the book, if you don't mind? I just want to share it with your listeners...

David: Yes. Do.

Sarah: ...is the shopping cart model of worrying. Did you come across that in the book? Do you remember that?

David: I don't remember that.

Sarah: Okay. I explained ... We talk about being worried, where in fact there is no such thing. You are actually worry-ing, which as I mentioned before is generating some very bad pictures. That's what we're doing. Every moment that we

generate a bad picture, we're generating bad chemistry in that moment, which is affecting us, and make us afraid.

Anyway, over the long run, that's how we stress our immune systems out. This worrying of things, some people think that they can't help it, because they don't really understand where the worry came from in the first place. It seems to come to them, and then you have to worry about that.

I used this model where it's like you go to buy a book on Amazon.com. When I go to my page on Amazon, it says, "Hi, Sara. We have some suggestions for you." They have like 10 books there that they think I might like. They'll have my dairy-free, soy-free, gluten-free cookbook there that I am really interested in, and they'll have my gardening book on exactly the right flowers, and so on. It's really amazing, because these 10 books will definitely be what I'm interested in. They selected them out of their millions and millions and millions of possible books just for me.

It turns out that they're not that smart really. All they're doing is they're watching what I've been paying attention to. If I've been searching for, and clicking on, and putting into my shopping cart, and actually buying these things, that will show up on my page. If I stop buying these cookbooks, then after a little while, then will stop showing up on my page.

When we parked our car and we're walking from point A to point B, we have the screen. When we're falling asleep at night, we have a very big screen. We're doing something in our mind, a vision of something. We have a screen. We always have the screen.

The screen says, "Hi Sara. I have some suggestion for you. Why don't you ..." It picks the last 10 things that I like to ruminate about like "Why don't you fret about this? Why don't you worry about that? Have you considered panicking about this or that?" Of the things that I'd like to pay attention to, which means, I play with them, I spend time with them, I entertain them, I ruminate on, I go over and over them, that is what's going to, so-called "pop into my mind." Nothing's popping any more than things that are popping on Amazon. It is what I have been selected to pay attention to.

Now, if I stop shopping for cookbooks on Amazon, when they show me the cookbook, my eyes glaze over it. I just move to my newest thing. Maybe I'm working on art, art therapy, whatever. I don't click on that cookbook when they put it up there. I don't even look at it. I just move my eyes. I start searching on the search bar for art books.

Same thing here. If there's a thought that pops into my mind, a suggestion, that says, "Why don't you worry about your kid? He's 35. He isn't married." "Why don't you start worrying about that for a while?" I go like, "Why would I want to do that? If I do that, I'm going to start feeling horrible in fifteen minutes. Why don't I just move over here and look at the flowers or something, move my attention to somewhere else, to my gratitude, or to my happy thoughts, to my plans for the future, to my new business that I'm building, to this or that, something that will make me feel good?"

If I continuously do that, then after a while when I'm walking from the car to the building, the things that will pop up on my screen will be flowers, new businesses, gratitude, and all these great things, because that's where I've been investing my time and energy.

The worried habit is what produces these thoughts that pop into our mind. Once we go with them, we build their neuro-territory, and we basically wire our own brains to be stressed and worried all the time. We can stop doing that, choosing where to place our attention.

David: Beautifully stated. I went to a local TED. It's called "TED X" when they have a TED somewhere near you. Are you familiar with the TED conferences where they have these very inspiring speakers?

Sarah: TED Talk.

David: Yes.

Sarah: I listen to them all the time. I love them.

David: Yes. Rick Hanson, who I had interviewed, actually was a speaker at this TED thing. It was good to be reminded that ... He said in different words, kind of what you were just saying, saying that neurons that fire together, wire together

Sarah: Absolutely. Dan Seagull also talks a lot about that in his books. Yes.

David: Yes. Also, he talked about that we do have this built-in negative bias that ...

Sarah: Yes.

David: ...if things are left on their own, if the brain is idling, there is a tendency for it to move towards worry.

Sarah: Very much so. I talk about that in detail there, too, and how to overcome that bias. Yes. We have to do a little bit of work, and we have to help our children learn how to do it. With chaos, it's huge, because then we're happy all day long. There are very negative. Worry, and anxiety, and stress, they are negative feelings, and they really wear us down, exhaust us, and ruin the quality of our lives for no good reason. There's no benefit there.

David: Yes. One of the strategies that you talk about, and you talk about so many, there's one you called "moving fear with facts."

Sarah: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: What are you getting at there?

Sarah: It's an alternative cognitive type technique. When I say, alternative, I think one of the examples I used would be the child's afraid of bees. The child doesn't want to go on the class picnic, so the parent said, "Look. Everybody goes on the picnic. How many people every year gets stung with a bee?" That's a cognitive approach what's the likelihood of the danger happening. I don't favor that approach at all.

After he's gone through the emotion coaching just to position ourselves in the right place so the child knows we understand, then we can say, "Well, you might get stung by a bee. That is something that could happen. Here are some things that you could do to reduce the chances." In the book I suggest we go to the computer and look up bees stings, and what to do to prevent them, and what to do once they happened. It says there, on the internet wear the color black. Bees don't go for that so much. Use eucalyptus oil. They don't like the smell of that stuff, or maybe an anti-bee spray...do this, and do that. That will reduce your

chances of getting stung. You still could get stung. If you do get stung, then immediately, apply ice to it. Take the stinger out with a credit card. Just push it out. Put some ointment on it.

The thing is, there are things to do. Those facts have something to do with the child's fear. What you dread could happen. We do live in a terrifying world where really bad things – not just bee stings – but really bad things happen all the time. We can't say that there's no war, there's no hurricanes, there's no death. There's really scary things that go on, but we can reduce our anxiety by being prepared for a situation and knowing what to do in every situation.

Sometimes, the only thing you can do in a situation is pray. Those people who actually believe that prayer is helpful, they do better in those situations than people who have nothing to do. For most of what we're afraid of, like fear of dogs, and fear of bees, and fear of whatever, there are actual facts that can help us deal with whatever might go wrong.

David: That is such a good and strong statement that it might be a good place for us to wrap it up, unless there's some other final statement that you'd like to make.

Sarah: I just say that there's so much more than what we talked about in that book. I think there's something for everybody there. Somebody will find one thing that will help them, and I'll be happy that it helped them and helped their children. There's just a lot of different ways to approach this, something for everybody.

David: I agree. I endorse that. Once again, I rediscover why I like having you as a guest so much.

Sarah: I so much enjoyed being a guest. I really thank you for the opportunity.

David: Yes. Well, Sarah Chana Radcliffe, I want to thank you for being my guest again on Shirk Rap Radio.