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186 — How to Raise Confident Kids with Actress/Author Jazmyn Simon

Amy Morin:

Welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*! I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four books on mental strength. Every Monday, I introduce you to a mentally strong person whose story and mental strength tips can inspire you to think, feel, and do your best in life. The fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys! Don't forget to subscribe to the show on your favorite platform so you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week. Now, let's dive into today's episode!

Do you struggle to know how to raise kids who truly love themselves? Do you struggle with your own body image issues? Do you have a hard time knowing what to say to your kids about a lot of today's issues? If you answered yes to any of those questions, today's episode is for you!

You've probably heard people say things like you shouldn't compliment kids on how they look. But my guest today has a different opinion about this, and she'll explain why. I'm talking to Jazmyn Simon. She rose to fame on HBO's hit show *Ballers* where she started with Dwayne Johnson (also known as The Rock). She's also appeared in many films, including Tyler Perry's *Acrimônia*. Jazmyn lives in LA with her husband, Dulé Hill, whom she met on the set of *Ballers*.

You might recognize him from many of his acting projects such as *The West Wing* and *The Wonder Years* reboot. They have two children, and they're the inspiration for Jazmyn's new book, *Most Perfect You*. Some of the things she talks about today are how we can help kids develop a healthy love for themselves, how we can learn to love our own bodies more, and how we can tackle tough conversations with kids. Make sure to stick around until the end of the episode for The Therapist's Take!

It's the part of the episode where I'll break down Jazmyn's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. Here's Jazmyn Simon on how to raise confident kids!

Amy Morin:

Jazmyn Simon, welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*!

Jazmyn Simon:

I'm so happy to be here today. Thank you for having me.

Amy Morin:

Oh, I'm excited to talk to you because I hear so many people say, "Gee, I'd love to write a kid's book someday," but most people don't ever actually do it. But you did. You wrote this book called the Most Perfect to You, and I know you've been marketing it, talking about it, and doing lots of author things that we do when books come out. But what kind of a response have you gotten?

Jazmyn Simon:

So far, it's been so good. I have sold thousands of books, which is mind-blowing to even say. All of the responses that I've gotten so far are, "Thank you. I wish I had this book." I was fortunate enough to do The Today Show, and I went back to my hotel room and I had a message on Instagram from a 67-year-old grandmother. She said, "I just want you to know that I saw you on The Today Show. I went out to Barnes & Noble. I bought your book. And I have to say, this is the book that I needed when I was a little girl and

the book that I need today." This was a 67-year-old grandmother. The response has been all that I wanted it to be and more.

Amy Morin:

I'm not surprised because most of us didn't hear this message when we were kids. Even as adults, most of us still think, I don't like my nose, or I don't like my legs, or I wish this was different about me. What inspired you to write this book in the first place?

Jazmyn Simon:

I have a 17-year-old daughter named Kennedy Ire, who is Ire in the book, and she's on her way to college, which is mind-blowing to me. But when she was about three years old, we were riding in the car and she looked at me from the backseat, I see her in the rear view, and she says, "Mama, I want to be pretty. I need my skin to be white." Okay, how do I handle this complex conversation with a three-year-old in the next five seconds? I say to her, "Well, Kennedy, very patiently, when you were still in my belly, I had a conversation with God and I told God that I wanted you to have my favorite color of skin, and that is what color you are, brown.

That's my favorite color. I asked for that to be the color of your skin. Actually everything about you I asked God for, specifically every single thing. If you don't like something about yourself, you need to talk to me. It's not about you, it's about me, because you are all of my favorite things." She sits in the backseat for a second and she says, "Okay," and then she lets it go. Fast forward until the summer of 2020, at this time I have a one-year-old little boy named Levi and now Kennedy is 15 years old. It was the beginning of the global pandemic. We had just on repeat, saw George Floyd get murdered on TV, then Breonna Taylor get murdered by the police, and it was just so much chaos in the world.

I thought, oh my gosh, when Kennedy was three years old, she took everything around her and she equated beauty to a certain thing. Now, what is every kid that's watching the global pandemic, people dying, Black people getting murdered on TV on repeat, what is this doing to them? Because even if they're not telling us, they're gathering all the information around them. I turned to my husband and I said, "There's so much hurt

and anger and pain in the world. I need to write a children's book. I need to let kids know that they are loved and they're perfect, and they're not what they see on TV right now."

I have a little Black son. He is not. That is not your life. That is not your path. You will not be hurt by somebody. You will not be killed like this. I just started getting in my head and I said, "I'm going to write a children's book." I tell you, Amy, I went downstairs and I thought, all right, what am I going to write? And I wrote Most Perfect You.

Amy Morin:

Really? This isn't something you hadn't been planning for 15 years after you said that to then turn it into a book. It just came to you when you realized the world needed.

Jazmyn Simon:

It came to me, and I thank Kennedy. I tell her that she is the best thing that ever happened to me. I had her young in life and she taught me how to grow up. She taught me what love and patience was, but I also told her that conversation 14 years ago lived inside of me and it gave me such hope that I could teach other children to love themselves from your pain. Sometimes the best things come from uncomfortable situations. It lived in me all that time and waited for the right time to come out. I hadn't thought about it until I sat down to write a book.

Amy Morin:

And in that moment when she said that to you, did it just come to you, or is that something you had thought about before?

Jazmyn Simon:

Let me tell you, it just came to me. Some things are ordained. I believe in energy. I believe in God. I believe that everything happens for a reason, even the bad stuff. I did not know why I said that in that moment. I hadn't thought about it. She was three years old. I thought, she has Black fam. I'm black. I never say, "I wish that I was white, or my

skin, I need this to be pretty." I was like, where is this coming from? I didn't want to dismiss her. I didn't want to be like, "You are pretty or, no, that's silly."

I just took the time to try to explain to her that I thought that she was perfect. And that if she didn't think it, I thought it. And not to be mad at herself, but to be mad at me. It came to me, one of my highlights in parenting.

Amy Morin:

I like that because I do think it's so tempting to tell kids, "Oh, don't worry about it, or that's not true." When they say they have a fear or when they're struggling with something, we just kind of dismiss it or minimize it if we're not careful.

Jazmyn Simon:

Absolutely, and that closes the door on a lot of conversation. I think it's a lot about mindful parenting right now. That's the new wave of parenting is mindful parenting. Well, 17 years ago, mindful parenting didn't exist. There wasn't Instagram to go on and find your favorite mindful parenting site. But at the time, I think that I always tried to mother Kennedy in the manner of which I would've wanted to be mothered. I always try to sit down and explain things to her and talk to her. In that moment, I'm really grateful for the foundation that she, one, felt comfortable to say it, and two, that I took the time to try to get into a three-year-old's mind.

Sometimes we think that little kids aren't smart. Little kids are as smart as we are. They just don't have the words to articulate the feelings that they have. If we take the time and we just talk to them like the little humans that they are, you'd be amazed at what they can grasp and understand and articulate to you and explain to you. Obviously she was in some sort of pain. Obviously she wasn't happy with herself. In that moment, I had an opportunity to try to get her to love herself more.

Amy Morin:

And then how about over the years? Because I suspect that wasn't the last time she ever said something like that. Did you keep always making sure that you gave her that same message?

Jazmyn Simon:

You know what? Yes and no. It's funny that you ask that because with the book coming out, we've had a lot of conversations about loving herself. Anytime I would have to go out of town for work, I would write a note and I say, "Don't forget who you are. Don't forget who you are. Don't forget who you are." Over the years, that's a message. You are loved. You are strong. You are beautiful. You are worthy. You are chosen. I would tell her all of these things to try to inspire her. When the outside world tells you who you are, don't listen. You know who you are. But I never really had this type of conversation like, are you happy with your brown skin?

A year ago, I'd say, I think she was 16, the book had gotten sold and I said, "Let's sit down and let's talk. Is there anything about yourself that you would change? Anything?" She sat for a second. Now, she's a mature young lady at this time. She thinks about it. In my house, we know not to answer quickly. Because if she answers quickly, I'm like, "That's not a thought through answer. I want you to really think about it." She thinks for a second. Now, my daughter, Kennedy, is six feet tall. She's always been taller than everybody. She wears a size 12 in women's shoes. She has a big foot. She goes to a predominantly white high school.

She has a white boyfriend. There's a lot of things that someone would suspect that she would want to change about herself. She sits there and she says, "No, there's nothing." She said, "I'm going to tell you that when I was in the third grade, every night I would pray that I would wake up and I would be white the next day." And that hurt me because I had this conversation with her when she was three. Now, third grade is about eight or nine. From three to nine, I had no idea that she was still thinking the thoughts. Now at 16, she had overcome her dislike of herself from a lot of different ways. We put her in therapy for anxiety.

There's a lot of things that we did along the way. But from that time from three, I thought, "Oh, I dodged a bullet there," and I didn't think to continue to ask the questions. Now, because I have experienced this with Kennedy, I know with Levi to ask a lot of follow-up questions. One really strong conversation doesn't fix the problem. Yes and no,

to answer your question. Yes, we talked about it, but maybe not as soon as I should have.

Amy Morin:

Good points. What kinds of things do you think we should be asking our kids? You said you asked questions. What kinds of questions do we ask?

Jazmyn Simon:

We started this thing with Levi. He's three. Most of these conversations are, "I don't want to. No. No. No." But I say, "What was your favorite part of today? Think of the thing that made you happiest today." And then, okay, he'll tell me yesterday he went to a birthday party. It was bunnies there. The bunnies. What was your least favorite part of the day? Well, I didn't get another M&M, right? He's three. We're just asking him really simple, rudimentary questions to try to figure out what you like and what you don't like. With Kennedy, we ask more complex questions. How are you feeling today? Are you excited to go to college?

Are you scared to go to college? What do I need to teach you? What do you feel like you're lacking? I think with age appropriateness, we just ask all the questions. I think that I got some things right in parenting with Kennedy. We have a safe space to talk about sex and drugs. When she started high school, she came home... I hope this is appropriate to talk about, but we're going there, right?

Amy Morin:

Let's go.

Jazmyn Simon:

Let's go. When she was in the ninth grade, she goes to Harvard-Westlake, which is one of the top high schools in the country. It's a very academic focused. I pick her up from school, and I say, "How's school today?" She's like, "Great. I won't say names. A young lady was giving oral sex in the gender neutral bathroom." We live on a hill, so I almost crashed off the side of the hill because I'm like, "Oh God." Again, I'm not prepared for

this conversation, but okay. I said, "What? Oh my gosh," and I had to check myself in that moment. I said, "Well, Kennedy, I'm going to tell you the truth. At a certain age, everybody gives oral sex.

I don't care what anybody tells you. But if you do it in high school, everybody's going to know about it because it's going to be the coolest thing that has ever happened to this young man. It's going to be the coolest thing. He's going to have to tell everybody. You need to make a decision if that's what you want to do. And if it is, that's okay and I accept that, because everybody's going to do it." These are the type of conversations over the years, and she says, "Nah, I don't think so." But you have to be open to conversations because I don't want her to get her information from outside of this house, right? Go ahead.

Amy Morin:

Yeah, that's the thing, kids get the message of drugs are cool, doing all of this stuff is awesome. It's fun. If you say to them like, "No, drugs are bad," well then they're like, "No, my friends said they're cool. You don't know what you're talking about. My friends are smarter. You're not in the loop anymore." They get these messages from other people. But when you can say to them, "Well, actually, when you do these certain things, you might have fun. You might enjoy it. However, here's the downside to it," then they see you as much more credible.

Jazmyn Simon:

Absolutely. I think when we're trying to teach our children to love themselves, because that's what Most Perfect You is about, I want kids and the adults who read them, right? When we read this book, it says, stop comparing yourself to other people. That's the main message. You are perfect. You are not perfect compared to that person or to this thing. You are perfect. We are reclaiming what perfect means. You are perfect. Okay, let's just clear the table. Now, you are perfect for all the things that make you you. This goes with drugs or sex or alcohol or anything. You are perfect. You don't need anything in addition to what.

You don't need to have sex to make you a cooler person. You don't need to do drugs to make you a better person. You don't need to drink to make you more of an appealing or fun or loosen up. These are all the same, foundation is the same. But I also tell her, some people will do drugs, and that doesn't mean that you have to do drugs because I didn't make you to be them. I made you to be you. Now, if you choose to do drugs, you have to do drugs knowing all of the consequences that come along with that. We have had numerous conversations. We live in California where marijuana is legal, and this is not a conversation at pro or con.

The fact is it's legal in California. I have told her many times, I do not partake in marijuana. I don't smoke weed. That's not my thing. But if you choose to do it, I need you to go to a store and buy it. Simple things. Some may disagree with that parenting. Some are going to say, "Don't do it." We live in a state that it's legal to do, so I would rather you go to the store when you're legally able to do that than get it from the street because people are dying from fentanyl overdoses. These are the type of conversations that we have on a regular basis with our child. Because in a couple of weeks, she's going to go off to college, and then she's going to go to college and she's not going to be in our house anymore.

She's going to be a whole new world. I don't want her to find out for the first time outside of my house what the world is about. I need her to learn inside of the house. I need to continue to lay the foundation, have the conversations, know that you don't need to be cool. Drugs don't make you cool. I made you cool. I made you cool before you were even born.

Amy Morin:

I love that message. I teach a lot of college classes, and in research they found that like 90% of college students said, "Yeah, I was academically prepared for college," but the same amount say, "Yeah, but emotionally I was not prepared at all." We're finding just that, that so many kids go off to college and the only reason that they've followed the rules is because they didn't want to get in trouble. And then they get away from mom and dad and they're all, "Woo! No holds barred. Let's go out there and see what life has to offer," and get themselves in all sorts of messes. And then they don't know what to do

about it because they've never really struggled or had these emotional challenges before.

Jazmyn Simon:

It's scary, isn't it? It's actually scary. For the last couple of months, I told my husband, I said, "We're going to give her a lot of space, as much space as she wants." She went to prom two weeks ago. We didn't give her a curfew. It's like, when do you feel like you want to come home? I told her the other day, "You need to stop asking me." She said, "Can I go to the movies on Friday?" I said, "From here on out, don't ask me. You tell me what you're going to do. You say, 'I'm going to be going to the movies at this time. Do you need anything from me before I go? I'm going to be doing this. Do you need anything?'"

Because she's actually going to college. She has to be in college on June 19th. She graduated June 10th. She has to be checked into her dorm on June 19th because she's going to a summer school class at Northwestern. She's out of here in the month. I said, "In a month, you will not have to ask me to do anything. I need you to go take a road trip. Take a trip to Santa Barbara with your friends. Go get a flat tire. See what that's like. I need you to book a flight out. I don't care if it's to San Jose on Southwest, go book a flight. I need you to do all these things because you're going to leave this house. I need to know that you know how to do all these things."

And that's one thing that people don't prepare you for as a parent. They get you prepared that the baby is going to cry all night. They get you prepared that you need to feed this baby. They get you prepared for kindergarten. What they don't get you prepared for, in my opinion, is sending a child off into the world. How do you do that? How do you make sure that they're mentally capable of leaving your house and knowing how to be an adult? I feel like we need to do a better job at that. Like you mentioned, kids get out there and they fall. And it's a hard fall because they've never fallen before. Mom and dad aren't there to catch them.

It's like, no, we need to prepare these children because you have the kids that are killing themselves. The soccer player at Stanford gets in trouble and kills herself. You have the track star in Wisconsin that killed herself in a moment of desperation. How do we

prevent this? What can we do? One, we tell our children that you are perfect, not compared to anybody else from a really young age. Beside that, what do we do? We have to help our children. They are struggling. They are hurting. They're not prepared. This generation of children are worried about the environment. They are worried about climate change.

They are worried about illnesses, about COVID and the pandemics of the world. They are worried about the political landscapes of this country. Again, if a three-year-old can tell me, "I need this to be pretty," trust me that a 17-year-old knows everything that's going on in the world, and it affects them. How do we prepare them for the world? I wish that on this podcast I could say this is what we do. I think it's a cumulative effort from everybody to say, "This is what we need to do. This is how we help them stone by stone to build this mountain that they are then going to have to hurdle themselves over."

Amy Morin:

I think so too. How do we give them that message that you are perfect without saying, "Well, you have to be perfect?"

Jazmyn Simon:

We need to reclaim what perfect means, right? When I wrote this book, I wrote the book first without having a title for the book, and then I titled the book Most Perfect You. My book went to auction, which means a couple people wanted to buy the book. I remember I had a conversation with one publishing house and they were like, "Well, perfect, could we change the name? It has a negative connotation attached to perfection." I said, "No. No. What I want to do is reclaim what perfect means. Let's reframe what's perfect." Again, I have a daughter who wears her hair in a natural and she's six feet tall.

She's got a 12 size shoe. She is perfect. She is not perfect compared to anyone else. She's perfect just as she is. I hate to bring up The Kardashians, I really do, but they are a standard of beauty right now, right? They are a standard. People are like, that's what beautiful is. I'm going to tell you, I'm a Black woman and I've had a butt on me for my entire life. 15 years ago, my butt wasn't cool. That was not the standard of beauty to

have a big old butt. Sir Mix-a-Lot had a song called Baby Got Back, right? That was not the norm. That was obsolete. To have full lips was obsolete.

Now you see The Kardashians who never one time have said, "This is not my real lips. These are not real. This is not my real butt. I get laser and liposuction. I get all this stuff. I have a professional hairdresser, and I have a professional makeup artist. I have someone following me with a light to make sure my lighting is right." When our children see that, they don't see what goes into the picture. They just see the picture. They see a little tiny picture, and they think that's what perfect is. That's what perfect is for someone that has had all this opportunity to get all this work done, all this Photoshop, all of this.

What we need to teach our children before we give them a phone and an iPad, we have to have a foundation of you are perfect. Look at those eyes, those eyes are perfect. I don't care if one eye's going to the left and one eye's going to a right. I made them to do that. I made them and I think they're perfect. I don't care if your nose is smushed to your face or out six inches. I made that nose. I picked that nose. Now, you can give this message to a three-year-old and let it absorb. It's harder to give to a 14-year-old. You're going to be like. You have to start young.

All these messages need to start before they get the device, in my opinion, before they get the laptop, before they get on Instagram, before they get on TikTok and Snapchat and all these things, because the world is going to come at them really fast. Before they get these things, we need to tell our children, "I picked you everything about you. I had a say in everything. I got to create a masterpiece. I want you to walk to the mirror and look at the masterpiece. You are literally perfect." Amy, I'm looking at you, you are perfect.

There is nothing about you that I think, ugh, she needs to change this. All I see is perfection, not compared to anybody else, but just looking at you. I see really pretty eyes. The color of your eyes are perfect. When I got on, I was like, those are some good eyebrows.

Amy Morin:

Thanks.

Jazmyn Simon:

You're welcome, but that's the truth. But we need to know that inside of ourself from a very young age that that is pretty, and that is pretty, and I am pretty, and I am perfect, and that is perfect, and that is perfect. The only way you do that is telling them all the time. We go through a list of affirmations. We did the same with Kennedy, with our three-year-old son Levi. I am strong. I am brave. I am handsome. I'm gifted. We go through these things every single day, because I want it to be a still small voice in the back of my children's head. That when somebody else tries to tell them different, I know who I am.

I am beautiful. I tell my son, "You are so beautiful." How often do you hear little boys told that they're beautiful? Hardly ever. I tell him, "I look at your face and you are beautiful. All I see is beauty and joy in your face." We need to normalize telling our children that. I have friends that are like... Their children are beautiful, by the way, this woman that I'm going to mention, not by name. She said, "When my kids were growing up, I never told them that they were pretty. I didn't want them to get a big head." I heard that and it hurt me. Because growing up, that's how I was raised. My grandmother raised me, bless her, and she did her very best.

If someone say, she's so pretty, no, she's not. No, she is not. She would say that I guess in her mind to keep me humble. But what it did is set me up for a bunch of bad relationships because I never knew that I was pretty. I never knew it. My husband to this day, "You are so pretty." I'm like, "It's because you love me." He'd be like, "No, I think you're pretty." But growing up, I had heard over and over, "No, you're not. No, you're not. No, you're not." What someone tried to do for my benefit actually was for my detriment in a lot of ways. Most Perfect You is just as much for me as it is for every child that reads it.

It's a reminder to me too. You are perfect, not compared to anybody else. You are perfect by yourself. I do think that the way we fix this is we continually tell our children, "You are loved. You are beautiful. You are perfect. I love those eyes. Look at those feet. Look at that stutter. Listen, the world may not like it, I love it. I actually picked it. And if you don't like it, I'm sorry, but I think it's great."

Amy Morin:

Now, what about to somebody who's listening who says, "But I don't want to comment on my child's appearance. I want to talk about how it doesn't matter how you look, it just matters how you act or if you're a kind person." What do you say about that?

Jazmyn Simon:

I say that's not right. Listen, and I get it. I get it. But when your child walks into a room, the first thing that someone's going to see is their appearance and they're going to have an opinion on it. Kids are cruel. That's just a fact. Some kids are cruel. There are still bullies in the world. I hope bit by bit we can change that because a bully needs to be loved too. Someone that's full of love doesn't bully. I don't care what anybody says. That's just not the way that it works. We need to fill up all these children. I get it. You want your children to know that they're smart. I want my daughter to know that she's smart, so I tell her that she's smart.

But I also want her to know that she's pretty, so I tell her that she's pretty. It doesn't have to be mutually exclusive. It doesn't have to be I'm only going to tell you you're smart and never tell you you're pretty. Because the world, if we like it or if we hate it, is built on how you look too. And if we don't tell them that they're pretty, they're going to think the other way. I never thought to tell my child, brown is beautiful. I never thought to tell her that. She thought on her own that it wasn't. Take it as a life lesson that I'm giving you, listeners. If you don't tell them, they're going to think something regardless.

You might as well tell your daughters, "You are so strong. You are so strong. You are so brave. You are so smart. You are so gifted. You are so beautiful." What's wrong with that? I know, I'm a feminist. I know. We want to be held to our brains and we should be, but that doesn't negate that we are still feminine and soft and beautiful and striking and all the things that make us who we are. I'm going to be honest, because I think honesty is what we need. I saw someone and I thought, no attractive. My first thought, not attractive. She's such a smart, brilliant woman. I thought, why do I think she's not attractive?

And I thought, because society has taught me that that nose isn't attractive. Society has taught me that that skin is not "good" skin. And then I had to retrain myself in that moment to say, she is beautiful. She is not what society has told me was beautiful. But if

I take the lens back and say, "Society can't tell me what's perfect. I get to choose what's perfect," she is beautiful. I think it's really a retraining of the way we think about things and the way that we see things. Who's to say, right? Like I mentioned, the butt. Baby Got Back. 20 years ago, no, no, no, no, that's not beautiful. Today, it's beautiful. Today, people are risking their lives getting a Brazilian butt lift to get a big old fake butt.

Isn't that so crazy? And then 20 years ago, everybody's doing Jane Fonda and, what it was, the Thighmaster to get rid of. They're running it off. It's like we need to reclaim right now what perfection is. And that goes back to the book. What's perfect? We need to let a baseline. Times are going to change. Boot cu. Jeans used to be big when I was in school, and then they were out, but now they're back again. Unless you're going to have whiplash and try to fit in everywhere, you need to set the foundation right now. Yes, you are beautiful. You are also smart. You are also strong. You're brilliant. You're a great musician.

But you have to say it. If not, they're going to get caught in the undertow of what beauty is. I get it, and I really do. I feel for every parent. They're like, "I don't want to tell my kid that." But if you don't, somebody else is.

Amy Morin:

I agree. All right, one last question then. For parents, I know that sometimes grownups are guilty of saying things about ourselves in front of our kids. Like, "Ugh, these pants make my butt look bad, or I have to go put on makeup before I scare someone." We make these off the cuff comments. How do we become more aware of those and be more careful of what we're saying about ourselves in front of other people, especially kids?

Jazmyn Simon:

Two things. Two things. One, you are perfect, right? You got to keep telling yourself that. Even if these jeans aren't flattering, because some clothes aren't flattering and we get that, sometimes I put, I'm like, "This is not a flattering outfit," that has nothing to do with me. It has nothing to do with me. I picked a bad outfit. It has nothing to do with me. I can go get another outfit that is flattering, but this outfit that I picked for me is not

flattering. You aren't going to scare anybody with your face. Your face is actually pretty. Someone has told you and made you believe that you need makeup to look your best self.

That is not true. That is not true. That is not the truth. The truth is, is the way that you woke up is perfect. Now, anything that you add on top of that is a cherry on top. That's the first thing. The second thing is we do have to be really careful about what we say in front of our children. Now, I think Kenny was maybe in the second grade and she was in dance. I overheard a kid in her dance class at Debbie Allen Dance Academy say, "I look fat. I look fat." I thought, oh my God, already? These are seven-year-olds. Oh my gosh. I told myself, Kennedy will never hear you talk about the size of your body, because all bodies are the right size.

All bodies are the right size. Again, no matter what society tells you, there is not one size that fits all. Health is all that matters, not size. I told myself, you will not talk about your body size, shape, anything like that around Kennedy. I've been really good about that until the last couple of years. Now she's 17. She's becoming my friend a little bit. I was like, "Man, my hair is all messed up." She's like, "I think it's great." I said, "You know what? It is great. My bad," because she will check me. She will keep it balanced for me. I feel like now she's my friend and I can say these things. I have to remind myself, no, no, I'm still an example for her.

I think as parents, we should be very mindful of what we say to our children. It's really being mindful what you say to your children. If you don't have children, what you say to yourself. As long as I'm alive, I'm going to be working on myself. I'm in the process of whenever I have a thought, I just rip it up. If I don't like it, I visualize myself looking at it like a weed and I rip it up and I said, "That thought does not serve me. I'm going to change." Like Dr. Joe Dispenza, change. We can't do that anymore. I think as parents or people that don't have children, we just need to change the way we see things. And it's not easy.

I'm not saying that I have it all figured out and that I have mastered it, but we need to change the way we beat ourselves up. Why? Why have we let somebody else tell us what good is, what pretty is, what perfection is? No. I'm telling every listener from the

bottom of my heart, you are pretty. Yes, you are. I mean that with such passion. I wish they could see me going crazy over here. It's like, but that's the truth, Amy. Why can't we lean into that? Why can't we lean into like, girl, I am so pretty, I am so smart, I am so strong? What happens if we do that? What happens if we tell ourselves that over and over and over?

One, we don't tell our kids, "Oh, let me put some makeup on before I scare somebody," because you know that you're not going to scare anybody. You know that you're good enough just the way you are as you woke up. Now, if you want to put on makeup, dude, I love dolling myself up, but that doesn't make me any more pretty than I was when I first woke up. It just gives me a little something extra. We just really need to work on ourselves. I think that's what it is. We need to reframe ourselves. And it's not easy. I'm not saying that it's easy. I want everyone listening to know that I take mental health very seriously, and I feel like we all need someone we can talk to.

We all need somebody we can lean on. But when you're in your quiet time, you have a choice. And if you take the time and be like, "Okay, I have a choice right now. I can beat myself up, or I can try really hard not to," please try really hard not to.

Amy Morin:

Thank you so much, Jazmyn. I feel like our appearance is a subject that a lot of people shy away from talking about. But like you say, it's right there, it's an issue, so we might as well talk about it and how you practice self-acceptance. Thank you so much for being on our show. Thank you so much for writing *Most Perfect You*. I hope all of our listeners who are parents and even those who aren't go out and get a copy and read it for themselves.

Jazmyn Simon:

Thank you so much. It was my pleasure to be here today. I just really hope that everyone listening knows that you are worthy and you are special and strong and beautiful just the way you are. Just the way you are.

Amy Morin:

I agree. A message that we should never get tired of hearing. When you say it, you say it with such conviction that I have no doubt whoever's listening is going to believe it.

Jazmyn Simon:

Good.

Amy Morin:

Thank you.

Jazmyn Simon:

Thank you so much!

Amy Morin:

Welcome to The Therapist's Take! This is a part of the show where I'll break down Jazmyn's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. Here are three of Jazmyn's strategies that I highly recommend!

Number one: give your kids a note with a positive affirmation. I love that Jazmyn tells her kids to remember who they are. Instead of saying, you're amazing, she's telling them to remember that they're amazing. I love the idea of writing a positive note for your kids. My mom used to do this for me when I was a kid. She would write a little note and put it in my lunchbox.

My mom's been gone for almost 20 years now, but I still have some of those notes that she used to write to me. There's something about reading reassuring words from a loved one, especially a parent, that can give you confidence when you need it. Just make sure you don't tell them things like, you're going to ace that math test today. Then they'll feel even worse if they don't ace it. Instead, you might tell them to do their best or to try their hardest. If they don't do well, it's an opportunity to grow and learn.

Number two: ask thought-provoking questions. When you ask your kids, "How was your day," you're likely to get a quick answer like good or maybe just a shrug or a grunt.

If you really want kids to open up, you need to ask more thought-provoking questions. Of course, you don't want to just sit down and start peppering your kids with deep questions if they're not used to that though. They'll likely run away. You can start introducing more thoughtful questions slowly. Show them a picture of a cool place you'd want to visit, and ask them the number one place they'd like to visit. Or as Jazmyn suggested, ask questions like, "What was the best part of your day?" You're more likely to get kids to talk when you aren't just sitting there talking. One of the easiest ways to encourage kids to talk in therapy is that we just color pictures together.

When they're looking at their paper and they're coloring, they're more likely to talk than if we were just sitting there face-to-face. You might find your kids are more interested in talking when you're playing catch, walking around the neighborhood, or just riding in the car when you aren't sitting across from each other at the dinner table.

And number three: build credibility with your kids. I like how Jazmyn talked about being honest with kids about tough subjects. This is how you build credibility. If you just tell your kids "don't do drugs" or "partying is bad," they'll think you don't know what you're talking about.

After all, their peers are telling them things like "actually, drinking is fun." It's important to acknowledge the pros and cons of doing things. I know it sounds scary. Like, the last thing you want to do is tell your teenager that there are upsides to drugs or alcohol. But when you acknowledge why people do those things, then they're more likely to believe you about the risks too. Say things like, "Drugs might make you feel good for a minute, but they can have serious consequences on your health, and you might get into trouble." Then they're more likely to listen to you.

Those are three of Jazmyn's strategies that I highly recommend! Write a note with a positive affirmation, ask thought-provoking questions, and build credibility with your kids. Don't forget to pick up a copy of Jazmyn's book, *Most Perfect You*. The target audience is for younger kids, like up to third grade. But I'm positive big kids, including grownups, will love it too.

If you know someone who could benefit from hearing this message, share it with them! Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger.

Do you want free access to my online course? It's called "10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential." To get your free pass, all you have to do is leave us a review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. Then, send us a screenshot of your review. Our email address is podcast@verywell.com. We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course.

Thank you for hanging out with me today and for listening to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!* And as always, a big thank you to my show's producer (who has loved to read since he was three), Nick Valentin.