

PARENTING DECOLONIZED PODCAST



Ep #43: Cultivating Unconditional Self-Worth in Ourselves and Our Children with Dr. Adia Gooden

Welcome to the Parenting Decolonized podcast. I'm your host, Yolanda Williams, entrepreneur, Conscious Parenting coach and single mom to one amazing toddler. I'm on a mission to help shine the light on how colonization has impacted the black family structure. If you're a parent that wants to learn how to decolonize your parenting, you're in the right place. Let's do this.

Welcome back to the Parenting Decolonized podcast. I'm your host, Yolanda Williams, and today I have with me, Adia Gooden. She is a clinical psychologist and we're going to be discussing how to make sure that we are centering our own worth and taking care of ourselves so we're not projecting some unhealed stuff onto our children. So thank you so much for joining me today.

Adia Gooden: Thank you so much for having me. I feel happy and honored to be here.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. Can you just do – just, you know, introduce yourself and how you got started with all that you do, all this amazing transformative work.

Adia Gooden: Sure. So as you mentioned, I'm a licensed clinical psychologist. So I do have a small private practice where I see individuals, mostly black people in therapy. And then, I also do a lot of work around helping people to embrace their unconditional self-worth, and I do that through some online programs and through speaking and I have a podcast called Unconditionally Worthy. And you know, I think I got into the self-worth work through my own personal journey of struggling with low self-worth and realizing after years and years and years that it wasn't going to be found – my worthiness wasn't going to be found in achievements, in accomplishments, in relationships and realizing that I needed to turn inside and then also working with clients and seeing that they struggled with similar things. And so that really inspired me to start to talk about it because I feel like it's something that affects so many things, but is often not something that we're talking about.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah. I think while a lot of us speak about worthiness in the sense of achievements, like I have imposter syndrome and all these things, but it's just like, it's such a deeper concept when you consider how unworthiness is baked into every single toxic systemic problem that we have. At the core of it is, you are not worthy. You're not worthy of wealth. You're not worthy of rest. And especially don't add on, you know, blackness or, you know,

having a (indiscernible) (00:02:49), then you are really not worthy. You know, it's really baked into a lot of these issues that I talk about often on my podcast, but I love that we're going to be talking about it from a parenting perspective, because as you mentioned, a lot of this starts to form when we're children and these inner child wounds stay with us throughout adulthood, unless we recognize what they are. So let's just talk about like how we even recognize that we have this unworthiness sort of story in our head.

Adia Gooden: Yeah, that's a really good question. You know, I think there's a lot of ways that unworthiness low self-worth can manifest. It can look like overworking and really having a hard time setting boundaries because you're scared of rejection. You're scared if you don't show up and do everything somebody wants you to do or everything, you know, whether it's a boss or a family member that, that will mean you're unworthy, that you'll be rejected. So people pleasing can be wrapped up in there. It can also look like anxiety. I think, you know, obviously anxiety can be caused by a number of different things, but if you don't trust yourself – if you don't trust that you know what's right for you, if you don't trust that you deserve or that you're worthy of good things happening to you, that often manifests as worrying constantly and feeling anxious and feeling on edge, right?

It can also manifest with depressive symptoms and feeling really awful about yourself and really engaging in harsh self-criticism and just feeling worthless, right? That's another manifestation. And so there's a lot of ways that this shows up. And I think it's important to talk about it because so often we feel like, oh, well, I just need to fix this surface thing. When really, we need to look underneath then say, well, how are you treating yourself? How are you showing up for yourself? How do you see yourself and feel about yourself? And if we could heal that, that will probably help a whole host of other challenges that you're experiencing.

Yolanda Williams: Especially if you're a parent struggling with this, I feel like if you're a parent struggling with feelings of unworthiness and I'm sure most of us are, right, like I said, they're baked into these systems. So it really is hard even when you start to heal from them, capitalism comes to tell you, like, "hey, you got to -- you got to produce to have value". So if you're not producing, you can't rest, you can't get any accolades, you have to be always on, right? So those worthiness – unworthiness feelings always tend to creep up, but for parents, I have struggled with unworthiness a lot. And what happens like when Gia is – that's my daughter, when she is about to hurt herself or when she does hurt herself and it was because I told her not to do something, I get angry, like it's a trigger for me and I realize that it triggers my feelings of unworthiness because I'm not – of unworthiness and inadequacy, because I always feel like can I keep her safe, can I keep her alive, am I able to do this, am I able to be a good mother? And so, I sometimes project those feelings onto her through a trigger. So how can we start as parents to recognize an underlying trigger that stems from unworthiness?

Adia Gooden: Yeah. I think that's such a great example because when we don't feel worthy, there's no room for mistakes and it's really hard to tolerate the fact that you may be doing your best as a parent to love and care for and protect and nurture your child. And there are still going to be times when you miss the mark, there are going to be things that you don't – you're not able to do there. There are still going to be times when your child gets hurt and it's

really hard to hold that if those, maybe mistakes or misses or whatever, reflect your worthiness, because that's where we sort of can devolve into, I'm an awful mother, I'm an awful parent, I'm an awful, you know, and we see this sometimes with our own parents or with family members, right? If you try to give them some feedback, "hey, that didn't work for me" or "this doesn't work for me", and they say, "I'm just the worst mother in the world, right". And then you have to say, "no, no, no, no, no, you're not", right? But it's because there's no tolerance for – I could have been a really good parent and still missed this piece, right. So I think that if you're finding that you cannot tolerate making a mistake or missing something or everything not going the way you planned or the way you wanted it to which with kids, it's just not going to, right. That if you feel really upset, really sort of like, oh my gosh, I've done everything wrong. I'm awful. If that's what that evokes in you, that may be a sign that you are using the attempt at perfect parenting, if that is even a thing, I would probably not, you know, using an attempt at perfect parenting to prove that you are worthy. And so, anything that deviates from that feels like an assault on your self-worth.

Yolanda Williams: Ooh! And see, that's hit me hard because I thought I wasn't doing that. And it just – but it sneaks up on you in the most insidious ways. And you know, when you – yeah, I feel like there's a lot of respectability in a lot of black parent households and the feeling that our children are – they're a reflection of how good we are, of how acceptable we are. So, really doing an unpacking, and like, what am I doing? What am I projecting on to her that is not hers to own. I want to raise a (indiscernible) (00:08:35) child. I don't want her to feel like she has to carry my worthiness. Well, we'll talk about uncoupling those two in a moment.

Adia Gooden: Yeah. Can I just say? I think it's such a good point and, you know, you mentioned respectability and I think there's so many elements to it because some of it is I want people to see us as good. And some of it is, I'm terrified that there may be harm or violence done against my child if they do not obey the rules, because that certainly happens.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah. Yeah.

Adia Gooden: I'm terrified that if somebody sees me parent in a way that does not adhere to white norms or standards, my child might be taken away.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah.

Adia Gooden: Or the State might get involved in our family system. And so, I think that, you know, some of these fears and the desire for, we got to keep it together, we got to act right in public are really grounded in some very real trauma that black people have had to endure. And so, I think our balance is sort of like, how do we offer ourselves compassion for having that fear and know like, if that makes sense. And also try to do something differently.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. Uh, it's a constant tightrope as a black parent, it is a constant, like, just the intersections of just trying to be a liberated person, raise a liberated child, but also understanding like our children can be snatched from us and nobody will be held accountable for it. It's terrifying, you know, and so, if she's out and she's playing, like when I, you know, Gia is autistic, so I always stay close to her when we we're out at the park.

Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Yolanda Williams: But I'm very mindful when we're out at the park, I'm trying to like, let her have freedom, but I'm also like, well, she can't fall. Like she can't – there's certain things that she can't do because this park is full of white folks. And they do look at us differently and they will call the police and all these things that I have to always keep in the back of my mind while trying to balance like being liberated. I'm sick of it. I'm tired of it.

Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Yolanda Williams: I just want to be free of it. It's exhausting, but what you're really talking about too is like thinking outside of that binary, the either/or has to be abolished because we can still feel all of these feelings and still be able to be like, okay, look, I'm triggered because of this feeling and that trigger's a valid trigger, but that doesn't mean I get to act up, you know, project that onto her. So really just thinking outside the binary is key here too.

Adia Gooden: Yes. Yes. I'm a promoter of nuance, right?

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Adia Gooden: Of both and have hold it all together, right. And, you know, yeah, I think it's like, okay, I'm triggered, what do I need in this moment to soothe myself? And if I can take a moment to soothe myself, I'll be able to respond to my child in a way that does feel good to me.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. Oh, I love it! So as we are doing this work on ourselves and we're noticing like we have these triggers and we're projecting them, I want to also talk about like how some of this can show up in children. Like, I feel like there are really insidious ways that parents – because we may not even know we're doing it. We're just being – we're not intentional. A lot of us have a hard time retired, you know, feeling worn down, we're still holding a whole pancetta and we got, you know, right now, it's the Ahmad Aubrey trial, (indiscernible) (00:12:21). We have all these traumas surrounding us. We are hella tired. We are in a Panda Rosa. And so, I'm trying to figure out like, what are some of the ways that we need to be careful as parents to not start to embed those feelings of unworthiness into our children?

Adia Gooden: Yeah. It's a really good question. I think the first thing that stands out to me and I think this is maybe a little bit more obvious when they're in the baby and toddler stage than when they get a little older, but it always sort of irks me when people say, oh, so and so's being a good boy", or they're being a good girl, right. And so instead of labeling – or bad, right, like you are being a bad – ooh!

Yolanda Williams: Or bad. You know, black feels like being called a child bad in a minute. "Oh, he's so bad in climbing up." Pulling up on something like he's supposed to do is bad?

Adia Gooden: Mm-hmm. Right, right. Like they're bad – and the piece of it is, first of all, you're labeling the child, not the behavior, right.

Yolanda Williams: Mm-hmm.

Adia Gooden: And so the question should never be whether your child is good or bad, right. It should be, is this behavior safe, unsafe, appropriate at this point, not appropriate at this point, you know.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Adia Gooden: But when you label a child, and "oh, you're being a bad boy, stop being bad, stop". You know, you're telling the child if you are acceptable and make me comfortable, and I actually saw a post this morning, that was like a child being convenient, right? Not crying, not fussing, not, you know, staying seated, not climbing on something, not running around, right. Then you are good, but if you are potentially following your own instincts, your own energy, right, your own curiosity at a moment that is inconvenient, you are bad.

Yolanda Williams: Right.

Adia Gooden: And so, that is the message, right? That's a message to a child that says you need to conform to me and your worthiness, your goodness or badness is determined by following the rules, doing what you're supposed to do, not acting out, blah, blah, blah, whatever. So that is definitely one way that I think, you know, it's like, if you can pause and say, okay, your behavior right now isn't okay for this environment. I know you want to climb on things. I know you want to explore, like, look at this new place you're in like, it makes sense. We can't do that right now. And I know that's frustrating, but like, you know, and obviously has to be developmentally appropriate, but there's a big difference between saying, "hey, this behavior isn't going to work right now". And you are wrong for wanting to engage in a developmentally appropriate behavior at age, whatever.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah. Because I think those seeds are sewn. I believe it was a stat that said a lot of people started popping their kids around 18 months. In 18 months, is when babies are starting to pull up on things, they're starting to put things in their mouth. They are pulling things down. They're in this exploit – the world is so new and they want to touch and feel all of it. And it is very inconvenient for parents around that age. And I can tell you for me, I was like, how can I control the environment because I want her to do these things, but I also want to keep her safe and I want to keep my stuff from getting broken, you know. So what do I need to do? And those are the – we have these kids and we expect them just to fit into our family and just acclimate really easily and they're just like, I'm just trying to figure out like life right now. I don't know what your agenda is, but this ain't mine, right.

So we have to start looking at these kids as whole individual human beings and not just an extension of us, because they're not really – I mean, they are themselves. They're with us for a

short time and then they live their life separately. So we have to start looking at them completely different and start looking at their behavior as something that's not attached to their worthiness to themselves and using the language because that's the key is really stopping yourself in the moment and using different language to describe your frustration, but also checking yourself because if nothing is going to happen, then why can't they pull up? It's a coffee table, calm down, right? Like what are you talking about? And the problem too comes with the elders, the grandmas who are just like, this is that bad baby.

Adia Gooden: Yep. Whew!

Yolanda Williams: And it's just kind of like, and they say it and I know they don't mean that what – they don't mean that, but that doesn't mean that it's not going to sew, like intent versus impact. I'm always going to call people out on that. I don't care how frustrated they get with me. If you don't like, you don't come around. Because my child's self-worth is tied into what you're saying and she can't control the sponge that is her brain taking this information in. So we have to be willing when it comes to worthiness for our children and ourselves really put up some boundaries. And when you were speaking about boundaries earlier, it made me really think like this is really about boundaries. And about like what we allow other people to say and do to us that either can contribute to us feeling unworthiness, do you want to go into boundaries and unworthiness?

Adia Gooden: Yeah. Yeah. I mean I think that's real, right. That, you know, if you're going to parent in a liberated way, you're probably challenging some norms. And so you are going to have to set some boundaries with other family members, with people in your circle, in your community about how they can or cannot talk to your child. What's okay or not okay in terms of discipline or, you know, things like that. And so there's sort of these outside boundaries, there's boundaries internally, right. So, how do I respond when I'm angry?

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Adia Gooden: Right. And am I setting a boundary for myself that I'm, you know, you're not going to get it perfect, but I'm really going to try not to react out of anger, right. That, you know, if something needs it, like, "hey, we got to pull your hand away" or we got to, you know, get you then of course you need to do that, right, but not a rageful anger kind of piece, right? Like that's not where I'm coming from. So what's my boundary internally around how I express my emotions with my child and what do I need to soothe myself in order to be able to communicate in a way that is conducive towards, you know, growing and nurturing this human. I think the other thing is, we have to set boundaries with children, right? So, you know, being, you know, a parent that is, you know, raising a liberated child doesn't mean no boundaries, right. And it doesn't mean the child just does anything they want, but it means you thoughtfully intentionally proactively set boundaries. So you're also not setting them in reaction because so many of us in our lives, the way we set boundaries is we don't set them, we don't set them, we don't set them. Someone pisses us off -

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Adia Gooden: And we set the boundary, right? Like we're angry and that "err, don't you speak to me again", right. And actually, we are much better off saying, "hey, this is the limit, this is the boundary". This is the whatever. Let me communicate that to you proactively. So I'm not reacting and setting the boundary and I think that people can do that with their children as well. Not telling the child here's what's expected. Here's what we can and cannot do in this space, in this place, at this time. And then, the child violates some invisible boundary that they didn't know about, that you didn't set and then you're angry, right. And then, you respond in anger and the child's kind of confused, like how would I know I'm not supposed to run in here, you know.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah. We forget that they don't know things. Like the world is a playground. We just – we forget that at a certain age they're just like, everywhere is the same, I'm going to – I jump on my mom's sofa. I'm going to jump on this sofa too. They don't understand that there's different rules for different places. So we have to like set up those boundaries and those parameters for them and communicate them. And even as adults, when I speak about boundaries, I'm like, okay, you set your boundary, but did you talk about it with the person? Did you say to that your mother, "hey, you know, the way you're speaking about the baby, I don't like when you use the, you know, the word bad, so please don't do that". And then, they might do it again out of habit. "Hi, you remember when I said I don't care for you to use the word bad? If you continue to do that, we're going to have to leave", you know, because I really want to make sure that I'm protecting my baby. Then they do it again, then are you up and leave. Like, that's how you establish and maintain boundaries. You can't say to yourself, she better not say call my baby bad. If she called my baby, I'm leaving and then never talk about it. We have to communicate our boundaries, you all, and I feel like because our boundaries were so trampled on as children and as black people, we don't – a lot of us don't even have any. And then as we are trying to figure out how to have them, we don't know how to like maintain and enforce them or communicate them. So this is also a practice in boundaries because your worthiness sort of depends on it. Your feelings of worthiness I want to say.

Adia Gooden: Yeah. Right, right. And I think you know what that makes me think about is what's been wonderful to see is the new focus on helping kids to set boundaries and respecting the boundaries that a child sets, so it's like if they don't want to give somebody a hug, right, but so many of us grew up in an environment where it's like, it's disrespectful for a child to keep that boundaries, right, like, it's like this sign of disrespect in black families, like, what are you talking about boundaries, you can't come into my room or I can't, you know, things like that and I think it is really powerful to both model your boundaries and then also help your child to articulate what are their boundaries, right, and then how do they communicate and hopefully if they can set their boundary or communicate it and you can figure that out together, there isn't the tantrum or there isn't, you know, something that is, my boundary is violated and I'm very upset and I'm very uncomfortable and I'm sort of responding to that, because I couldn't communicate or I wasn't listened to when I said I was uncomfortable, I didn't want to be here or whatever, coming from the child.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. Can we sort of talk about like worthiness and like agency, because I feel like agency is something that is sort of misunderstood, but also when it comes to worthiness, I feel like – it feels like sometimes we don't have agency, because we don't feel worthy. So we

can't speak out for ourselves. We can't advocate for ourselves, we are not worthy of doing so because we've always historically felt like we don't have agency in this space. So can you talk about that a little bit?

Adia Gooden: Yeah, I loved that you use the word 'agency'. I think it's such a great word, because people are so often focused on control and there are a lot of places and spaces where we don't have control, right, like there are some places where we do, but there's a lot where we don't, but we do often have agency. We almost always can make choices about how we're going to treat ourselves, how we're going to treat other people, whether we're going to stay engaged in a situation, whether we're going to leave and I do agree that if you feel that you're worthy, if you feel that your worth isn't dependent on this person loving and accepting you, this person liking what you're doing, then it's easier to make a choice, right, it's easier to say does this situation work for me? Am I comfortable? Am I safe? Do I need to set a boundary? Do I need to remove myself from this situation? When your worth isn't dependent on external circumstances and acceptance from other people, it is so much easier to exercise your choice and agency and that's often what I'm talking about with my clients is, you know, they'll come in with a situation and basically in their head it's "I have no choice", and part of what I push at is you do have a choice. You may not like your choices –

Yolanda Williams: And you are making a choice. Yes.

Adia Gooden: But you may not like them, but you have a choice and getting into that, you have choice, you have agency, it's so empowering. It can feel scary because sometimes it feels easier to play the victim, it's everybody else's fault – there was nothing I can do, I'm just the victim of the situation, that can feel safe for people and realizing, no, I actually could leave this situation, I could do a different thing, I could say a different thing, I could put up a boundary, it's empowering, but it also can be scary because it sort of encourages you to take responsibility for what you can be responsible for.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah, I mean, don't get us wrong, but there's some privilege in being able to, you know, I know for instance, I know someone who basically was just like, she felt like her agency was taken from like at a job and she ended up quitting that job and giving no notice and she was like, I'm not giving any notice, they didn't care about me, I'm not caring about them, but for me, I stopped giving notice a long time ago. If I don't want to do something, I'm just not doing it and I'm not giving you two weeks to figure out how you're going to torture me. So but that's – making that choice meant that I had to make sure that my savings, you know, like I had some savings to be able to do that. So there are some instances where there's some privilege when it comes to making these choices, but a lot of times, it really boils down to, for me working on my worthiness meant speaking up for myself, saying no a lot. Stop lying about, what I don't – I used to lie all the time, like I am really good at lying. When I would be like, "oh do you want to do something? And I would lie and be like, no, because I thought it would make them mad, or – and they wouldn't invite me out anymore and now I'm to the point where it's just like, don't invite me out, when they cancel, I'm so excited. So I'll just be like, do you want to go or, you know, can I call you later? I'd be like, actually, I don't feel like talking right now and I don't feel like going

anywhere and what I love is I have friends who are exactly like me so it is just like cool. I'll talk to you when you want to talk and they respect that. And that also goes into boundaries too because who are these people that are in your life that do not want you to have agency and want to trample on your boundaries like, are these people you want to have in your life, around your children, that are not empowering, that don't want to enable you to have, you know, better feelings of worthiness? It sort of forces us to like reevaluate our relationships and I think that's scary.

Adia Gooden: Yeah, right, it is scary to sort of shift the dynamic and shift the pattern. I say that usually when you're setting new boundaries, people who have gotten comfortable, and you know, it's made their life easier that you didn't set a boundary, throw a tantrum, that may not be a two-year-old's tantrum, right, but it might be another tantrum, right, like you might say, hey, please don't contact me after this point, or hey, I need a break from talking and they're texting you, texting you, texting you, calling you, calling you, calling you, calling you, right, like or their attitude, or they say something online or right, like there's lots of ways adults throw tantrums and so part of what we need to do is withstand the tantrum, right, not see the tantrum as a reason to let go of the boundaries, oh, my gosh, I'm being mean, this is bad, but just say, you know, I've made this boundary not out of reaction, but with intention, owning my agency figuring out what works and doesn't work for me and a lot of times boundaries are actually around maintaining healthy connections because if you don't set a boundary, the resentment and frustration that builds may eventually prompt you to cut off the relationship. And if you do set a boundary, there's actually this opportunity to say, "hey mom, I love spending time with you, but it doesn't work for you to come over five days a week". And so if we could do once a week, make sure you call ahead, right, like, whatever so that you're not the moms over there and you're annoyed and you're annoyed and you're annoyed and you're annoyed and so you're like "just don't come to my house ever again!"

Yolanda Williams: "Just don't come to my house!" Yeah.

Adia Gooden: You know, and then it's like coaching yourself through that and knowing like, it's going to be hard and that's okay and you're doing it with intention, getting support from people who understand and really be helpful.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah because when that mama gets offended, "oh, you don't want me, I thought I was helping, you don't want me to come over?" This thing, what happens is when we start to loosen that boundary, then we feel bad about ourselves, and again, it feeds into those feelings of unworthiness, you start to not trust yourself anymore, you start to just give in to things that you know are harmful for you and are not conducive to a healthy sort of environment for you. So it becomes like a cycle of feedback loop. Having boundaries, I think, as someone who has, has battled with feelings of unworthiness my whole life, that is how I started to feel more worthy when I started just being like "no", and I started giving – started saying no without any explanation, which was very hard for me. Sometimes it depends on the relationship, I'll feel the need to give an explanation, but I've learned to just be like, "no, I'm okay, thank you", without having to qualify or justify my no because it's my (indiscernible) (00:30:09) no and if I

want to say "no", like I can do that, I was a yes person for so long so saying no is very empowering, feels very liberating as well. And again, modeling that so when Gia wants to say no, she feels like she has the ability, like she knows how she is seeing me do it, she has heard me do it. So I kind of want to go back to parents and uncoupling our feelings of worthiness from our children. Can you just give us some insight into how if we are doing that, how we can start to find worthiness for ourselves and sort of uncouple the two?

Adia Gooden: Yeah, yeah, I think it's a great question. You know, I think the first thing is trying to recognize it, right, so we sort of talked a little bit earlier about how you could recognize it, but maybe sort of spending, you know, some time thinking, like, why is it so important for me that my child do this or that thing? What do I think that will give me, like, how much of that is about, I want them to be happy, I want them to be healthy, etc. and how much of it is about this is what I think other people will think of me if I do this for my child, if I don't do this for my child, if my child does this and my child doesn't do that, right. So sort of exploring some of that for yourselves and then, you know, some of the practices and I think it's useful to frame these things as practices because they're things you go back to, that I really encourage people to do when they're sort of wanting to ground themselves in their worthiness, one is practicing self-compassion so I mentioned that a little bit earlier, but I mean, at the essence, it's mindfulness, right, it's tuning in to your body, to your thoughts without judgment and noticing, okay, every time this happens, my chest gets tight, I have a lump in my throat, my head, you know, or like, ooh, I'm tense in my jaw, I have been tense in my jaw for hours, right. So just tuning in, what is my body telling me and communicating? Common humanity is the second component, it's like remembering like this is normal, parenting is hard, especially in a society that's so individually focused and nuclear family focused, and you know, expects one or two people or three people to do this all on their own, it is hard, and this is normal and then another big piece is self-kindness, right, being kind to yourself and that's where some of the sort of re-parenting pieces can come in and so it can look like, you know, sometimes when we're activated or we are triggered, it's the little one in us who's come up and taken over, and what we need in that moment is to give our little selves, our 10-year-old self, five-year-old self, whatever age, all the love and the comfort that we didn't get at that point, right, and saying it's okay, right. Like, I'm here for and with you, and I'm not leaving you and it is okay, right. And so you could put a hand on the chest, you could give yourself a hug, right, that's something that sort of is soothing and says it's okay, you're okay, I'm here, I'm not leaving you, right. That sort of affirms that you're okay, some comforting statement or physical touch, that those things really are, you know, very helpful and then the fourth piece that I like to talk about, especially for black people is honoring your body. And I know that can be so challenging as a parent, right, because your sleep is sort of disrupted and there are so many demands, right, but thinking about, you know, maybe it's checking in and saying "I have not eaten", I mean I am more irritable and frustrated because I have not eaten anything nourishing, like, can I pause and get a bite to eat, like is there a way I can get a little bit of rest? Is it what I really need? Just like an hour away from my child and is there a way I can arrange that, right. So like tuning in to what is your body and brain saying it needs because sometimes it's because you're not able to care for yourself that that's when the reactions happen, that's when you know the anger happens, the frustration happens because your nerves are on edge because you haven't been able to take care of yourself in the way you need to.

Yolanda Williams: Let me just tell you, when I first had Gia, I really always I have never felt I could ask for help, that's just how I grew up and that went into my feelings of worthiness, both from an unworthy of receiving help, but also from a – what is that, savior complex, I was like the person in my family. So I based my worthiness on my ability to help other people and when I wasn't to able help other people, I felt unworthy so it's weird. Anyway, I remember having Gia and I was so tired, and I wasn't sleeping and she's screaming, and I'm just crying and I was going to pick up the phone and call my sister and then something was like, no, you don't want to be a burden, feelings of unworthiness, you know, you don't want to be a burden. You just got to figure this out, it's your child. So my sister calls me and I'm telling her I'm okay and she's like, I'm going to come over, I am going to come over. She's like, why did you just call me and I was like, I didn't want to bother you and she was like, you can always call me like, you don't have to do this alone and I had moved from California to Arkansas for help with my child, I get here and it's still hard for me to ask for help. So after that, I was like, come get this baby. Does anybody want a child for a few hours, because I realized like I had to put myself first, I had to take care of myself, I needed sleep, I was getting like, maybe three to four hours of non-consecutive sleep a night, I'm still not recovered. She's still just (indiscernible) (00:36:14) in the midnight, I still wake up at 4 a.m., you know, and so I had to start thinking of myself. It's sort of I had to put myself first, make sure that I was number one in my life, in order to be a good mother, because I'm a single mom and as much as folks like to say, like, my child is the first person, I don't subscribe to that now. I have to take care of myself. If my mental health is not well, my physical health is not well, how the hell I'm going to take care of this child on my own. So, but that's where the struggle comes from, which is like, am I adequate enough to do this? I'm worthy enough of being a parent to this child, especially finding out that she is autistic, I'm really like, can I, you know, can I offer her the support she needs? So it's just a constant practice, like you said, of uncoupling my worthiness from my parenting and learning how to like value myself more as a person, not even as a mom, as just a regular-degular woman, you know, and learning how to love myself wholly and unconditionally because I never did before if I'm being honest.

Adia Gooden: Yeah. Yeah, I mean I think one of the things that that brought up for me is, is remembering that parenting is a role, it's a role you have, just like being somebody's child, somebody's sibling, right, being an employer, an employee, right, these are roles that we have and we do have a tendency in our society to be very attached to this role, like, I am a lawyer, or I'm a doctor or I'm a this or I'm a, you know, and if we can see the role of a parent is something that we embody and that is something that shifts over the lifecycle of our child, right, like being a parent when your child is very small is very different than being a parent to an 18-plus-year-old, right. And so seeing it as a role that you are embodying versus who you are, I think can help with that uncoupling, right, because when it is apparent is who I am, it's all of who I am and if I get it right, then I'm worthy, but if I don't get it right at any moment, then I'm not worthy, it's too much pressure, right. But remembering parenting is a big part, is a big role, it's a big part of my identity, but there's also other parts of me, as a woman, as a person, as a daughter, as somebody who loves this, as a podcaster, right. And so some of that is helpful because there may be some times when parenting is particularly tough, where you particularly feel like I don't know what I'm doing, I don't know, like, how do we do this? Like, this is just a tough time.

Yolanda Williams: Or even I don't want to do this right now like, like I don't want this, I don't want to be a parent and that's just truth.

Adia Gooden: Yeah, and if you can know, like, okay, this role is one that I'm signed up for and I may have to do it when I don't want to, but that's okay that I don't want to, it doesn't mean I don't love my child. It's a role that is it, just we don't want to work sometimes, a lot of the time, all the time, right. So you know, so knowing that and then also accessing other parts of your identity, other parts of the roles that you play, so that you can have a more holistic view of yourselves and not feel like all that I am is a mother.

Yolanda Williams: Yes, that is so powerful. Well, I just, you know, I thank you so much for what you do, and this work is so transformative, but not just for, you know, the individual for like generational stuff because once we start to work on these feelings of unworthiness, we can be more conscious and intentional with our children, with the people around us and you all know my philosophy on conscious parenting and how to change the world. So, you know, we're modeling worthiness and we are teaching our children and pouring into them what worthiness looks like, we're not projecting our unworthiness into them, like it's so much bigger than we think and so thank you for doing that work and, you know, I ask everybody the same question, which is, what does decolonizing parenting mean to you?

Adia Gooden: Yeah, I was thinking about this and I think it means letting go of the ideas that we need to train our children, get them to conform, punish them, break them down, right, I just think there are so many legacies from slavery that, you know, have carried through generations of black people, that are about controlling, conforming, breaking, shrinking black children and I think that decolonized parenting means releasing ourselves from those ideas, that children need to be controlled, and they need to conform and they need to be put small, right, and so to me, that's what comes to mind when I think about decolonizing parenting.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah, you know what, I recently read something that said, "what if we re-imagine parenting as an act of intergenerational solidarity", and I was just like, pshhh! Like I uhhh! Because even parenting denotes ownership sometimes. If we think about it like they're teaching us, we're teaching them, it's intergenerational solidarity, you're in collaboration with them and we don't have power over them, but we are empowered with them. That's how we raise these, you know, how we decolonize and raise the kids, like, from just taking the ownership out of parenting. So powerful. Well, how can the folks reach you? How can we find you on social media?

Adia Gooden: Yeah, so I'm mostly on Instagram and you can find me there @DrAdiaGooden. I have a website, dradiagooden.com, so I'd love to hear from folks and connect further.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. Well, thank you so much for being here with me today. I'll make sure to link all that into the show notes so we can follow you, and again, thank you for all this transformative work that you're doing in the community, really appreciate everything.

Adia Gooden: Thank you. Thanks so much for having me.

Yolanda Williams: Thank you and thank you all for listening. Please make sure you leave a rating and review and until next time, keep it conscious!