

Parenting Through the Unknown: Embracing Change with Dr. Shafali

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SUMMARY

In this episode of "Parenting and You," Dr. Shafali addresses the challenges of transitioning into new phases of parenting, particularly for mothers who are expecting a second child or navigating changes like moving to a new school. The discussion emphasizes the importance of acknowledging fears and anxieties while also fostering resilience and community support.

- *Transitions can evoke feelings of fear and anxiety due to the loss of predictability.*
- *It's normal for parents to feel overwhelmed, especially with past experiences like postpartum depression.*
- *Embracing the unknown and focusing on resilience can help manage anticipatory fears.*
- *Journaling and community support are effective outlets for expressing feelings and reducing anxiety.*
- *Children also struggle with transitions, needing time and support to adjust to new environments.*
- *Parents should validate their children's feelings about change while encouraging gradual adaptation.*
- *Finding a balance in parenting styles, such as gentle discipline, requires self-awareness and understanding of personal triggers.*
- *The importance of community and shared experiences among parents can provide essential support during transitions.*

Hi everyone, welcome to a new episode of parenting and you with me Dr. Shafali. If you are someone who's had a hard time making transitions, who has a hard time embracing the future because of all the unknowns, who misses predictability and routine? Well, then there's a lot in this episode for you. Coming up, a mother who's about to give birth to her second child and is worried that she might get too overwhelmed.

Joining me now is Da. She's about to give birth to her second child and she's worried that she may be too overwhelmed. Hi, Da. What's going on? Hi. Yeah. So, my husband and I, we have been together for 10 years, married for five, we have a 4-year-old son, and now after two years of trying, we are expecting our second son, which I'm very excited about. But I do have to be honest, I had a little bit of postpartum after having our first son. So, I'm a little nervous about that and having that experience again cuz I don't want to have to go through it. But also, I feel like I've been experiencing a little bit of like prenatal kind of symptoms where the anxiety of going from one child to having two is starting to feel like a lot more pressure the closer I get to my due date. Mhm. How to kind of manage that or any tips on how to welcome that.

Oh, I know. I can only imagine that any transition brings about such a loss of the familiar, loss of the predictable and the known, right? Transitions by nature have that element of this panic of the unknown and then because you have that past postpartum experience you are already dreading it right so you're projecting into the future

so what advice can I give you you know first I can tell you that whatever you're feeling is completely normal and every mother going through such a big transition has all these imagined fears these memories that she feels are going to, you know, be tainted because now her younger son is not going to have this precious childhood and this new baby is going to invade and of course all this anticipatory fear. So, you're normal to feel that and valid given your past experiences. But I think that now that the baby is on its way, reality is what it is. The best thing we can do now is to embrace the unknown and to let go of this idea of what you think it's going to be and you know tell yourself that you've been through that postpartum and you're fine. Yes, it was hard but you actually did go through it. So in a way you know that there is a path forward and that you do have the resilience. You are capable. So each time those fears well up, that's your little girl who's scared of a new change. You have to be your own mother and say, "Yes, Da, I understand." You know, yes, you're afraid. That's normal.

Exactly what I did. But then remind yourself of your resilience. You did go through it and now you know better. So maybe it'll be slightly easier and you are resilient. You are capable. And what a wonderful thing you're doing. you're introducing a new child to the family and your son is going to have a brother. Maybe he'll be thrilled about it, maybe not. But, you know, remind yourself of resilience and the grit that you have already shown. I think every transition brings about a morbid panic in people.

Our first instinct is to think that this is a catastrophic calamity. But then we can soo ourselves by saying, you know, something good can come out of this. Maybe I'll be even stronger. Maybe I'll be a better mother because of this new child. Maybe my son will be a better child because of this new experience. Maybe my family will be more cohesive. Right? What are the positives we can pull from that will allow this transition and this bridge to the transition be a little bit more easy to face you know we have to do a lot of self-talk because otherwise the unknown can be terrifying yeah and I think that's what it is everything you just said I feel like you know I know it's my hormones I know it's my brain that's just doing what it's doing so I try to reel myself back in I have these moments where you know especially with social media now you kind of find yourself scrolling and everyone is giving parenting advice and it's do this, don't do that. Right? So, you're like, am I doing this right? Am I doing this wrong? So, even trying to figure out the best way to introduce the baby to our son without making him feel like, you know, he's going to now be secondhand to the baby because there so many more needs, you know, right? Does your son know that this uh boy is coming? Yes, he's very excited. Awesome.

And very sweet and all of the things. And you know, I'm trying to just be like hyper aware of his needs also. So, you know, seeing things that are like if my son needs me or if the baby needs me, telling my son, okay, the baby can wait. I'm coming to you first because he's more conscious, right? The little things like that I'm I'm definitely aware of and making sure that I know that he's priority. But he's been an only child for four years, which feels like a long time. Yes. Yes. So sometimes I find myself looking at him and I'm like his whole world is about to change and I don't think he even realizes it, you know. Right. Right. I myself a little bit. So you can look at it as a negative thing where you know his whole life is going to change and I'm feeling bad about it or his whole life is going to change and he's going to be more resilient because of it. He's going to be better able to cope with life's struggles because of it. I'm going to teach him life skills because of it.

There is so much of a growth opportunity that is going to happen because this new child is coming as well as a

lot of chaos and stress and anxiety. So we can never look at it just one way. If you're going to look at it, look at it both ways. And you know in terms of scrolling on social media and following all the advice, it can drive you crazy. At the end of the day, it's not that complicated. At the end of the day, if you've read a few books and if you are trying to be a conscious parent, you know that as long as the basics are covered, as long as your older son feels seen, secure, significant, and safe, then he will manage with this transition and you're so dead on right that the baby doesn't need you as much as your current son because your current son is the one who's a more conscious and been more habituated to having you. So he's going to feel transplanted by this, you know, this new person coming in and dethroning him. He was on the throne. So it sounds like you're already very well aware of that. So keeping that in mind, you will be able to make those adjustments. But I think the main thing here is our mindset during a transition.

you know, are we focusing on all the things that could go wrong or are we excited about all the new ways you are going to be a completely different person? You're going to see things about you that were never revealed. You're going to expose aspects of you that you didn't even know you had because of this new child. So, it's exciting. It's a new adventure. It's a new experiment. Can you lean into that or can you just stay stuck focused on the the things that could go wrong? Right? This is the mindset shift that you can embrace in this new transition. Otherwise, everybody can look at a transition and only see doom and gloom, right? No, that's very true. Everything you're saying is so helpful. And it's also one of those things too because we had tried for 2 years. You know, sometimes I feel like especially we as women when we become parents and when we become mothers that we don't allow ourselves the space to not complain but vent. Yes.

Then you feel guilty because there's those I can't get pregnant or I can't have kids and like I said, we had tried already for two years. So for it to finally happen Yes. I could feel like I end up holding things in and I'm like, "Oh, I shouldn't say anything or I shouldn't complain or I shouldn't feel bad or feel like a negative reaction to this because this is what I've wanted, you know, and prayed for." Right. I definitely appreciate you giving the space to have the conversation because I feel like a lot of times we as mothers, we don't get that, right? And I think we as mothers confuse having the feelings of sadness or fear versus being negative and only looking at the negative. Right?

So that's not what you're doing. And I think that's what culture makes you feel like you're doing when you are just expressing yourself. You know, expressing your feelings. You know, I'm scared. I'm terrified. I'm nervous. I'm afraid that I'm not going to be a good mom to two kids or whatever your fears are. It is only when you vent them and express them that you can actually manage them better. So there's a big difference between having genuine fears.

That's why I normalized it for you and validated it versus seeing the negative. Right? So I'm asking you to allow yourself. In fact, the more you vent every day in a journal, the less you will be in the throws of anxiety and chaos. Do you see the difference between expressing yourself and honoring your fears versus myopically, obsessively focus on the negative? Big difference. Big difference. No, it's very true. I think I should start journaling. I don't journal, but I feel like I should cuz I've been looking for an outlet. I've been looking for, okay, how can I, you know, I talk to my husband and he's great and he listens and he's amazing and all of the things,

but sometimes, you know, you feel like you have these thoughts where you need to get them out.

And I think journaling is a great advice. Yes. And also, you know, community. I recently just last week launched a new community because when we are with like-minded, like-hearted other parents who are going through the same things, that is a way of getting that validation. So, you should check it out. It's called the conscious circle. But community is the next piece of this where you feel supported by other people who've gone through this path with you.

The reason you're here is because I'm a parent. I'm a mom. I can understand so I can help you. And that community is what we're missing as modern parents. We are more and more isolated and we are estranged from wise other women especially the sisterhood and as a mother especially tapping into a sisterhood is so important. So these are the things you know that we need to now seek out. You need to actively seek out community actively do a practice like journal writing. actively make sure you are expressing your feelings and hearing and validating yourself because the more you do this and take care of your internal world, the more you'll be better prepared to show up for the great challenges that are going to come.

They're going to be challenges, but there's also going to be tremendous joy, tremendous growth, and tremendous opportunity here. Yeah, I totally agree. Thank you so much for that. That's awesome. I'm also thinking about you're saying community and I think about like you know I have my mother-in-law who's very helpful and I have my friends who are parents and things like that and I look at my son and sometimes I think about the like being pregnant and being hormonal and the emotions that come yes if my husband's not here if I feel overwhelmed and you know my son he's four he's still a toddler so he requires a lot of attention and I find it's very rare that I yell at him yes but also being pregnant my hormones are all over the place. And I had a moment where, you know, the other day I did get very upset at him and I yelled at him and I had to stop myself and I was like, why am I yelling at him? He didn't do anything.

When it comes to that sort of communication with your kid, especially at his age, like the impact that it has or things that I can do to better contain those emotions when it comes to his needs, you know, again, it's about expressing yourself in a safe place on a daily basis. So your tank is full and full of self-affirmation, full of validation, full of compassion, full of understanding. So that then you're not bursting at the seams and exploding.

You're exploding because you have so much suppressed. You have so much that's building up. Why do we explode is because we're not paying attention to all the internal lava that is boiling over and then it tips over. So that internal work, you know, join a community, write in your journal, have a space where you're venting and expressing every day so that it doesn't just take you by surprise. That internal connection is so important, especially as a pregnant mother. That's so important. It's interesting because my family, our family's from Haiti. My husband is American, white American and um you know, just culturally we're very different in how we were raised and like the things that my parents did that I don't want to do, right? And I have a moment of where if I get upset or I yell at him, I'm like, "No, no, no. I don't want to yell at him." But I'm also trying to find I feel like my parents might have been on the extreme more extreme level of discipline and we're trying more the

gentle parenting approach and it's trying to find like a happy middle. Yes. Assertive with our tone. Yes. Because we mean business but we're not necessarily yelling or any of the extra things that come with that.

Like how do you find that balance when it comes to disciplining your kids? Finding a happy middle. Yeah, there is a happy middle and the middle really is the consciousness of the parent and again you doing your inner work, understanding your triggers, understanding what in you is getting inflamed by your child's reaction. That deep inner work is the middle path to not being too soft or too hard. So, you know, just take it easy, one step at a time. In many ways, you are already breaking so many patterns from your past by being this conscious. So congratulations and good luck. I'm sure you're going to be amazing. Thank you so much, Dr. Shabali. Coming up next, a mother who wants to know how she can best help her children make an adjustment to their new home and new school.

We're going to now meet with Leona, a mother of two pre-teen boys. She wants to know how she can help them better adjust to their new home and new school. Hi Leona, welcome. tell us what's going on. Hi, Dr. Thank you so much for having me. Of course. Yeah. Well, I'm in the what I feel like is a new phase because I've been parenting for a decade. So, I have a 10-year-old and so I'm coming up into this new era of pre-teen and all things new. So, we have a new home and a new school, which are all things exciting, but also there's adjustments that come with that. Yes. Yes. So, what kind of struggle are you particularly having? My boys are different. So, my older one can like I can drop him into a new space and he'll come out with a friend at the end of the day and my younger one it takes him a little bit longer to warm up and make friends. And so, even this morning drop off was a little was like he was sad. So, he is slower to make friends and he's shy.

He's more takes him a little bit longer to open up. Okay. So, where is the problem here? Like learning how to navigate each personality. Mhm. My older one is like great, okay, and then my younger one is not. He's wanting to go back to his other school. Is this a new school district, a new city? What is it? Just a new school. Okay. So, your older one is adjusting well, but the younger one is the one having the problem. Yeah.

He's not loving it much. He's still remembering his old school and what that was like. Yeah. And this is the thing about transitions, right? Transitions require a missing a yearning for what was old, what was predictable, what was familiar. And the new is very scary. Even as adults, we have this, you know, reaction to anything new. Any transition requires so much of adaptation, flexibility, acclimatization and that is what your son is going through. So when he is going through this kind of transition, he is going to remember the old. He's going to remember how things were familiar and things were comfortable.

And we as parents need to realize that and he can still push through. So, we're not taking away his feelings about the old, about the predictable. We are normalizing his fears. We're going, "Hey, I understand. You know, when I was young, even I went to a new school or a new neighborhood, it is scary. It's different. It feels weird, but this is a transition and give it time. Things take time and it's okay to miss your old friends and we can still be here." Now, let me ask you, are you in this new place? Because that's just a natural thing for all these kids to move to a new place or did you move them on purpose? It was on purpose, intentional.

Okay. And do you feel confident about why you move them? Yes. Do you feel good about your choice? Yeah. In your heart of hearts, is this a good school for him? Well, that's an interesting question. It's a school with more children and he tends to like smaller spaces. He's sensitive just like me to big crowds, big noises. So why did you choose this school for him? Because it was too far to move back to the old school. What was your reasoning behind choosing this new place? The curriculum.

Okay. We weren't confident in the curriculum that was being offered there at the old school. Are you confident that this school is good for him then? I'm confident that the school is good, but I'm also learning that it might not be the best for his comfort level. So, this is where you as a parent need to step into your inner knowing because if you are not sure that you made the right decision, then every time he protests, you're going to shake and waver, right?

But if you are sure, like for example, if your child has a cut and a wound and an infection, you're very sure you need to put a band-aid, you need to give him certain meds, you need to clean up the wound or take him to the doctor. You're not doubtful about it. You know that that is a good thing for him. I want you to have that same confidence about his school. If you don't have the same confidence about his school, you are going to feel insecure and doubtful and waver and guilty every time he protests.

His protests are legit. Everybody protests in a transition, especially if they didn't ask for it. An involuntary transition like when there's a hurricane or a fire and your house burns down. That is an involuntary transition. Your power was taken away from you. So everybody has a trauma reaction to that kind of change. So your son was made to go through this involuntary transition without his asking for it. So he is all right and legit to protest.

You now have to be confident inside yourself that you made the best choice. Otherwise, every time he looks to you, you're going to be like, I don't know what to say. Yeah. Right. So, how are you going to make that discovery? Is only through trial and error. You didn't know this when you first moved him. It's okay to say maybe this is not the right choice for him. It's okay to re-evaluate. That's a brave person to say, I thought this would be good, but it isn't good. And not feel like you were never meant to even try. It's good you tried, but maybe it's not the right choice. But you will need to figure that out and make that call. But let me also tell you having said that that there is no perfect school. Right? So I don't know what kind of ideal you're looking for. This school doesn't have great windows. That this one doesn't have a great swimming pool. That one doesn't have great map. This one has rude children. This one has affluent children. That one has children who, you know, come from a different background.

What are you exactly hoping that a school can give? because maybe you have unrealistic standards for a school. For us, it was clear in the curriculum that was being offered from the previous school, that's a main reason we're sending them to school is to get a solid education. Well, again, I'll challenge you because curriculum, it sounds like a great word. It's actually quite empty. I'm just going to tell you why. Because a curriculum without it connecting to the kids, without great teachers, without the child feeling safe at school is actually an empty curriculum. So all I'm saying is you may be right but it's only one spoke in the wheel. Yeah. A school is a system.

Everything in life is a system. So we can ask for one thing we don't get something else. Right? So as long as you have that realistic understanding that nothing is perfect then you may be okay leaving your child here and then you may teach your child nothing is perfect. Deal with it you know and have that loving but firm attitude. But if you're going to be always doubtful, then your child who's looking for leadership is going to feel nervous. And I'm not saying that you still after 6 months don't need to say, "I made a bad choice. I'm moving him back. This is not the right environment." But at least while you're going through the transition, children look to their parents for some leadership. You know, it's okay. This is difficult. I understand but let's give it a little bit more time and you can give it another 3 four months and then decide if you need to shift him or keep him right one thing that I am observing is that he is very shy and just this morning I was saying you're great like if I went to school with you I would want to be your friend you're kind you're smart you're creative you're athletic funny and I gave him homework work. I said by the end of the week, please tell me a new friend that you want to have a play date with. So, I think he is used to friends coming up to him instead of him initiating. And so, I am encouraging him to step out a little bit and make friends and just say like, "Hey, can I play with you?" Even if it's a new group, cuz even that for him is a big that's like risky. That's a big risk for him. How old is he? Eight. And here's where you can step in and maybe you can invite a few people over with their kids because he is very young and it is intimidating, especially if he's slow to warm up. Maybe you can build a little bit of that initiative and community for him to help him transition. Yeah. Have a barbecue, call people over, have their kids come over, you know, or have one kid come over. It doesn't have to be a lot, but maybe you can help him a little bit to ease into it rather than telling him, "Hey, go find a kid you want to have a play date with." Because that could be intimidating for him, right? So, kids need us to be very understanding during transitions, especially children under the age of 10. We need to understand that they are intimidated. They feel anxious. New surroundings feel very, very unfamiliar to them. Children thrive on consistency, especially in their environment. Children thrive on predictability. That's how they gain mastery over their environments. So when you throw them, thrust them into a new environment that they're not prepared for, they actually feel incompetent. So we need to understand his vulnerability, especially if the child is not this gregarious extrovert like your older son, right? So remember how you used to be, right? You said you're a lot like him. It takes time. We need help. We need support. We can't feel bad about feeling bad. We can't feel insecure about being insecure. There's a lot of opportunity here for you to support him, for him to try to flap his wings. I think it's a good thing to try, but also then re-evaluate it in a few months. I hope that helped. I have some work to do around it. Okay. Awesome. Well, thank you for coming with your question. I'm sure it'll help others as well. Thank you so much. Thank you. You know, transitions are not even easy for us adults. So, we can just imagine how hard it is for our children when new situations are unpredictably thrown upon a child when it's not in their voluntary consent. Children have a hard time with feeling a sense of control. So, of course, we try to prepare them. Of course, we try to reassure them, but the main thing we have to do as parents is allow them the safety to have their fears, the safety to express themselves, and we have to give them the the time and the adjustment period before we can push them to feel good about it or to feel happy about it. Those are our needs to make us feel less guilty about these transitions. And also, we need to be kind and compassionate with ourselves.

We need to offer ourselves a grace period during these times of transition. Transitions always involve a deep missing, a yearning for what was and a deep fear about what is to come. That is why it's called a transition. It is going inside the tunnel, leaving the familiar and the old behind and not yet knowing what the new is. It is the deep missing and yearning for the past and the deep fearful anticipation of the new. And we need to understand

the psychology that goes into a transition and allow our children the time and space and freedom and safety to experience all those feelings that come up when we are in that dark tunnel before the next future shows up. If you enjoy listening to my podcast and you value the insight and advice I give, maybe you want to join my conscious community. I created this community so that I could be more accessible to people. You know, so many people want my help and advice, and I'm so honored and privileged that they do, but most people cannot access me. So, I wanted to be more accessible. I understood that people needed community in order to feel more supported on their journeys in life. And this is why I created this community. So if you are someone who is longing for a community, who wants to grow as a parent, who wants to be more conscious, then check it out. It's called the conscious circle. The link is in the show notes below. Well, thank you so much for listening to this episode and I will see you on the next episode of Parenting and You with me, Dr.

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