



RAR 72 – How to Save a Bad Day

Sarah: You're listening to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.

Hello, hello, Sarah Mackenzie here. This is episode 72 of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. Today we're going to be talking about how to save a bad day with our kids. And we all have them, right? Probably don't need to convince you of that. I've got six kids of my own, age preschool to high school, I know about bad days. We're going to talk about how to save those. Before we do, I want to let you know that we are gearing up to have a super exciting few weeks at Read-Aloud Revival, big announcements, we're giving away a gazillion books in the next couple of weeks. You don't want to miss it so that you don't miss any of those announcements about what's coming next and how you can win free stuff, I want you to go to ReadAloudRevival.com and join the subscribers there. You'll get our free book list. It's a great Read-Aloud book list in a whole bunch of different categories that will help you find excellent books to read with your kids. It'll also put you on the email list so that you don't miss the announcements when we start announcing our big giveaway day, that's coming up right around the corner, and some other exciting things happening in October, here at Read-Aloud Revival. Again, go to ReadAloudRevival.com so you don't miss out on any of that good stuff.

1:47 The Ultimate Reset Button

Today I want to talk about how we can save a bad day, and we all have them, right? Some of us have them more often than others. Some months

we have them more days than we'd like to admit, but when the kids are squabbling, when our kids from toddler to teen are melting down how can you save a bad day? I'd like to suggest that reading aloud is the ultimate reset button on your worst days. I have kids from age preschool to high school (at the time I'm recording this podcast), six kids to be exact, and no matter their age when my kids are melting down, usually the best way for me to press the reset button on them is to read-aloud. Let me tell you what happens with my toddlers – this has worked with them since they were about 2, and it still continues to work even on my 5 year old. If your toddler or your preschool age child is having a meltdown, and I mean the unreasonable kind of squalling, sobbing, no matter what you suggest – you could probably suggest let's go get ice cream and they don't stop crying – that's when you know it's like the real deal meltdown. This is what you should do. Try this the next time that happens. Instead of suggesting or trying to reason or discuss something with your child, just grab a picture book off the shelf, plop yourself down on the floor, and start reading it aloud. Now, trust me, when you first start reading this book aloud you won't even be able to hear yourself because of all the ruckus that the child is causing, right? I know! I have a lot of small children in my house. You won't be able to hear yourself, but just do it anyway. Just read-aloud, calmly, out loud, to yourself; most of the time this simple strategy will work. Don't ask them, just do it, just sit down and start reading a story. My favorite stories for these particular moments are the Paul Galdone fairy tales. I don't know what it is about those books, but they are the ultimate reset button for a preschool age child, but really, you could just choose any picture book that you have handy. The closest one you can grab?



That's a good one. Sit down and start reading it aloud. Now, one of these days I'm going to get this on video in my own home. It makes me laugh every time because it's so magical. My kids (and I have twin 4 year olds) and when they're both melting down it's even more magical. I can sit myself down and start reading a picture book. It usually takes them a couple of pages. They'll be throwing their fit and they'll look over and see what I'm doing and a lot of times they'll say, "No, I don't want you to read to me," but I keep reading it aloud, and then they just come over and cuddle up and start listening. Really, truly, I know some of you are shaking your head right now going, "That's not going to work." Just try it. Then I want you to come back to this episode's Show Notes and tell us in the comments what happened when you tried it because I bet you will be surprised. Now, what about your older kids? Same thing. What you want to do is pop a big bucket of popcorn or get out some popsicles or whip up some hot chocolate, kind of depending on the time of year and where you are in the world or what season it is, get out some kind of simple treat that doesn't take you baking banana bread or something like that, sit down at the table and start reading aloud. Now, you can just start reading aloud whatever you're already reading with your kids or something that's closer within reach, but one thing that's a tried and true solution for this particular situation is a fairy tale. Fairy tales are stories that really speak to the entire human experience, they meet humans where they are, they speak to the human experience of life, and they are very powerful, magical stories because of that. And there are some places online where you can access very well written fairy tales for free (the Baldwin Project – we'll put some links in the Show Notes), so if you don't have a book of fairy tales handy

you can always grab some online and just read it off of your phone. A fairy tale will probably capture and engage all of your kids ages 4 and up – that would be my guess, all the way up through your teens. Of course, you can just choose something else from your shelf or whatever you're currently reading aloud with your older kids anyway. I'm just saying if you don't have something handy and you don't know what to read, choose a fairy tale, you can't really go wrong there. Also, I don't ever say, "Hey, do you guys want to read-aloud?" I just say, "Everybody go to the table." Add a little something yummy to eat, it's magical. I'm telling you, it's magical.

6:12 The Most Essential Subject

In *The Read-Aloud Handbook* Jim Trelease says this about reading aloud, "It's so important but if there's really a shortage of time steal it from other subjects that are not as essential as reading, which includes pretty much everything else." That's on page 56 of *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. What he's saying there is that this is the most important part of your school day. So if your kids are melting down and you're feeling like, 'Oh my gosh, we're never going to recover this school day,' my best advice to you is not to say, 'Oh, we're going to do our math or we're going to get everything done on our checklist,' and that's my instinct, to just white-knuckle the day or we're going to get everything done that I set out to do this morning, but what works a lot better is just to take a few minutes and read-aloud. Sometimes it means scrapping the rest of the school day in favor of reading, which like Jim Trelease says is the most important part of your school day anyway, and sometimes it doesn't have to be scrapping the whole day. Sometimes it can just be taking 15 or 20 minutes right in the middle of



the day when we were supposed to be doing something else and sharing a story and a snack. It goes a long way. Andrew Pudewa from the Institute for Excellence in Writing once told me that he would shuffle other subjects out of the curriculum entirely if that's what it took to fit more time for reading aloud in. So, between Trelease and Pudewa, and this podcast I hope that on your next bad day you'll realize that no matter what you haven't gotten done that day, reading aloud is going to be the best 15 minutes you could possibly spend anyway, and it's the ultimate reset button so you might as well just scrap everything else, pop a big bowl of popcorn and enjoy a story with your kids.

8:03 Let the Kids Speak

Now, it's time for Let the Kids Speak. This is my favorite part of the podcast where kids tell us about their favorite stories that have been read aloud to them.

Child1: Hi, my name is Renee. I am 11 years old and I live in Seattle, Washington. My favorite books are *The Mother-Daughter Book Club series* by Heather Vogel Frederick and it's about five girls with their mothers in a book club. My favorite book in the series is *Pies and Prejudice* because they read *Pride and Prejudice* and one of the girls goes to England for a year.

Child2: Hi, my name is Kaylah. I am 8 years old. I live in Seattle, Washington. My favorite book is *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis. I like it because there are a lot of adventures and my favorite part is when Lucy, Edmund, Susan, and Peter go through a magic closet that leads to a different city.

Child3: Hi, my name is Naomi. I am 5 years old. I live in Seattle, Washington. My favorite book is

How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World. I like it because he gets to bring the cow and the chicken home.

Child4: Hi, my name is Lydia and I am 3 years old and I live in Maine and my favorite book is *Make Way for Ducklings* and I love it because all the ducks quack at the cars. Quack, quack, quackety, quick. Quick, quick, quackety, quack.

Child5: Hello, my name is Lincoln and I'm 6 years old. I live in Florida and my favorite book is *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and my favorite part is when Harry Potter defeated the snake.

Child6: Hi, my name is Benjamin. I'm 6 years old. I live in Florida. My favorite book is *The Polar Express* because they drink hot chocolate.

Child7: Hi, my name is Marth and I'm 6, and we live in Iowa. My favorite book is *James Herriot's Treasury*. My favorite story in it is *The Market Square Dog* because there's a veterinarian in it who fixes the dog because he got ran over, and the dog's cute.

Child8: Hello, my name is Malz and I am 8 years old, and I'm from Iowa. My favorite book is *My Father's Dragon*. I like it because he used lollipops to escape the crocodiles that were going to eat him.

Child9: Hello, my name is Tunesa. I'm 8 and I live in North Carolina. My favorite book is *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. I like this book because it is about a family who doesn't have a mother who finds a mother that they love and like.

Child10: Olá, meu nome é Vasquel e estou a 6 anos. [Translator: Hello, my name is Vasquel and I am 6 years old.] Meu livro favorito é por causa de winn-dixie. [Translator: My favorite book is

Because of Winn-Dixie.] Eu vivo em Portal em Portugal.[Translator: I live in Portal in Portugal.]

Child11: Hi, my name's *[**inaudible**]* and I live in California, and. [Mom: what's your favorite book?] *[**inaudible**]* [Mom: and why do you like it? What's your favorite part in the book?] Where he goes through and makes *[**inaudible**]*.

Child12: Hi, my name's Amelie, I'm 8 years old and I live in California. My favorite book series is *Princess Ponies* about adventure, friendship, magical things, and it's where they rescue this island, and I just really like it.

Sarah: Thank you so much, kids. Hey, thanks for listening to this episode of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. We'll be back next week. Remember, if you have not joined the email list you are missing out on all kinds of excellent free resources, book lists, really good stuff. Go to ReadAloudRevival.com and join the subscribers there to jump on the list. Thanks so much for listening and until next time, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.