

Elmore Community Services:

Flipping the Narrative Podcast: Being a Father

Podcast duration: 40 minutes

Co-Hosts: Liz Jones and Luke Jerdy

In conversation with: Sam Abberley, father of four, who became a dad aged 19.

Producer: Ben Anderson, Sound Rebel

Podcast Episode Transcript

Liz Jones: Hi. Welcome everybody to the Flipping The Narrative podcast. I am one of the hosts. My name is Liz Jones. And I have worked in the violence against women and girls field for about 20-odd years now. And I have also worked with perpetrators of domestic abuse and offenders of sexual violence.

This podcast is being brought to you by Elmore, which is a community service based in Oxford that looks after people with complex needs who fall through the gaps of services. And they provide them with intensive support over a long period.

Luke Jerdy: Thanks, Liz.

And I am Luke Jerdy. I am your co-host for the Flipping The Narrative podcast. I am an actor, writer, teacher. And I am primarily interested in exploring masculinity and what it means to being a man with my work. So this podcast is perfect for me

because I get to chat to other men about what it means to be a man and all the topics and subjects that branch off from that.

Liz Jones:

The Flipping The Narrative series is in response to the misogynistic events of last year, in particular the murder of Sarah Everard and the releasing of the messages that police officers were sending to each other.

Instead of women constantly being told what they must do to keep themselves safe, this is for men. One to get them talking about relationships, themselves, things that might be difficult for them. But it is really looking and asking them about how they can contribute to this agenda, to help women remain safe and to challenge men who have the wrong thoughts about women.

Luke Jerdy:

In this episode we talked to a lovely young man called Sam Abberley, who is a father of four boys. Which is a brilliant person to talk to for me as I am a very, very new father. My son, Asa, is four and a half months old. And I think Sam's oldest is seventeen. So talking to him was an absolute pleasure.

We spoke about what it means to be a father, the realities of being a father, how our own relationships with our fathers have affected and will affect how we parent our children. And we also spoke about our own relationships and how modelling the way we are in our relationships affects and influences our children.

So I hope you enjoy it. Here is our chat with Sam. Enjoy.

So, Sam, absolute pleasure to have you on. Thanks so much for joining us. So you have got four kids. Is that right?

Sam Abberley: Yes, I have got four.

Luke Jerdy: And how old are you?

Sam Abberley: I am 37, with four boys.

Luke Jerdy: All four boys?

Sam Abberley: Yes. Ranging from seventeen to two.

Luke Jerdy: Wow. A big range. A big range.

Sam Abberley: Yes, a big range.

Luke Jerdy: Well, this is going to be a great chat. (Laughter) I am going to learn so much. I have got a four-and-a-half-month-old son, so I am learning all the time about being a dad.

Just to start us off, can you cast your mind back to when you

had your first and before you became a dad? How did you see the role of a father and the role of a mother?

Sam Abberley: How did I see it before I was a father?

Luke Jerdy: Yes.

Sam Abberley: My father wasn't around, so I guess as far as what I see as the role of a father I had my own ideas about what I envisaged myself being as a father, which was sort of the opposite of what I had experienced. So that was my sort of template.

So I think in my head the main focus for me was ensuring that I would be a good father and that I would be there for whoever the child was going to be.

My perception of parenting was all based on being raised by my mum without having a dad. So to me it felt important that I was there for the child with the mother and that they had both parents around.

Yes, that was my sort of thought on it before Archie, my eldest, was born.

Luke Jerdy: And were there specifics to that? Or was it a more broad thing of, "Well, my dad wasn't around, so I have just got to be there for this. I want to do the opposite, in terms of I am going to be there. I am going to be present. I am going to be a really good

dad”? Was there anything specific that you kind of thought, “This is my role”?

Sam Abberley: The only real specific, aside from being there, was to put them first. To try and make sure that everything I was doing was geared towards them. Especially having a child so young.

I think the main thing that people use to scare you away from having a child so young is that you will give up a lot of your freedoms. You will lose the ability to go out partying and go out drinking or clubbing or whatever you want to do when you are younger.

And I sort of accepted that straight away and went, “Okay, I am going to look past that, and I am moving in a different direction. I am not going to pine for it. Instead I am going to be there 100% for the child.”

From what I can remember now, that was a real like driving force, is being there exclusively for them and putting my all into being there for them.

Liz Jones: How old were you when you had your first child, Sam?

Sam Abberley: Nineteen. Yes, I must have been nineteen.

Liz Jones: So that was young.

Sam Abberley: Yes.

Liz Jones: How did it feel when you knew you were going to be a father?

Sam Abberley: At nineteen probably nothing feels quite the same as what it does when you have got a bit more wisdom and perspective on things.

At nineteen I probably felt far more capable of being a parent than what I felt by the time the fourth one came along, for example, where suddenly I am able to consider all of the additional things, more than just being there. "Financially am I able to provide for the child? Is the rest of my life secure enough for that child? Is it appropriate for me to be bringing a child up based on everything else I have got going on around me and other children?"

You don't really think about things in the same way at that age. I don't know. Hard to answer that in retrospect.

Luke Jerdy: And your thoughts about becoming a dad. Do you think they would have been different? I would imagine they would have been, but in what way might they have been different if your own experiences with your father had been [there 00:07:03]?

Sam Abberley: Well, impossible to say, I suppose, because the way that I was raised has obviously influenced everything that has happened. Most likely if my father was around, if I was an outsider looking

in, I would say, “Probably he wouldn’t have ended up having a child at 19 if his father was around.” So I would imagine that I wouldn’t be in the position I was in most likely.

Luke Jerdy: You think that is part of the reason you had a child young?

Sam Abberley: I don’t. I don’t really think that is the reason why. But if I was talking to somebody else that was in my shoes I would think, “Absolutely, yes. Their father wasn’t around, so they are missing that love from their father, so of course it makes sense that they would want to give that and that they would want a family.”

Especially a large family, like four kids. That is a lot. It is almost like I have really gone far in the other direction to compensate for what I was missing.

So yes, from an analysis point of view that really adds up. But in my own head I don’t quite see it like that. It is an accident that happened a long time ago and I tried to make the best of the situation in reality.

Luke Jerdy: Yes, it wasn’t like you went out and put those things together into a nice, neatly-packaged box and went, “Well, because my father is not around I am now going to have a child at nineteen. And then I am going to have three more. And that is going to compensate for the love that I didn’t have.”

No, I completely get what you are saying. And I also get that an

outsider might think that, because we like to put things into neat little psychological boxes. And a lot of the time they fit but they might not necessarily. You are right.

And I think, I don't know if you agree, when you are 19- I know that I certainly thought about things and considered things, particularly how I was myself, a lot less. It was like it just happened and I got on with it. And then I went to the next thing in my life. And then I went to the next thing in my life. I didn't stop and consider that. So I guess that was part of it as well.

Sam Abberley: Absolutely. Definitely. I was going with the flow at the time. But, like I say, trying to make the best of the situation. And, having been through what I went through, to me the best of the situation meant being the absolute best dad I could and taking it seriously.

Luke Jerdy: Yes, and it is a similar thing for me. I was the same. I have got a fairly good relationship with my dad now but he was absent for a lot of my life growing up. My mum and dad split up when I was 12, and then myself and my sister saw him less and less and less, until it almost petered out altogether for a time.

And he consistently let us down, when he said he was going to come and see us and then didn't. He would always make excuses at the very last minute. It was this kind of perpetual disappointment.

But I didn't have a child until I was 31, so we were in not

completely similar situations but fairly similar, in terms of probably our feelings around our fathers being absent, but have gone down different paths.

Sam Abberley: How is your dad now with the new baby? Does he give you any tips?

Luke Jerdy: Well, he would be wrong to give me any tips really. (Laughter) It would be like, "No, I can't really take much advice from you, Dad, because you didn't do a great job yourself."

Sam Abberley: So you would feel like that? If he did get involved in that way, would you feel that way?

Luke Jerdy: It would depend what he said. He mentions memories from when I was younger and things like that from when he was doing it.

It is a really complex thing with my dad because he is always so loving and says all the right things. So on paper he is saying all the right things. But then his actions don't match up with what he says.

And it has only been recently, where we have had much more in-depth conversations, where I have understood where that has come from and his background. So I am fortunate enough to have had those conversations.

He just wouldn't. He just wouldn't step in and try and give me advice. I just couldn't see him doing it. If he did it would be okay, but I would probably say-

Sam Abberley: "Hang on a minute." (Laughter)

Luke Jerdy: "You don't really know what you are talking about," yes.
(Laughter) So yes, I think that is probably how I would feel.

What do you think the reality is of being a father or being a dad? Especially because your oldest is 17 now. Is that right?

Sam Abberley: Yes.

Luke Jerdy: Talk to us a bit about those realities and how it has been.

Sam Abberley: I think I would say that the reality of being a father changes as they get older in a lot of different ways.

I think the stage you are in right now is very exciting. And it really is fun having a little baby around. It is a big lifestyle change, of course, but you are seeing new things every day, and they are getting bigger. And it is fascinating to see personalities developing.

As they progress to toddler age- So my youngest now is two, and he is just an absolute joy to be around. He is just so much fun all the time. And I look forward to seeing him, and I miss

him, and I think about him so much because he is just fantastic.

And then they get to primary school and they start surprising you, because they say stuff to you that you haven't taught them and they do things that you don't necessarily recognise that they have picked up from the people that they are at school with or teachers. And they start becoming more and more their own person.

And my experience with primary school kids has also been great because generally they are well behaved and they are still pleased to see you and you get a lot from a young child.

And then as they get to teenagers there is a big shift because suddenly you are not doing as much stuff for them. It doesn't involve as much busy work. But emotionally it is far more challenging because they are not just their own people. They have all their own problems and desires and wishes. And those things you are there to support them with in a very different way, it feels, to the way you support younger children.

So I would say the experience changes quite a lot as they get older. At each step it is a challenge but in different ways.

Luke Jerdy:

How does that feel when they first come to you and say something that perhaps they have either been taught or learnt from somebody other than you or their mum or your close family?

Sam Abberley: It depends. It depends if you agree with what they have been taught. (Laughter)

Luke Jerdy: Okay. Well, if you don't agree, how does that feel?

Sam Abberley: The third son goes to a Catholic school. And I have got no religion. And so he comes back and talks to me about what he has learnt about God, for example. And I don't necessarily want to contradict what he has been taught but it can be surprising because I wouldn't have taught him that and suddenly someone else is. And that could influence his beliefs in ways that I can't comprehend yet. So it is surprising.

Sometimes it can be worrying if they come back and say stuff that maybe isn't age appropriate or that I wouldn't have shown them or let them see at that stage. And that can be worrying, and you might try and dig a little bit deeper into, "Where did you hear that?" and, "Who else is saying that?" and try and find out if there is a consensus or it is a one-off.

But for the most part I would say it is actually pretty fun and it is nice hearing that stuff. It is great to know that my children have got their own lives and that they are enjoying themselves.

And I love hearing about the stuff that I don't know. Every parent will ask their parent what they got up to that day at school. And you do feel disheartened and frustrated that they just go, "I can't remember," because you really want them to

remember something they can tell you. You want to hear about it.

Luke Jerdy: So did you make that decision to send him to a Catholic school? I am just interested in that decision if it doesn't align with your religious beliefs.

Sam Abberley: Yes, so my wife is a teacher and she teaches at the school, so it was a pretty easy decision.

But actually, when it comes to picking schools, you just want the best education for your child. And you go around and look at schools and, a bit like buying a house, if there is one you just click with then that is the one.

And that is what we found for primary and it is the same for secondary. It was more about just finding what felt like the right place, regardless of some of the beliefs maybe not fully aligning.

Luke Jerdy: Right, okay. So it was much more about an educational decision than perhaps an ethos?

Sam Abberley: Yes. They have like 15 children in each year group. I mean that is really nice. Where you look at another school and they have got 60 children in the year group. And you think, "My child is going to get a nice sort of community feel." Everybody knows everybody.

And there is something nice about that at primary school. It feels very comforting there. In a way that maybe some of the bigger schools, that don't have the same faiths necessarily, they lose some of that.

So yes, it was more about that than it was the religion. But it definitely comes into it because you think, "Yes, they are going to have to go to church once a week. Do I agree with that? Is that a good thing?"

Overall I guess the more they can be exposed to the better. And as long as they keep an open mind and we keep a conversation going about other faiths and religions and beliefs that others have got out there then that is all good really.

Liz Jones: What sort of values and beliefs do you teach your children?

Sam Abberley: I always try and teach the children to be as openminded as they possibly can. I really want them to experience as much as possible but also to be aware that other people's experiences will lead to them treating them and living in maybe different ways.

And I think it is really important for all of the boys to be openminded about who they come across and what their backgrounds might be and what their beliefs might be, because I want them to grow into people that they are comfortable with. And I don't ever want to be too prescriptive with anything. Yes, I try and teach them to be openminded,

kind, honest and fair.

Generally, I try and teach them right from wrong as things come up. It is hard to be too directive with children because it is so different every day. So you are really trying to guide them as much as possible.

But yes, I would say being openminded is definitely a big one. I want them to be openminded and make their own minds up as much as they can.

Luke Jerdy: Yes, and you mentioned honesty as well, which is important, isn't it? And I remember reading somewhere or hearing something where it is like when your child first lies to you that is a real hurdle to overcome. Because they will eventually. One day they will lie to you about something. And hopefully it is a little white lie. I mean how did that feel for you? Was it a big thing or not?

Sam Abberley: It depends what it is. I think you are really inclined to believe everything they say anyway. So even things that I think might be a lie I still really want to just believe it because they have told me and I want to trust them.

I think for the most part the boys are honest, and they are good, and they do tell me things. I think a lot of the time maybe it is not saying stuff as opposed to outright lying.

But when it does happen it is tricky because sometimes they will try and reinforce the lie. And if they stick to the lie then you

are at loggerheads because if you keep saying they are lying and they keep saying they are not you start to question whether maybe they are not lying. And then is there a trust issue? It gets quite complicated.

How do I think about it? What happened when they first did that? I don't know if I have got any specific memories. But when it comes up now it is generally, especially for the younger ones, a reminder that, "I won't get cross if you tell me the truth. I will if you lie." (Laughter)

Usually we will skirt around it or we will go a step beyond the lie. So, "I didn't have an accident," for example. "Okay, well, I think maybe it is time to go and try for a wee all the same, so let's go and get that done."

Yes, we will take a step on and then have a chat afterwards about, "Look, if you do have an accident, well, come and talk to me about it. Tell me about it." And we will have that conversation separate to the confrontation of the lie itself. Otherwise it never seems to go well.

Luke Jerdy:

And how important is that, that they come to you with things? Not necessarily things that they might lie about but problems, dilemmas. Do you have specific roles? In terms of do they go more towards your partner for that or is it an equal thing? I would imagine being a father particularly of four boys it is important that they know that they can come to you with issues and problems.

Sam Abberley: I would say that as they get older it is very rare for them to come to me with a problem, even when it is clear that there is one. I think probably that is a little bit of just growing up and maybe wanting to deal with things themselves, a little bit of not wanting to rely on me. Maybe sometimes they are embarrassed about things that have happened or they are not sure how to process it yet. And I understand that.

Generally with the older ones it more comes from having a chat with them. If maybe they are feeling down and we start chatting then stuff will come out. As opposed to them coming up and going, "Hey, this happened today. What do you think about it?" I have learned in real life that doesn't really happen so much with teenagers. They don't engage with you in that way.

For the younger ones, yes, it is just a constant barrage of problems and dilemmas and things they don't know how to deal with. And that just comes out to whoever is closest. "I don't know how to change the channel. Or, "I am bored and I don't know what to do. Or, "I don't know how to do this bit of homework." There is always stuff. You are always teaching them.

And that is very easy when they are younger because those roles are very specific. They are learning and you are teaching. And that goes on for a long time. It is when they get older that sort of fades away.

Luke Jerdy: So with the teenagers would you say it is important to have regular check-ins with them? Rather than waiting for them to

come to you, it is important to go, “Are you feeling okay? How is everything?” And then maybe issues will come from there. Or do you think it is just you leave it and they will come to you if they need you?

Sam Abberley: With the older two, because they are so much older, I do give them as much dedicated time as possible. So we will go out of the house and we will do stuff together.

Last night, actually, we just went out and did something, just me and the two bigger boys, just to get away from the kids for a little bit and out of that environment. We went out for dinner.

And we do that like once a week usually. And that is usually a really good time just to check in on a little bit more of a deeper level. A little bit less superficial than, “How was your day?” And that is usually a really good time to pick up on stuff.

But a lot of the problems that the older ones have do seem to be bigger, maybe more like existential problems. It is like finding a direction. “Where is my life going?”

Girlfriends is a big thing. Do they want a girlfriend? Do they not want a girlfriend? Should they have a girlfriend? What were they going to do once they finished school? A-levels, university or work? All those things. And friendship groups. All those things are such huge things in their lives.

Yes, it is very rare that there is like, “Oh, we had a bust-up or an argument today.” It is usually, “I really hate doing this subject

but I think that would be helpful for me in the long run, and I don't know how to deal with that." Or, "I don't know what I want to do."

The eldest always wanted to go to university and the last year he has just gone off education. Now it has changed his perspective of where he saw himself or where I saw him going for the next five years. Suddenly that has completely changed and he doesn't know what to do now. And that has impacted him in a lot of ways that I don't think he realised before making that decision.

So yes, the problems are bigger, and you are constantly checking in and going over those things and realigning slightly. Rather than just a quick patch-up and, "We will have a 10-minute chat and then off you go, and you will be alright," it is more coaching and being there for them as they get to grips with bigger challenges.

Liz Jones: As you have got four boys, do you have conversations about relationships, sexual relationships? Obviously not the younger ones. What you would like them to feel a good relationship is. Do you ever have those conversations with them?

Sam Abberley: Yes. So I think a lot of those sorts of things come from just life in general, respect towards other people, as opposed to, "Oh, I have got a girlfriend." "Oh, well, make sure you treat her with respect." I think generally I hope those values are instilled as they grow up.

If I was to see anything that I didn't agree with then certainly I would say, "Look, maybe that was a bit out of order," or, "I wouldn't have expected you to speak about or to someone in that way."

We have conversations about things as they come up. If one of them is getting more serious with a girl, for example, then it would be like, "Okay, well, let's talk about protection," and that sort of thing. Definitely happy to talk about any subject with them completely openly.

A lot of it I would say we do in jest. We are constantly talking about what I would think are maybe traditionally more taboo subjects. A lot. We would talk about those things, make jokes about things, when we are driving or just out for a meal, or sat at the dinner table even if the younger ones aren't around, to make sure that nothing is off the table. We can talk about anything. There is nothing that can't be discussed.

And I think because those are already up in the air it makes it a little bit easier to then discuss- If we make jokes about one of them needing condoms all the time, when I turn around and say, "Have you actually got some?" it is not such a shock.

Liz Jones:

In a previous podcast we were talking about what it means to be a male, and they were saying about the sort of stereotype of growing up to be violent and using violence as a tool. Is that something you ever talk to your boys about?

Sam Abberley: I would say that violence has come up at points. Generally, I am not a violent or aggressive person in any way. I think the kids are fairly similar. Even as boys they have never been aggressive boys.

But things come up. When there are fights that happen at school or they mention, "Oh, this person got into a fight," or, "Someone got beaten up," or something like that then, yes, we have those conversations and what they think about it, how they would have reacted in that situation.

Yes, absolutely it comes up, but I wouldn't say that it is something that I have felt the need to refer to or really drill home to any of them. No, it is just as and when things come up.

Maybe my perception of what it takes to be a man is a little bit different through not having a father. I don't really have a perception of what it means to be a man in any sort of way. That doesn't really mean much to me, to be honest. It is just being a person.

Luke Jerdy: Yes, it is interesting. I guess that has filtered down to them automatically without you having to have conversations about, "This is what it means to be a man and to be a man in today's society, and what I think it is, is X, Y, Z." Perhaps just how you are as a dad and how you are as a person, how you conduct your life, has filtered down.

You have obviously done a great job if there haven't been any issues like that of violence against other men or issues or

sexism or misogyny towards women.

I guess that comes from a multitude of things, doesn't it? It comes from the way you have been, the way your partner has been, the way you have raised them, and I guess the type of other boys that they have been around.

Sam Abberley: Yes, there is definitely an element of that.

Sometimes you can't avoid it. Stuff will happen that they are not in control of. And then it is how they deal with it. And maybe a lack of instruction from me might leave them ill-equipped to deal with particular scenarios, absolutely. But you have always got that worry as a parent. You can't teach them everything.

So I hope they are well enough equipped, but if they ever weren't or if anything ever did come up then absolutely, yes, we would address it and discuss it.

I certainly think that just because I haven't been aware necessarily of any sexism or misogyny, or worse, those things definitely still could have happened. They could have happened without my knowing about it. It could have happened in their peer groups with their friends. Or even in relationships those things could have come out.

And those exactly could be the things that they don't necessarily lie about but they could hide from me. Absolutely that could be the case. I wouldn't ever want to be naïve enough to think that they were perfect and that they wouldn't

do those things.

So yes, I don't know. It hasn't been something that has come up yet. That doesn't mean it won't. And when it does, or if it does, then we will deal with it I guess.

Luke Jerdy: Yes, I am just wondering if as dads we should bring those things up before they happen.

So is it important to have conversations with our sons, or daughters but particularly sons, in terms of how they view women, how they view potential partners, how they should treat them?

Or is it a case of going, "Well, they seem okay, and they are getting on very well, so I don't necessarily need to bring this up until maybe it becomes an issue. Because it might never become an issue. And their teachers might be telling them how to do this and they might be getting it from other sources"?

I am just interested to know how early we should have these conversations or if we should have them at all.

Sam Abberley: Yes, I think maybe I am focusing on the older two because they are the people that are in these relationships. Or they are the people that are going through these things mostly. But actually I think probably what you say is right. And, thinking on it, I think a lot of these things come when they are a lot younger.

The third one, he is five, and he is definitely at that point where we are having these conversations about how you would treat your wife, what it means being married, and how I would treat my wife and how she would treat me. There is definitely stuff that he is witnessing with regards to how we treat each other, the roles that we have adopted.

Yes, definitely I would say, “We need to make sure we look after mummy,” or, “Do this for mummy,” or, “Make sure you hold the door open.” You do those little things when they are younger a lot more because they don’t necessarily know them.

I think maybe my expectation for the teenagers is that they know this by now. I think I understand them as generally rounded, good people that know this stuff. It seems to me that it is basic stuff that they already know. And I guess that is where I am coming from. It is not stuff that has come up because I think they already know what they are up to there.

It is really the younger ones where you are teaching them in a very sort of light-touch way, as and when they see things or things come up.

Luke Jerdy:

Yes, and it seems to me you have got a good grasp on what they are like and their general wellbeing. So it sounds like you would know if difficult things were creeping into their beliefs or how they were behaving or how they spoke about other women. And I think that is obviously really important, isn’t it?

But you are right. I think you take in so much when you are younger, don’t you? I always, always remember, from a very

early age, my grandad saying to me about, “You never hit a woman. You never hit a woman.” And perhaps he didn’t put it in exactly the right way, but it is things like that that really do stick with you.

It is just interesting discussing when to bring things like that up. And how deep do you go with it? Like do you sit them down and say, “Right, look, this is how we view women, and we view them like this. And this is how we treat them, and we treat them like this”? Or is it a lighter touch thing of little things that then feed into later life?

Sam Abberley: For me it is definitely a lighter touch thing.

And, like I said before, as much as possible I don’t want to be too prescriptive with anything. Of course, yes, not hitting women is a great thing to be prescriptive about.

Not hitting in general is what I am teaching the children right now. So for me that means, “You are not hitting a guy. You are not hitting a girl.” It is the same thing. We just don’t hit. That is the rule. And that is something I would be prescriptive about.

The rest of it, yes, I think definitely for me it has been light touch stuff the whole way. And I wouldn’t have taught any of the boys any differently to that. The minute I sit down and start telling them how things are- I don’t know. I think probably most of them would switch off. (Laughter)

Luke Jerdy: Yes, because I guess there is an element of figuring it out for themselves as well, isn't it? You are right. And it is important to make discoveries like that yourself.

Yes, it is good for me to hear your experience of that. And that lighter touch approach may be a better way. I kind of envision me and my partner sitting down with my son and being like, "Right, this is how things are. Make sure you don't do this. Make sure you don't do that." But without putting blanket rules on things because every situation is different, isn't it?

Sam Abberley: Absolutely.

Luke Jerdy: So it is like, "Well, actually, I was in this situation, and what you told me didn't apply." And suddenly you are like, "Oh. Oh, dear."

Sam Abberley: With the third one, he is at that stage now where he is starting to feel emotions that maybe weren't so prevalent when he was younger. And anger is one of the key ones at the moment, where he will get angry in response to something.

And I can't tell him not to get angry because that is an emotion that he is feeling. I can't tell him not to be angry. How he behaves when he is angry is something that I hope to influence and help him with.

And how he behaves when he is angry changes every time. So I don't say, "When you get angry you should do this," because

he doesn't know yet. He is too young to know how he is going to respond each time he gets angry.

If he gets angry because I have told him he can't have pudding, for example, he might run off to his bedroom crying or he might jump down from the table or he might slam a door. I don't know.

When those things happen then it is a case of sitting down and going, "You know what? If you run up to your bedroom because you need some space, that is okay. You can talk to us about that and then take yourself away."

Or, "If you slam the door because you are angry, you know what? That is not okay. Being angry is okay. Going into another room is okay. But we don't slam the door because you could catch someone's finger in it." Or, "It makes a loud noise and could wake up the baby." Or whatever the reason.

And I think generally parenting for me has always sort of gone like that. And it is not always reactive but a lot of it is quite reactive to how they are behaving. And you try and guide them as best you can. But you never know how they are going to respond in any particular scenario, so it is hard to say, "Be like this," or, "Do this," because none of you know yet.

Luke Jerdy: And is your relationship important in terms of role-modelling to them what a relationship should be?

Sam Abberley: My relationship with my wife?

Luke Jerdy: Yes.

Sam Abberley: It is very important. So we have a few very specific rules. Like we won't argue in front of the children. If there is any sort of disagreement then we will talk about that separately. We will always put them first. We will always listen to the kids before listening to each other. We will always back each other up if we walk in on a scenario. We will never step on each other's toes.

So yes, we have got a few ground rules to try and make sure that we are putting on a united front because we want to show the kids that. It is important for their stability and for their wellbeing and for their sense of place to know that they have got that structure and that stability.

And, yes, absolutely I really want them to see what a positive relationship looks like, and I really want to be that role model. Because I am acutely aware of being a role model. You will find this out, especially as the baby gets older- Is it a boy or a girl did you say?

Luke Jerdy: A boy.

Sam Abberley: A boy? What is his name?

Luke Jerdy: Asa.

Sam Abberley: Okay. So, yes, as Asa gets older he is going to want to do whatever you are doing. (Laughter) Especially as a boy he is going to want to be just like his daddy.

And you are super aware of that. Everything you do they are just watching and absorbing it and becoming it. Maybe not so much at the baby stage, but certainly within a year or so they copy a lot. And yes, you will be aware of it and you will be concerned about it. And definitely that extends to the relationships they have with people. And I want them to see that. It is important.

Conversely, I suppose, when they become teenagers they want the opposite of what you are. (Laughter)

Luke Jerdy: I love that. I think that is really, really good advice in terms of how you role-model your relationship and how you are yourself. And, yes, it is definitely something to consider.

It is partly an amazing thing that he is going to want to be just like his dad, but also you are right. It is a huge- Even when you said it then I was like, "Oh, yes." I smiled, and then I thought, "Oh, God. Actually, that is a really big thing and a really big responsibility."

Sam Abberley: Definitely.

Luke Jerdy: So I guess it is just about navigating it day by day and just being careful of how you come across. And particularly how you are with your partner is really important.

Sam Abberley: You can't police yourself too much though. You have got to be yourself at the end of the day. You have got to be the person that you are. And as long as you are sure of yourself. I think that is equally as important, because you are always second-guessing yourself as a parent and reflecting on things you have said or done and whether it was the right thing. But I think as long as you are yourself and you know your own beliefs then they will pick up the all right stuff.

Luke Jerdy: Yes, it has been an absolute pleasure, Sam, to talk to you and to hear about your life as a father. And it sounds to me like you are doing a fantastic job with brilliant sons.

Sam Abberley: You will see with Asa. If Asa is good you will do a good job. But each child is totally different, and there is only so much you can do. They definitely have their own personalities. I really try hard to raise them the same way. They are so different, and you are just constantly catering to their individual needs. So if you have got a good one in Asa then you will be a good dad. I am sure of it. (Laughter)

Luke Jerdy: That makes a lot of sense. That makes a lot of sense.
(Laughter)

Thanks so much for joining us, mate. It has been a pleasure.

Sam Abberley: No worries. Cheers.

Liz Jones: Thank you, Sam.

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