

WE ARE FAMILY - Season 3, Episode 4: Jack Black

Jack Black:

Hi, my name is Jack Black, and to me, family is unconditional love.

Julia Dennison:

Hello, and welcome to *We Are Family*. I'm your host, Julia Dennison, and today, I'm joined by a true force of nature in comedy, film, music and more. He is the hilarious star of films like *School of Rock*, *Nacho Libre* and the *Kung Fu Panda* series, of which there's a brand new chapter coming out this summer.

But he's also one half of the comedic rock duo, Tenacious D, he's got his own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but most of all, as he'll likely tell you, he's a dad! But seriously, how does a dad get all this energy? I'm hoping that we can find out today. I am so thrilled to welcome the one and only Jack Black to this episode of *We Are Family*.

So because we are parents, I always like to start with talking a little bit about our own upbringings and how they influence the way we parent. What was your childhood like? Were you introduced to creativity really early? Did comedy come naturally to you? Were you always trying to entertain your family and friends? What was it like?

Jack Black:

I think back to my childhood my parents were both full-time aerospace engineers. So it was a little unconventional. They were really progressive. They, they never really told me no. There wasn't a lot of discipline. There was more, just sort of, '60s era free thinking, new age kind of upbringing, which had it's advantages and disadvantages. It was a little chaotic, but, uh, it was also a lot of fun, and, uh, I was able to express myself and my creativity in uh, in cool ways.

Julia Dennison:

Did you feel like when you became a dad, were you conscious of the fact that you wanted to parent exactly the same, differently, or sort of a combination? Middle ground.

Jack Black:

I wanted to do some things a little differently. You know, uh, my parents, uh, were really interesting in their tastes in music and stuff, and, they had a fun sense of adventure, but um, they also argued a lot, and, and I wanted to have a little more of a peaceful, place for, for our kids to, to grow up. And I think we've done that pretty well.

Julia Dennison

Yeah, that's, that's fair enough. I feel like you don't want to burden your kids too much with all the emotions while also showing them how to have emotions. It's that balance.

Jack Black:

Exactly.

Jack Black:

Well, I remember when I was a kid, my dad would say that his dad had a bad temper and he never wanted that to carry over into my childhood. So, he did, you know, raise me differently than his dad did, I had a great childhood. No complaints, but there are a couple things that I'd like to be a little different. I think that's natural. I think all parents are like, you know, take the good, and try to avoid the pitfalls that their parents might have fallen into.

Julia Dennison:

Yeah, so obviously, everyone loves you from the incredible film, *School of Rock*, but I think you weren't a parent yet when you filmed that right? Did you feel like it gave you a little taste of fatherhood when you were acting with all those elementary school kids or-

Jack Black:

Oh my God. I was really-

Julia Dennison:

Did it make you want to be a dad, or like-

Jack Black:

At that point, no. At that point, I was like, I'm not having kids. I'm not getting married and having kids. That's not for me, and I was very intimidated by the kids. I was like, I don't know if I can work with kids. Then, once we got on the set and we had our first read through with the cast, I was like, this is magical. This is going to work. You know, we were all on the same team, and uh, and I was like, what was I afraid of? I was born for this role cause I'm like a kid. You know, I-

Julia Dennison:

Right.

Jack Black:

It was a, kind of a revelation, and I was really glad ... It was a good lesson in, you know, taking the plunge. Just cause you're afraid of a thing doesn't mean it's not going to be a great thing. It was like the best thing in my career.

Julia Dennison:

Totally, and I feel like we, as adults, there's this hierarchy that like we know more than kids, but then so often, I feel like we're taught lessons by kids, and often they know more than we do in a lot of things. Was there anything from that movie you felt like the kids taught you?

Jack Black:

Just the spirit of fun and um, just the energy on the set where in between the takes, when the kids were just hanging out and laughing and horsing around and, uh, yeah, it was more of an energy than it was about specific, like, lessons or things like that.

Julia Dennison:

Yes. Just have more fun, I suppose.

Jack Black:

Yeah, well I mean ... Cause when you go into a production, when you're making a movie or putting on a show, there's a bond there that's like ... Cause it's a scary job. Y-, it- ... When that camera's rolling and it's your time to say your lines, it takes a lot of courage to be able to face your inner demons and the terror of the moment.

Julia Dennison:

For sure. Yeah.

Jack Black:

And so, we'll always have that, and to this day, we have that awesome experience in common, and we look forward to our reunions. We got a 20 year reunion coming up next year.

Julia Dennison:

Okay. That is blowing my mind.

Jack Black:

So we're looking forward to that.

Julia Dennison:

Oh my God, that is so awesome.

Jack Black:

We're friends for life.

Julia Dennison:

That is ... Of course, it is a family, right? And we talk about that on the podcast, your family's not always your biological family.

Jack Black:

Right?

Julia Dennison:

So *Kung-Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight*, as parents we obviously love a Netflix series, so we're so excited to have that come to Netflix on July 14th. Can you tell us what, if there's any kind of like, favorite storylines or good lessons to parents who want to tee it up for their kids on Netflix?

Jack Black:

Well, a cool thing about this one is it ups the stakes from the movies. The movies, all three of them, all took place in China, and had, you know, these adventures and, and journeys that were local to China. This time, it kind of broadens, and it's more of a global story, and the arc takes place over the course of, uh, you know, a lot more episodes.

There's a new character, this really strong woman character who comes from England, and she's played by Rita Ora, brilliantly, and she's a knight, and she's mysterious and she has secrets. And the plot thickens throughout the course of the series, and she has highs and lows emotionally, and she's got a lot of personal growth. She's, in a way, the heart and soul of the show, and it was really cool to share the journey with her.

Julia Dennison:

That's awesome.

Jack Black:

I think people are going to love it.

Julia Dennison:

Yay, I'm so excited. So think about music, you're obviously a bonafide rockstar

Jack Black:
Oh.

Julia Dennison:

Yes, you are. And your wife Tanya Haden is like, you know, music royalty. What was music like for your own family with your kids growing up? Did you have any favorite bands you'd watch together or, or listen together, and did you have any kind of, like, movies about music that you loved to watch together? Obviously, besides your own.

Jack Black:

Yeah, we liked to jam out a lot and listen to music and dance around to music a lot when, when the boys were younger, in their single digits, but now that they're teenagers, they, they can't stand my musical taste.

And they are always just headphones and not even letting me hear what they're listening to.

Julia Dennison:

Oh my goodness.

Jack Black:

But, back in the day, yeah, there was a lot of dancing around to Weezer, uh that was probably our favorite.

Julia Dennison:

I love that. Any, any tips on parenting teens cause we just interviewed Michael Ian Black for this podcast, and he's got teens, and he said that you can see a lot of their toddler in them.

Jack Black:

Yes.

Julia Dennison:

Do you feel like-

Jack Black:

Oh my God.

Julia Dennison:

Do you feel like you see a lot of them as like ... Is it like revisiting them as babies?

Jack Black:

I mean, look, we have fun adventures, but it gets harder and harder to get quality time with the kids as they get older cause it's, it's just like, I'm not a kid anymore. I don't want to do that kid stuff anymore, and you're like, "oh no, but still be my kid. We can still go to Disneyland can't we?" "No, it's not cool anymore." Ugh. But that's just part of growing up, right?

Julia Dennison:

Mm-hmm.

Jack Black:

It's like, you got to, you got to let them leave the nest.

Julia Dennison:

You do, and-

Jack Black:

It's painful, but it's what's important.

Julia Dennison:

I get it. We talk about that a lot on the podcast. You got to just be there for them even if it's not always easy, and that is parenthood.

Jack Black, thank you so much for coming on *We Are Family*. This has been so great to chat.

Jack Black:

Thank you.

Julia Dennison:

Take care.

Jack Black:

I've got all my sisters and me.

Julia Dennison:

Thank you so much.

Thanks so much for listening. Be sure to follow *We Are Family* on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you listen so you don't miss an episode.

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This season of *We Are Family* is presented by me, Julia Dennison, and produced by Jim Hanke. Editing is by Jason Mack, and thanks also to our production team at Pod People: Rachael King, Matt Sav and Danielle Roth.