

Ep #5: Getting Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

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Welcome to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*, a podcast for parents that are tired of yelling, threatening, and punishing their kids. Join mom and master certified parent coach Lisa Smith as she gives you actionable step-by-step strategies that'll help you transform your household from chaos to cooperation. Let's dive in.

Well hey there. Welcome back. Oh my goodness. I am so excited about today's episode. Wow is it going to be a good one. My goal with today's episode is to help you understand where your kid's big feelings are coming from, help you understand how to be less triggered by them. Who doesn't want that? And number three, what to do about them. Right. You're going to leave here today with an action plan. Where do my kid's big feelings come from? How can I not be so triggered by them? What the heck do I do Lisa? Help me out. All right. You guys ready? Let's dig in.

So let me share this. Peaceful parenting does not mean your kids are peaceful. Let's bust that illusion right now. Our kids are on a journey the first 25 years of their lives to understand the world, understand people around them, and understand their feelings and needs. Because the brain isn't fully developed until the age of 25. Yes, yes. I said 25 years old. That journey is really, really, really long as the brain continues to grow and develop.

As a result, our kids are often trying to navigate the world, connect the dots, learn feelings, learn their needs, and learn how to react to different feelings and needs. Now if they're lucky, they have someone showing them—also known as modeling—for them where these reactions come from and the fact that they come from feelings and needs.

By the way, the only way to teach your kids this is to show or model. You cannot teach your kids by telling, yelling, lecturing, or punishing. You can't teach them by saying one thing and modeling another. Now I promise to

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cover that whole ball of wax in a future episode but sufficed to say we're going to have more conversations about modeling.

Let's get back to those big, gigantic feelings our kids have. You know the storming, the melting down, the big feelings. Let's talk more about that. I want to begin by working our way backwards. This lesson is about getting comfortable with being uncomfortable. "Say what? What Lisa? You want me to what?" Yep. I want you to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

In order to talk about this, we really have to start with talking about our kid's really big feelings. If your kids have big feelings and even bigger storms, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Yep. I got one. He's got big feelings and big storms. I imagine that one of the reasons that you're still listening is because your strong-willed kid or kids who have a lot of opinions and reactions can get really big and loud and have really big emotions, which I call storming. You with me?

So maybe in your household there's yelling. Maybe there's melting down. Maybe there's slamming doors. Maybe there's sassing. Maybe there's eyerolling. Maybe there's crying. Maybe there's arguing. Maybe there's fighting. Maybe there's a lot of drama. Maybe your child is trying to get the last word in. Can I get an amen if you resonate with one of these? All right. I call all of that storming.

What I really, really, really want you to hear is that all of this, all storming is an expression of our kid's big feelings that come from unmet needs. All storming is an expression of our kid's big feelings that come from unmet needs. For some reason, I don't know whether its brain wiring or DNA makeup or the characteristics of just being a strong-willed kid, but strong-willed kids feel their feelings intensely.

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Their highs are high, and their lows are low. They feel a lot of joy, you know it. When they feel a lot of anger, they know it. When they are pleased or proud or looking forward to something, you know it, right? Anything they feel is often really big and is expressed in a really big way.

One of the first things we really need to understand is that they're just expressing their feelings. Our number one job as parents, I beg you to hear this. Our number one job is to not take their big emotions personally. It's not about us. They're not doing anything to us. They're not trying to be difficult or disrespectful or unkind or give us a hard time. They're not trying to do any of that. What they're doing is they're having a hard time. There's this saying that I absolutely love. It says our kids are not giving us a hard time, they're having a hard time. Truer words have never been spoken.

So let me repeat this so you make sure you get it. Anything they feel is an expression of unmet feelings and needs. One of the first things we really need to understand is that they're just expressing their feelings. Our number one job as a parent is to not take the storming personally. It's not about us. They're not doing anything to us. They're not giving us a hard time. They're having a hard time.

When your child is storming, they are speaking the language of help. What they are saying to you is, "If I could help myself, I would have done it already. If I could calmly ask you for help, I would do that. This is the only way right now that I know to ask you for help." So this is really, really, really important that you remember this. That your child isn't giving you a hard time. He or she is having a hard time, and this is their language of help. This is the expression of the hard time that they're having.

The only way they know how to ask for help in this moment is to yell, cry, meltdown, throw themselves on the ground, eye roll, sass, slam the door,

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scream at the top of their lungs. It is critical that you not take his or her actions personally.

You see, once you understand this everything, everything gets easier as a parent. It gets much easier to deal with these storms. It's much easier to connect with your kids. It becomes easier to hold space for their feelings and let them storm. Once you understand where the storm is coming from, you no longer want to shut the storm down out of anger or judge it. Of course you may not like it, right? It's not fun. It's challenging. It's not comfortable, but you can see the purpose of it.

Much like when they first came home from the hospital, the baby storms right. Crying is storming. So I'm going to call it storming. The baby storms or cries to let you know that he or she needs help. What are they doing? They're speaking the language of help in the only way they're capable of doing it at that point. Ironically, most of us have so much empathy for the storming baby. We immediately go to it. We comfort the baby. We empathize. We play detective until we figure out what they need. Remember those days?

Those days might have been long and tiring and frustrating, but my guess is you weren't taking the storming, i.e. crying, personally. You weren't saying, "There goes my two-month-old again giving me a hard time." Or "Darn it, why does my six-month-old disrespect me by storming every night at 6:00", right? It's hard to even say it and take myself seriously.

When they're real little babies and they're speaking the language of help, which is storming, we don't take it personally. Then for some reason once our kids become verbal, we often start assuming that the storming is personal and something they are doing to us.

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I don't care what age your kids are. Two, eight, nine, 11, 13, 15, 17, 22. They're all speaking the language of help because they have an underdeveloped brain. Sure, the storming might look different. Door slamming versus crying. It might be about something different, gaming versus a cookie. But it's still all storming. All storming is our kids speaking a language of help. "Help me sort out my feelings. Help me figure out what I need. If I could help myself, I would. If I could calmly ask for help, I would. This is the only way I can raise the red flag. Please help me."

I like to illustrate these lessons with an example, so it deepens the learning. So I want to take a moment now to show you how quickly you can make a change in your parenting. How you can redirect the storming and not take it personally. I'm going to share with you a story about Tiffany and Noah. Tiffany is a mom with an eight-year-old strong-willed child, and Tiffany often feels Noah is disrespecting her.

Tiffany and her husband were not on the same page, and that often created a lot of tension in their home. Not to mention Tiffany often feels stressed when she's late for things. When she's stressed, she often turns towards yelling, threatening, and punishing Noah which she says never feels good.

So this is an actual email I received from Tiffany shortly after working together. As I read this to you, I want you to look for how Tiffany was reacting to Noah's storming initially. Then I want you to notice how she stopped taking his actions personally. And finally, how she went underneath the behavior to the unmet feelings and needs. And as a result, ended up connecting deeply to Noah.

So Tiffany wrote, "Lisa, I had a great learning moment today with Noah. I picked him up from school. He was aggressive, bossy, and crabby. He

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threw his backpack at me and ran off to the car. Well, let me tell you something Lisa. I was not about to pick that backpack up. I was getting really worked up. As I was walking back to the car, I was thinking to myself Noah, you are being such a brat. I can't believe you're giving me a hard time today. I marched all the way back to the car and told him it was his responsibility to grab that backpack and bring it to the car.

“I will tell you Lisa, he was not being very nice at all. On top of it, I had the car running and it looked like it was going to rain. I let him know that we were not going to get a new backpack if he left it out in the rain and it got ruined. I started getting really worked up. Then I heard your voice in my head Lisa. I heard you telling me to get curious not furious. So I took a couple deep breathes. I decided not to take any of this personally. I got in the car. I shifted. I looked at Noah and I said, ‘Hey Noah, you seem frustrated. What’s going on?’

“Oh my gosh Lisa. Noah immediately started crying. I'm talking big, big, big tears. And said, ‘No one wanted to play tag with me today at recess mommy. I had to play all alone. I didn’t want to play hide and seek like the rest of the kids. I wanted to play tag, and no one would listen to me or do what I wanted to do.’”

So Tiffany said she responded, “Oh buddy, that’s a bummer. So you felt left out and alone? Lisa, he looked up at me with these big eyes. Like I had just solved all of his problems. ‘Yes mommy, that’s exactly it.’ So we talked for a moment, and then I said hey, let’s walk back together and get your backpack. While we were walking, we talked about frustration and how I sometimes feel left out and frustrated.

“Then I gave an example of how I feel frustrated when he doesn’t listen to me when it’s time to get in the shower. He kind of laughed. I'm eager to see

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what happens tonight with the shower, but in the meantime, we connected, and it felt great. It was amazing to understand what was really going on for him when he threw that backpack down on the ground and ran away.”

Do you have goosebumps right now? I mean wow, right? Can you see how Tiffany was taking Noah’s storming personally? And how it wasn’t serving her or him? How she was angry and reactive and then she shifted. She got curious, not furious. She got comfortable with Noah’s big emotions. That allowed her to get curious not furious. Didn’t you just feel yourself soften the minute you heard him say no one wanted to play tag with him at recess and no one would listen to him?

By not taking his emotions personally, Tiffany was available to play detective and help him understand he was feeling the feeling of frustration. Later, I’m sure she talked to him about not throwing the backpack when we feel frustrated. But in that moment in the car, she was able to just be his safe place for him to regulate and calm down, for him to and calm down, for him to connect the dots between, “Oh when I feel frustrated, this is how I act. I felt frustrated because no one would play with me.”

He was carrying that around with him all afternoon. He needed a safe place to talk that through and regulate. His SOS, his cry for help was the big emotions. Was the throwing the backpack and storming off. Can you see this? Can you imagine how he felt seen, heard, and valued? How Noah felt connected to his mom. I imagine he felt like, “Wow, she gets me.”

I want to just give you a moment to absorb this. I want this for everyone of us, and I really want this for our kids. I dream of raising a generation of kids that feel seen, heard, and valued. Let me say. If you can get comfortable with your kid’s big emotions, you are so much more available to help them through the storm. You can be the safe place for your kids to regulate and

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calm down, and to move to the other side of the storm where they can assess the unmet need. You can do this just like Tiffany and Noah. All it takes is to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

A lot of times our kid's big emotions make us really genuinely uncomfortable. I get it. That used to be me 100%. For many of us, our brains go to this place of being triggered with their big emotions because we weren't allowed to do this as kids. Maybe your parents would have not tolerated that storming for even one minute and it makes you cringe even thinking about it.

Maybe you can't even imagine what it would be like to not only tolerate but hold space for your kids through the storms. Because maybe you weren't allowed to express big emotions. If you even tried to express them, you would have been punished or shamed or embarrassed. Maybe up until this podcast today you didn't even know why your kids were storming.

I certainly didn't. I had no idea why my kid was storming before I switched on to peaceful parenting. I had absolutely no idea. I will confess I used to take every one of his storms and big emotions completely 100% personally. Why is he doing this? How dare he? I can't believe this. Not again.

Or maybe your brain thinks they're acting this way because they're being manipulative or disrespectful or giving you a hard time or being uncooperative. Yeah? Well, the problem is these judgements or these thoughts that we have trigger us and allow us to be wildly uncomfortable with our kid's big emotions. Sometimes it's also fear of judgement or embarrassment or fear of where all this might lead. Yeah? This acts as a really big trigger for fear or anger. Then we jump in and start storming right alongside our children.

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So one of the takeaways from today's podcast is to get comfortable with your kid's big emotions, and for you to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. There are times when you might be uncomfortable because of the storming, because of the way it presents, where it presents, how it presents, how long it presents. So it's really helpful to remember to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

I really want you to remember that your kid is not giving you a hard time. He or she is having a hard time. Try to remove the judgment from the situation. The judgment is what is triggering your fear and anger. We're working on getting curious, not furious. We're working together on going underneath the behavior to the feelings and needs much like Tiffany did with Noah.

In order to do that, we have to number one remember to not take their storming personally. Number two get comfortable with their feelings. Leave space for them, acknowledge them, let them have their feelings. Number three, we need to understand that they're not giving us a hard time. They're having a hard time. We need to be really comfortable with them expressing their feelings in a way that allows them to be seen, heard, and understood.

So the takeaway from today's lesson is to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Get comfortable with your kid's big emotions. Understand they're having a hard time not giving us a hard time, so they feel seen, heard, and valued which leads to deep connection. Okay. Until next time, I'm wishing us all peaceful parenting.

To celebrate the launch of the *Real World Peaceful Parenting* podcast, I'm going to be giving away a \$50 gift card to one of my many Peaceful Parent courses. I'm going to be giving away one gift card to 10 lucky listeners who subscribe, rate, and review the show on Apple podcasts. It doesn't have to

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be a five-star review, although I sure hope you loved the show. I want your honest feedback so that I can create an awesome show that provides tons of value.

Visit www.thepeacefulparent.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. That's www.thepeacefulparent.com/podcastlaunch. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode. So stay tuned.

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