

Ep #6: Do THIS to Say Goodbye to Parent Guilt!



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.

Welcome, welcome, welcome. I am so excited to be here with you today. I want to know how's it going. How are things? I am so pleased to announce my son, who is 16 and in grade 10 in high school, is back in school full time. Which is really great for all of us, but especially him.

As we dig into today's content, as I was preparing to talk to you today, I realized that we are about 10 weeks into 2021. So I did the math. We're about 20% into the new year, which means we still have 80% of the year to go. I want to invite you to take a second and ask yourself what do you want your parenting to look like in the coming year? What do you want it to look like?

For me, I want there to be less grilling, coming in hot as I call it, from me with my son. Sometimes he comes home. He's 16. He's got a lot going on. There's a small window to catch up with him over. I notice that I tend to come in really hot and grill him about how was school? What's your schedule? Do you have homework? What's happening? What are you doing? I don't think it's really how I want to parent. I want to be much more conversational with him. Much more of a flow and a give and take.

So one of the things that I'm really working on this year is just being more conversational and less grilling. That's definitely something I want my parenting to look like in the coming year. So I'm curious as to what you want your parenting to look like in the coming year.

I also want to say thank you to all of you who have rated and reviewed the podcast. The feedback has been incredibly helpful. I also want to thank you

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because when you leave a review, when you rate or review the podcast, what you're really doing is you're paying it forward to other families. When you leave a review on Apple Podcast or other podcast sites, that company is much more likely to recommend the podcast when people are looking for a parenting resource.

So, again, when you take the time to leave a review, subscribe, or rating you're paying it forward to other families and other children who really need their parents to hear this information. So from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

I also want you to know that I'm purposely keeping these episodes short and sweet. This has always been a mission of mine. When I thought about putting a podcast together, I really wanted to keep it short and sweet. I really want this to be something that you can get in, you can listen to the tips and tools, you can get out. It's simple. You can take notes. You can listen while driving home from work when the day comes when we're actually all driving home from you. You can put the tips and tools and support and coaching that I recommend to work immediately.

So I wanted to give a shoutout for Bdalea who left a review and said, "I love that the episodes are short and filled with action items to try." So thank you so much Bdalea for that beautiful review that you left. I really appreciate it. Again, I appreciate every one of the ratings, reviews, and subscribes that you are all helping me with and leaving behind for others to see.

So today I want to talk about mistakes. Mistakes, losing it, and guilt as a parent. Have you been there? Because I know I sure have. I was inspired to talk about today's episode after a friend of mine posted something recently on her Facebook page. She wrote, "I totally screwed up as a mom this morning, and the mom guilt is killing me." She wrote, "The pressure of everyone at home 24/7, online schooling, my husband working from home

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on top of the everyday stuff was building. I didn't notice how bad it had become."

She wrote, "I should have known something was off when I bought ice cream last night. That only happens when I'm stressed because I don't even like ice cream that much." Then she went on to say, "My son did mess up, and I went into full on lawyer mode. Which is great as a lawyer and awful as a parent to sweet boys. In the light of a new day, my mom guilt makes me want to go pick my boys up from school and take them to Disney World." Then she wrote, "Overkill?"

I can totally feel her pain and heartbreak. Can't you? I can feel her regret. Who can relate? Because I sure can. I imagine you can because we've all been there. Even the most peaceful of parents occasionally loses their shiz. I know I do even to this day, and it feels awful every time. Yep, every time. Let me add as a side note. It's not good for your child to have perfect parents. Or for them to think you think you're a perfect parent. Because then they never get a chance to see you modelling forgiveness and repair and mistakes and accountability. All kids learn accountability and forgiveness from modelling from their parents.

So the real question is what to do once you've had the meltdown? Once you've lost your shiz and gone into attack mode, then what? Disney World? New toy? Favorite treat? No, no, and no. Those are bribes to cover the pain and sometimes leave a hangover feeling for both you and your kids. None of those help prevent the next meltdown, and bribes don't create connection. Remember, connection is when the other person, in this case your child, feels—and that's the operative word here—feels seen, heard, and valued.

"Okay Lisa. So what should I do?" Well, let me tell you. I'd like you to consider my four-step process for repair and recovery. Step one is take a deep breath and forgive yourself, which is really a way to say regulate your

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emotions. Really forgive yourself by having empathy and compassion for yourself and this hard job that is parenting.

Step two tell your child you're sorry. Explain what happened for you such as, "Stress got the best of me. I was doing too many things at once. I forgot that you asked me to get you some posterboard and I forgot to write it down." We want to apologize that way so that our kids know it's on us and not them. When you sincerely apologize, you're modeling responsibility and forgiveness for them. Kids really, really, really need to have forgiveness and apologizing modeled for them with ease and sincerity and often in order for them to learn it.

Now a word of caution. Don't jump into step number two until you've completed step number one. It is really, really, really important that you take the time to need to forgive yourself and regulate your emotions. The best way to do that is have empathy and compassion for yourself. Then, once we feel regulated and ready, we approach our kids, and we apologize, and we explain.

Now, I beg you. Don't launch into explaining what they did wrong. That's not an apology. Really, really, really resist them temptation. Because if you shroud blame in the form of an apology, what's going to happen is it's going to break down the trust and the connection, and it's going to create shame and blame. Let me repeat this. I beg you. Don't launch into explaining what your kids did wrong. Really, really, really resist the temptation to blame them packaged up in an apology.

In step number two, you are going to your kids and you are taking responsibility for your actions. You're not manipulating the conversation and twisting it around with something like, "I'm sorry, but you made me do this." Or "I'm sorry, but if you wouldn't have done this then I wouldn't have done that." We're not doing that. It's okay to explain. It's important to explain, but don't ruin a good apology by making excuses for your

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behavior. Your kids can sniff that out a mile away. A mile away. Then you're modeling that for them instead of taking accountability, responsibility, and sincerely apologizing for your part.

I also don't want you to apologize as a way of justifying your actions. "I had such a hard day. Everything at work went wrong. Then you were having a hard time settling down and I got frustrated. I was at the end of my rope, so I yelled at you. I know I shouldn't yell, but you need to listen when I tell you to settle down." See, that's apologizing but justifying your actions in the apology. We don't want to do that.

Let me read that apology again so you can catch the subtle justification. "I had a hard day and everything at work went wrong. Then you were having a hard time settling down, and I got frustrated. I was at the end of my rope. So I yelled at you. I know I shouldn't yell, but you need to listen when I tell you to settle down." I like to say there should never be a 'but' in an apology ever. Ever. Ever. 'I'm sorry' can be a complete sentence.

Please never apologize expecting or trying to motivate your kids to apologize. "I'm sorry I yelled at you. Now I need you to apologize you didn't settle down." That's not how apologies work. That's not us getting rid of the parent guilt, and it's definitely not us showing our kids how to take responsibility for their actions. If you want to address their actions, you do it at a different time in a separate conversation.

Back to the example above. Later you might say, "Hey, I notice that you're having some trouble settling down when I pick you after school each day or right before bedtime. Can we talk about a plan or something we can try to help you settle down?" Right? That's a separate conversation. Step number two is you're just apologizing to your kids for what your actions were. You're taking responsibility, and you're just apologizing with ease and grace. And showing them what that looks like.

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Then step number three is you let your kids know what you will try to do better next time. You're not making promises. You're not making guarantees. You're just letting them know, "I will try to do better. Here's what I'm going to try to do next time. When you have trouble settling down, I'm going to take a break and walk away for a few minutes. Then when I'm calm, I'll rejoin you. When you're having a meltdown and having a really hard time and I feel myself on the verge of yelling back at you, I'm going to walk away for a few minutes until I feel myself under control."

You're letting your kids know what you will try to do better next time. "When I make a commitment to you that I'll pick up posterboard for you for your project, I'll try to write it down or set a timer in my phone, so I remember to get the posterboard at the grocery store." Yeah? That feels really good. Because you're not guaranteeing. You're not promising. You're human, and you're going to do the best you can. I recognize what went wrong and I'm taking responsibility for it, and I'm letting you know that I will try to do better next time.

Then step number four, which is as important as one, two, or three. Step number four is you're going to move on and be fully present with your kids and be fully present in the moment. I was just talking today to a client who had a meltdown a couple days ago with her kids. She's been feeling a ton of guilt since then. She apologized. She's incredible regretful. She's very sad and sorry about what happened, but she was really struggling with step number four. With moving on and being full present with her kids three days later.

The problem is your kids are ready to move on. They've forgotten about what's happened. They've forgiven you. Kids are living in the moment. They're in the present. What they want you to do is forgive yourself so that, "You can be fully present with me and attend to my current feelings and needs. Maybe I need some attention. Maybe I need to talk about a

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problem. Maybe I need to have some fun. Maybe I need help with my homework.”

If you're still living in the past at the mistake that happened three days ago. If you're still ruminating on your guilt, you're not able to come and be fully present and in the moment with your kids. That is what they really want. So I like to say step number four is to move on and be fully present with your children. Come and be with them right now in the moment. You can even seal the deal with a hug, a high five, or a big smile or all three.

When you give them that hug, that high five, or that big smile, let that be your signal to move on and be fully present. It doesn't mean you're not taking responsibility. It doesn't mean you're not going to do better next time. It doesn't mean you might not think about what triggered you in the first place. You're not going to continue to hold on to the guilt. Guilt is the enemy of the effective parent.

So if three days later you're still ruminating on something that happened, you're not present and effective with your kids. You're not in the moment meeting their needs right now. So when you do step one, two, three, and four it's like Disney World for you and them. Here's the deal. Mistakes happen. Things build up. We lose it. We are human, and we are flawed. And we are stressed. And we are often triggered while parenting. So we lose it occasionally.

As I mentioned earlier, the irony here is that it really wouldn't be good for your child to have perfect parents. Because then he or she would never see you role modeling self-forgiveness and repair. Connection is repair and recovery. Feeling seen, heard, and valued happens when we repair and recover with the four-step process with our kids.

Now you all know I love giving you some examples so that you can see or visualize or imagine these tools in action. So let's say maybe the 20th time

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in one evening your five-year-old got out of bed last Thursday night and you finally lost it. You might say, "I was pretty mad before when you wouldn't stay in bed and I yelled at you. I'm really sorry. You don't deserve to be yelled at. I will work harder at staying calm. Can I have a hug?" After the hug, you say to your child, "Let's get you back to bed."

Then maybe the next morning at breakfast you talk about ways that your child can stay in bed. Strategies. Maybe right as you're getting ready for bed the next evening, you talk about the importance of staying in bed. Right? That apology that I just described covers the four steps.

You take a minute to regulate yourself. Regulate your emotions. Take a couple deep breaths and calm down. Then you go to your kid and you take responsibility in a way that a five-year-old can hear. "I was pretty mad when you wouldn't stay in bed. And I yelled at you, and I'm really sorry. You don't deserve to be yelled at. I'll work harder at staying calm. Can I have a hug? All right sweetie. Let's get you back to bed."

Or maybe your kid told you after school she had no homework. At 8:30 that night, you walk into her room seeing her frantically doing her homework at her desk. You instantly think, "I cannot believe she lied to me. I am so stinking mad at her." And you explode. And you tell her that she's lost her phone for a month. You two get into a big screaming match, and you say some really unkind things to her during the battle. Okay. I get it.

So using the four-step process, maybe you take a minute and go to your bedroom. You wash your hands, or you drink some water, and you take a couple of deep breaths. You get your emotions under control. You realize that you're upset because she told you she didn't have any homework and you got surprised. You were triggered from her lying. Your brain keeps trying to go back to, "I can't believe I said that to her. I can't believe she lied to me. I can't believe I said that. I can't believe we got in that battle."

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Okay. You take a few minutes to digest all of this. You really wait until you feel calm, and you feel like you have your emotions regulated. Then and only then do you go back to her room, knock on the door, and ask, “Hey, can we talk for a minute?”

Then before she says anything you say, “I’m really sorry that I said some not so nice things to you. I was surprised and upset when I realized you were in here doing homework after you told me today you had no homework. It’s not an excuse and I take responsibility for my words. You didn’t deserve for me to say those things to you. Next time when I’m really triggered, I’m going to walk away until I calm down, and then I’m going to come and discuss the situation with you.”

You just give her a few minutes to digest that. You’re taking responsibility. You’re not manipulating her. You’re not making her feel bad. You’re not telling her that you got upset and yelled and said unkind things because she lied. You’re not even drawing attention to the big dramatic emotional words that she lied. You simply use the four-step process to take responsibility and apologize for your part. Right?

Step one, you regulate yourself. Step two, you tell your child that you are sorry. Step three, you let your kids know that you will try to do better next time. Step four, you move on and be fully present with them in the moment. In this situation, in this example, later when you both feel calm and regulated you can have a separate conversation about why your daughter lied to you and said she didn’t have any homework. Maybe she forgot. Maybe she didn’t realize she had homework. Maybe she didn’t hear it in class. Maybe she avoided telling you because she wanted to do something else after school.

That’s a legitimate concern and conversation to have after you’ve used the repair and recovery tools to reconnect with her. You’re going to get so much further in these conversations later after you’ve repaired and

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recovered and drop the guilt. Because remember. Step number four is you're going to come and be fully present with your daughter, right. You're going to come and connect with her. That's going to feel amazing for both of you. You're going to be in the moment and fully present with her.

That's going to give you two an opportunity to talk about why she said she didn't have homework after school, and it's 8:30 at night and now she's doing homework. It's going to allow you to get curious, not furious, and play detective to really understand what happened. Then figure out how we're going to handle this differently next time. I love this so much. It's so powerful and helpful. It's such a great way to eliminate the parent guilt when we have that occasional time that we have a meltdown or lose our shiz.

Using the four-step process teaches our kids so many valuable lessons. It teaches them accountability. It teaches them how to gracefully recover from mistakes. It teaches them forgiveness. It teaches them to take responsibility. It teaches them how to brainstorm on doing better next time. And it teaches them communication skills. So the next time you lose it, and we all know we will, and the parent guilt mounts, try the four-step repair and recovery process. It will feel like you've both taken a trip to Disney World. I promise. 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 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

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www.thepeacefulparent.com/podcastlaunch. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode. So stay tuned.

Thanks for listening to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. If you want more info on how you can transform your parenting, visit thepeacefulparent.com. See you soon.