

## Ep #12: The Fantasy of Parenting



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With Your Host  
**Lisa Smith**

[Real World Peaceful Parenting](#) with 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. Thank you so much for joining me today. I want to begin today's episode by giving a Real World Peaceful Parenting shoutout to Jpsuperstar for leaving a review on Apple podcasts.

This parent wrote, "Lisa, I'm a huge fan. I've read your book, took some of your courses, was involved in a couple of your social media challenges and it all has changed my life. This podcast is a mini refresher course I need every Wednesday. Usually by Monday the peaceful parent in me has left the building and then, boom. Wednesday morning just when I need you most, there you are. Have you ever considered compiling a daily parenting motivational text message? I'd sign up in a heartbeat. Thank you for all you do and thank you for helping me realize I'm not a horrible parent and for giving me tools that make parenting easier."

I love this review so much Jpsuperstar. First of all, thank you so much for pointing out that you've been following me for a while, and that the podcast is a mini refresher course. Because that is exactly what we intended it to be. I also love that the podcast is helping you realize that you're not a horrible parent, and that the tools are really making your parenting easier. That is 100% the mission of the podcast. So thank you for that feedback. I am so grateful Jpsuperstar.

I want to thank all of you who have rated and reviewed the podcast. I am forever grateful. Again, I appreciate the feedback. More importantly I want to thank you because when you rate or review the podcast, what you're really doing is you're paying it forward to other families.

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I know I've mentioned this before. When you leave a review on Apple podcast or another podcast site, that service is much more likely to recommend the podcast when a person is looking for a parenting resource. So when you take the time to rate and review, 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 for helping change the world one family at a time.

Today we're going to talk about the fantasy of parenting. What? You're like, "What Lisa? We're going to what?" Hang with me here. No sometimes as parents, well, I think pretty much every time. When we find out that we're pregnant and we're going to have a baby, there's this fairytale or this fantasy that comes up. We have this fantasy of what parenting is going to be like. This vision, this dream, this fantasy is perfect.

We read *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, and we think we've got it all covered. Am I right? The nursery is decorated just so. We've got the bag packed for the hospital with all the recommended items. We bought the highest rated digital thermometer possible. We've learned how to install the car seat, and we're ready to go. We're ready to do this thing. We're going to do this parenting thing, and we're going to do it perfectly.

Then you have a kid. Who seems to not have read all the books on the kid's behavior, and who is forging his own path bravely and with huge determination. Who doesn't give in, back down, relinquish, submit, or comply. You got one of those in your home? Are you like, "Oh yes Lisa. I so understand what you're talking about." Then you, my friend, have a strong willed kid or two.

Have you ever wondered, "Hey, how come there's no book called *What to Expect When You Have a Teen Called Malcolm*" or insert your own kid's name, right? Right? I mean seriously. Frustration, by definition, is a gap

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between expectation and reality. Frustration is a gap between expectation and reality. The bigger the gap, the bigger the frustration.

So if you want less frustration in your parenting, well then, we simply need to close the gap. How do we do that you ask? Great question. The best way to close the gap is to examine and then drop the expectation or the fantasy of how this is supposed to go or who my kid is supposed to be. Or how they are supposed to act or react or show up. How I'm supposed to parent this kid. We have this expectation of how this is going to go.

You know I thought I was going to birth this really sweet little girl who was going to sit in the corner at this little wooden table and look at her soft toys all day and color within the lines and look up at me and smile adoringly. We'd bake together. We'd laugh when accidentally we got flour on our noses as light streamed through the kitchen window.

I'd teach her some cool science experiments and read her some books about brave girls who did big things. She'd be inspired to create a beautiful bold life. Read *Little Women* together. She'd be like Beth with her selflessness and Jo with her creativity. It would be an easy life of sunshine and fireflies and smores from the bonfire. And she would do everything I asked the first time without any resistance or pushback. It makes me laugh just saying it out loud.

Well, then I birthed a boy who is a full contact sport. Who, let me tell you, is not taking my shiz at all. My son has no problem challenging me when I'm wrong or when he doesn't agree. He has no problem making sure that he is heard and has a say. He has strong boundaries and strong convictions about the right way to do things. Honestly, I wouldn't have it any other way now. But boy, in the beginning it was rough. The frustration was big because the gap between expectation and reality was huge.

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One of the first steps that I really had to do in this path to peaceful parenting is I had to drop the fantasy and come to terms with the reality. What I know after working with hundreds of families around the world is that sometimes for us as parents, there has to be a letting go or a mourning of the expectation that we had around this whole parenting thing and an acceptance of what we do have.

Sometimes you're not even conscious of your expectations. Releasing your frustrations, closing the gap between expectation and reality might require some soul searching. So step one is to ask yourself what was my expectation? What was the fantasy I created around how this was going to go? Then you want to ask yourself okay what is really happening? What is the reality. To decrease your frustration, you want to close the gap between the expectation and the reality.

Let me illustrate what I mean with an example. One of the moms that I worked with recently was frustrated with her son around homework. Like really, really, really frustrated with him on a daily basis. The frustration usually lead to some big storming on her part as well as his.

After some soul searching, she realized that her expectation was that her son would come home from school everyday about doing his homework. I mean really excited. Delighted, eager, excited. And would be completely open to all of her help and suggestions. She, herself, after some soul searching realized that she wished that she had a mom that would sit with her for hours right by her side quietly while she did her homework when she was her son's age.

Reality check. Her son is not excited about doing homework at all. Ever. He does not want to come home from school and hit the books immediately while she sits quietly by his side. I mean not many kids do, but this boy really didn't want to do homework.

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So after her realization of the fantasy and working on decreasing the gap between expectation and reality, she committed to letting him have his own experience and emotions around homework. It's imperfect, but he's able to get his homework done. By decreasing or releasing her expectation, her frustration around the situation lessened. Much to her surprise, the struggle around the homework decreased significantly. And, as a bonus, the storming between the two of them went away.

Now maybe being a strong willed kid would not have been tolerated in your house when you grew up. You're working really hard to provide a more accepting environment for your strong willed kids. So this bewilders you that your kids show up this way with resistance, and arguing, and really bucking up against the system.

You have an expectation that because you're determined to parent differently that your kid would automatically be a compliant child. Maybe you were the strong willed child when you were younger, and you think about the pain you caused yourself. Because you want to save your kid from himself, you expect him to listen to you because you can help him, and you know better.

Well, I firmly believe that often the universe doesn't give us what we want. It gives us what we need. Parenting is no different. Sometimes what we need is a child or two that teaches or guides us. Sometimes we need a child who breaks the mold or does things differently. Sometimes we need a child who helps us heal old wounds and shows us a new way in the world. I am absolutely certain that we don't always get what we want. But when it comes to the spirit of our children, we get what we need. So as I said, frustration is a gap between expectation and reality.

This isn't to say that we don't love our children. This is in no way up for debate. I know that you love your child or children with your entire heart. I

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mean I'm pretty sure that even if things are really tough for you right now, that you love and adore your kids very much. I know that I adore my son. It really did help me when I let go of the fantasy of how this is supposed to go. When I released the expectation of what this was supposed to look like. Because the expectation was a trigger for me. It triggered me very quickly when Malcolm was little, and he was melting down. Or he was not doing what I asked. Or he was not doing things my way.

You see, when we let go of the idea of how things should be and we allow our kids to be who they are, it sets up a space for us to be patient and understanding. For us to question our expectations of them. For us to understand our quirks, and for us to see the strengths that we might have missed otherwise.

This doesn't mean that if you have a kid that wants to break all the rules and smash through all of the limits that you need to let go of those rules or limits. You get to set boundaries. You get to set limits that peacefully stick. It does mean that you can look at the situation with an underlying awareness that those rules are higher jumps for your kids to clear than you might have thought. Some extra skills like patience and empathy and understanding could be a complete game changer as a result of dropping your expectations.

Maybe you thought you would have a kid who perhaps always did their homework, was always on time, who listened the first time, who always helped at home, who never fought with your siblings. Who always went along with your ideas, who loves learning and likes homework, was never grumpy or out of sorts. You didn't have the kid you thought you would have. You had your kid. Dare I say the kid you were meant to have. Amazingly unique, one of a kind, and sometimes, yes, super frustrating.

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Yes, parenting can be a full contact sport with a strong willed kid. Sit in the bleachers? Not me. I'm not doing it. This is a game I want to play to the best of my ability by being fully present. I know that we're both going to benefit from it. I know that I am at my best as a parent when I am fully present managing both the expectations and the reality. Not getting triggered by my ideas of what this should look like.

I know I'm a better parent when I've dropped my judgements. When I remember that my kid is just trying to get his needs met. When I'm curious not furious and wonder what he needs. When I scuba dive down to the feelings and needs instead of snorkeling on the top by focusing on the behavior.

Joan Ryan, a very famous author, says, "Parenthood is about raising and celebrating the child you have, not the child you thought you would have. It's about understanding exactly the person that they are supposed to be. If you are lucky, they may just be the teacher who turns you into the person you're supposed to be." Gosh, I love that quote. I look at it all the time. I know I am meant to be Malcolm's mom. It is meant to happen exactly like it's happening.

He is truly one of my greatest teachers. He has taught me boundaries, conviction, determination, integrity, passion, and focus. I know he has so much more to show and teach me if I am awake at the wheel. One of the best ways I know to be awake at the wheel is to examine and drop my expectations. There is no question we are here to teach our kids. To guide them and support them. To help them live up to their full potential and be good humans.

But the real question I want to ask you today is what are you kids here to teach you? I want you to take a moment and really consider this. Examine it. Maybe your kids are here to teach you patience. Maybe they're here to



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teach you how to move away from fear. Maybe there here to teach you compromise and that you can't always get your way. Maybe they're here to teach you teamwork. Maybe it's a new way of thinking about things.

Maybe they're here to teach you kindness, diversity, inclusion, focus, determination. How to argue productively. I know I'm learning that one every day. Maybe they're here to teach you how experiential learners don't want to be told what to do. Again, I'm checking that box on a daily basis. Whatever it is, I believe that we are better parents and better humans if we accept that this relationship is a two way street. That our kids can teach us and maybe even be the teacher who turns us into the person that we are supposed to be.

Lastly, let me ask you. What is it about each of your kids that you want to celebrate? Go home tonight and tell them exactly what you want to celebrate about them. Let them feel that total acceptance for who they are and how they show up in the world. Deal? Awesome.

Thank you so much for listening today. I want to invite you to head over to [thepeacefulparent.com/welcome](https://thepeacefulparent.com/welcome). Over there you can sign up for my free peaceful parenting minicourse. You're also going to find everything that you need to continue on the path to peaceful parenting right over there just waiting for you. I can't wait to see you over there. Until next week, I'm wishing you 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.

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Thanks for listening to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. If you want more info on how you can transform your parenting, visit [thepeacefulparent.com](http://thepeacefulparent.com). See you soon.