

Ep #17: How Do I Get My Kids to Stop Disrespecting Me?



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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 to today's episode. In today's episode, we are going to talk about R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Yeah. You might have been waiting for this. I am ready to deliver today.

I am really loving bringing you this podcast each week. The feedback so far has been amazing. I promise you that I am only starting to get warmed up. So I am so delighted to have you here. Again, I want to thank you for joining me. If you have a suggestion for a future podcast or a question you'd like me to answer in a podcast episode, feel free to reach out to us at support@thepeacefulparent.com or you can leave us a message on Instagram @the_peaceful_parent. The_peaceful_parent. We'd love to hear from you.

So if you've been listening for a while now, you know I try to bring tips, ideas, and support that helps you create deep connection and cooperation with your kids. So today as we dig into the topic, I want to invite you to take a deep breath and commit to remaining open minded. Can you do that? Perfect.

As we wade into the deep end of today's podcast, I want to tell you that the number one question I hear from parents is, drumroll please, "Lisa, my kids don't respect me, and I don't know what to do. Or my kids constantly disrespect me or show me disrespect." Raise your hand if you're in this camp. If you've thought this, if you've said this, if this is the number one

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thing you struggle with in your parenting or the number one complaint you have about your family dynamics.

I was in this camp for a really long time. I used to marinate in the thought that my son was disrespectful to me. I would think about this whenever things weren't going my way. When Malcolm wasn't doing as told, when he wasn't compliant, when he was storming, pushing back, or generally struggling. Looking back on it, it was a broken record. Or as Jon Acuff would say, a broken soundtrack in my mind.

The real problem was the more I thought about it, the more my mind looked for evidence to support it. If you constantly say to yourself out loud to your partner, to your co-parent, to your colleagues at work, to your mother, to your neighbor, to your friends, or to your kids that they are disrespecting you, your mind will look for evidence that your kids are disrespecting you. It will find it 100% of the time. So please stop thinking, stop saying that your kids are disrespecting you.

This is my goal for you today is to bust up this myth. Shift your perspective. Give you a new soundtrack in your brain, and really dispel the myth that your kids are even capable of disrespecting you. They are not disrespecting you. They are not giving you a hard time. They are having a hard time. In some cases on some days in some situations, a really, really, really, really hard time. They're dysregulated. They're storming, and they're speaking the language of help. They're not disrespecting you.

Our kids don't set out. It's not like they get up in the morning and go, "You know, I'm really going to let her have it today. You know what? I'm frustrated, and I'm going to open up a big old can of disrespect. Or I'm going to challenge everything my parents say or do because, you know, I don't really think they've earned my respect."

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Depending on the age of your kids, they might not even know what respect is or isn't let alone know how to show it or demonstrate it. What I know is that intentionally setting out to disrespect you requires motive. Motive comes from your executive function. We know that executive function isn't fully developed until the age of 25. So what I'm talking about here today applies to two-year-olds and four-year-olds and seven-year-olds and nine-year-olds and 12-year-olds and 15-year-olds and 18-year-olds and 22-year-olds and 25-year-olds.

So because motive comes from executive function, and we know that executive function isn't developed until 25, I would argue that your kids are not capable of intentionally disrespecting you. I can't say this enough. They are not disrespecting you. Every time you tell yourself this or you say it out loud joking or not, serious or not, you are giving your mind the assignment or looking for evidence that your kids are disrespecting you. Your brain will find evidence 100% of the time. That will reinforce the idea that your kids are disrespecting you.

So for the sake of your parenting happiness, your parenting satisfaction. For the sake of your child's inner voice, and for the sake of your relationship with your kids, please stop thinking and stop saying, "My kids are disrespecting me."

Okay. Maybe you're saying, "All right Lisa. I sort of get that. But if they aren't disrespecting me, what's going on?" Good question. I understand. This is all new. That's why I asked you to take a deep breath and remain open minded at the beginning. So now it's my turn to ask you a question. What does respect mean? What is the definition? What does it mean to you?

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It's a somewhat nebulous term. It probably means something slightly different to all of us. It is not black and white. It's very fluid based on how we feel and who we're talking to. It's definitely not black and white regarding our kids. One definition of respect I found is told in esteem or honor. Right. An example is I can't respect someone who cheats.

Another definition is to show regard or consideration for. These are pretty big concepts that the average kid isn't even really able to wrap their underdeveloped brain around let alone show regard or consideration or hold in esteem or honor. I'm not even sure our kids know how to do that.

Our kid's mission in life while their brain is developing is pretty simple. Their mission in life is to get their needs met. Their underdeveloped brain and lack of executive function doesn't really allow them to think outside of themselves or think much past their feelings and needs. So what I know is that your kids are not disrespecting you. What they are doing is trying to get their needs met. We typically focus on disrespect, the thoughts that our kids are disrespecting us, when they're storming.

Now remember. I lump a lot of things into the general category of storming. Crying, melting down, stomping feet, eye rolling, back talking, slamming doors, hitting, ignoring, yelling, crying. I put that all in the category of storming. So what are they doing when they're storming? "Lisa, you say they're not disrespecting." Okay. I'm going to stay open minded to that. What are they doing?

Well, what they're doing is they're speaking the language of help. Help me. I beg you to understand that your kids at any age are communicating with you in the only way they know how. As I mentioned earlier, we have an underdeveloped higher brain, part of which is called the prefrontal cortex. It takes until about the age of 25 to develop.

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As humans, we are all working each and every day to get our needs met and take care of our feelings. When any of us have unmet feelings and unmet needs, there is the potential to storm. Unmet needs lead to feelings. As the feelings bubble up and fill up the volcano, the lava spills out of the top in the form of storming. Let me say that again. Unmet feelings and needs cause us to storm.

Our children from zero to 25 are learning and developing. They're learning to navigate the world. They're learning to get their needs met. It's hard for them. Some more than others. So sometimes there can be lots and lots and lots of storming day in and day out, week in and week out, year over year.

What happens is as parents when there's a lot of storming, sometimes we start to take our kids behavior personally. We start to feel like the storm is something they're doing to us. We convince ourselves through our thoughts that they're storming to punish us or to be difficult or be disrespectful. We say things to ourselves in our mind or out loud like, "He's being so difficult. She's being defiant. She's being disrespectful. He's being disrespectful. They don't show me respect."

Can you relate to this? Have you had these thoughts? The problem is these thoughts and judgements trigger us. They lead us to judge our kids. Then we start taking the storming personally. One of the reasons that we take the storming personally is because we think our kids can communicate with us like an adult, but they can't. Their brains aren't developed. That prefrontal cortex is underdeveloped.

So why are they storming? I promise you it has nothing to do with, as Aretha would sing it, R-E-S-P-E-C-T. What they're doing is they're speaking

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the language of help. When your kid at any age is storming. This counts for adults too, by the way, but we're focusing on kids.

When your kids are storming, what they're saying is, "I don't know how to help myself. If I did, I would have already done it. I don't know how to ask you for help calmly. If I did, I would do it. I need help regulating my brain. I need help sorting through what's going on. I need your help. This is the only way I know how to ask you. I need you to not storm with me because you think I'm disrespecting you. I need you, parent, to stay calm. I need you, grandparent, to stay calm and help me sort this out."

Our kids are saying, "I need you to communicate with me in a calm way so that you can help me calm down and sort this out. So please don't call me names or yell at me or intimidate me or tell me I'm disrespectful. Help me regulate myself and help me learn."

Let me help you understand this in a different way. Remember when your oldest child was first born, and you brought them home from the hospital? Oh, I remember that day like it was yesterday. Dave and I got Malcolm in the house in his little carrier, and we set him across the room. And we just stood there staring at each other like, "What now?" Then Malcolm let out that first cry, that first at home cry. I remember I was like oh, I don't know what to do. Where's the nurse? Someone come help me. Right? I had no idea what the cry meant. No idea.

But then over time as the weeks progressed, I started to learn different cries, right. We do this. We learn that one cry means the baby is hungry. One cry means, "I need you." One cry means, "I want to be held and cuddled and loved." One cry means, "I've got some gas and I need you to help me get it out." Right? Then there was that cry, "Hey mom, I just blew out the back of my diaper." Remember?

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What are our newborns doing when they're crying? Okay, I'm hoping to blow your mind here. Our newborns are storming, right. Crying is basically storming. What they're doing is they're communicating to us. "I need help. I have needs. Please come help me. I'm speaking the language of help to you."

It's really interesting to look at this because we respond to these babies with no judgement, without frustration. We don't storm alongside them. We don't judge what they're saying. We don't go, "You know Lisa, my newborn really disrespects me at 6:00 every night when she cries right as I sit down to eat my dinner." We don't do that.

We don't see their storming as anything negative. We figure out what they need, and we help them. We're incredibly empathic and patient. Even if we don't know in that moment what they need, we still work to figure it out. Because we understand they're speaking the language of help. We don't scream alongside them. We don't storm alongside them. Right? It makes me giggle to just think about it.

On a very innate level, we understand that our babies are speaking the language of help. We don't take it personally. We certainly don't link it in any way to R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Then what happens is they start to get a little older, and they start to talk. For some reason, our brain decides that because they can talk, they can communicate like an adult.

Here's what you need to know. Just because they start to use words does not mean they have a fully developed prefrontal cortex. It doesn't mean that just because they can say words like mommy and cookie and up and down and "I'd like to go to my friend's house" and "I don't want to get off electronics". It doesn't mean that they can communicate like an adult.

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They're not capable of going inside their bodies and saying, "Mommy, I'm very upset and frustrated that you're telling me that I can't have a cookie until dinner because I'm really hungry right now." They don't have a fully developed brain. They can't do it. I mean heck, most adults can't even do it. But kids really can't even do this.

So what I really want you to take away from this is that when your kids are storming, it's not about disrespect. They're speaking the language of help. Let me say this again.

When your kids are storming at any age, what they're saying is, "I don't know how to help myself or I would have done it already. I don't know how to ask for help or I would have done it already. I don't know how to ask you for help calmly with lots of words or I would have done that already. I am so dysregulated that this is the only way I know how to ask for help. Storming is the only communication tool I have right now to ask for help. I promise you mom or dad or grandparent or stepmom or stepdad or big sister, I am not disrespecting you."

Who's on board with this? Does this shift your perspective? Do you see this storming in a whole new light? Wonderful. So your homework this week is working on this. Let me ask you. Are you willing to make a commitment to no longer marinating in the thoughts about disrespect? Yeah? In the heat of the moment meaning your kid is storming big and loud, can you work to remind yourself that they're speaking the language of help?

Use the mantra "she or he or they are having a hard time not giving me a hard time". This is going to help you stay grounded. And you can use the mantra QTIP. Quit taking it personally so that you can literally stay calm and help your kids through the big storm. Yeah?

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So here's the big finale. Going forward when the meltdown comes and believe me it will because we all have meltdowns. I want you to remember that your kids are not disrespecting you. They're not trying to give you a hard time. They're not trying to punish you. They're not trying to be difficult. The storming is them literally asking you for help by speaking the language of help. Your job is to QTIP, quit taking it personally. Yes? Awesome. You got this. I know you can do it.

Remember, your mind expands on what it focuses on. So if the only thing you do after listening to this podcast is you drop the thoughts that your kids don't respect you or disrespect you. Just dropping these thoughts from your brain, not allowing them to marinate will result in you seeing your kids in a much more positive light. It will completely strengthen the connection you have with your kids. It's a game changer. I promise you. All right. Until next week I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

Thank you so much for listening today. I want to personally invite you to head over to thepeacefulparent.com/welcome and sign up for my free peaceful parenting minicourse. You'll find everything you need to get started on the path to peaceful parenting just waiting for you over there at www.thepeacefulparent.com/welcome. I can't wait for you to get started.

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