

Ep #21: 5 Tips For Helping Your Kids Feel Their Feelings



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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. How's it going? How's it going for you? Well, here in Arizona we just started summer. School's out. My family and I are gearing up for a summer of basketball. My son plays basketball, and we are going to travel around and join in some tournaments this summer. It's going to be fun and exciting. So maybe I'll see you at the court somewhere.

Let me remind you. If you have a suggestion for a future podcast or a question or a success story that you'd like to share with me, feel free to reach out to us on Instagram. That's the best way to get ahold of us. Over on Instagram @the_peaceful_parent. I would love to hear from you. I've heard from a lot of you so far. I love the feedback. I love the questions. I welcome the interactions. So, again, you can find me over on Instagram @the_peaceful_parent.

Okay. So today as I jump into our episode, I want to ask you a question. Quick. Ready? What are you feeling right now? Can you name it? Do you know? Think about it for two seconds and tell me what are you feeling. Give it a name. I don't care whether you're standing in line at Starbucks, driving down the road, at the park with your kids. What are you feeling?

Today I want to talk about feelings. Yes, feelings. Yours, mine, and your kid's. Did you know that your kids have feelings? From the moment they're born, feelings come from met or unmet needs. When we're getting our

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needs met, our feelings are positive. When we are not getting our needs met, our feelings tend towards the negative.

A few years ago I remember when my son was around 11, he woke up one morning on the wrong side of the bed. You know what I'm talking about? I mean we've all been there, yeah? He was grumpy and unhappy with everyone and everything. Me included. That particular morning I couldn't do anything right. My mere presence irritated him. My breathing was enough to send him through the roof.

So that particular morning we drove to school in silence. When we got there, he continued to look unhappy and even ignored me as I said goodbye to him. One of the school staff members looked at me with big eyes almost as if to say, "Hey, what's going on?" I jokingly explained to her that just my existence this morning is irritating him. He looked at me with an even grumpier look on his face. The school staff member said to him, "Hey Malcolm, don't treat your mom that way."

I thought about it for a split second. Then I turned to her, and I said, "Oh no. He isn't treating me disrespectfully. He's just feeling his feelings, and we're both okay with that." When I looked over at him, his whole demeanor had changed. He understood that I got him, and that I was comfortable with his big negative feelings. He felt seen, heard, and valued. He understood that I got him.

So let me remind you. Feelings are never wrong. Ever. Not yours, not your spouse's, not your mother-in-law's, and definitely not your kid's. Now, I know that this may sound foreign to many of us. Maybe because you were raised in a household where you were told to stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about. Or be seen and not heard. Or we don't want to hear about that.

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Many of us were raised in a house where our parents didn't allow or acknowledge our feelings. Our feelings didn't matter. Or worse, they spent time telling us what we actually feel. Or told us, "No, you don't feel that way."

Sometimes we think if our kids are mad or sad or they're having a negative feeling, our brain makes it mean we're not a good parent. So any negative emotion coming from them is really hard for us to tolerate. Sometimes it's hard for us to see our kids upset. We love our kids. We don't want to see them or be around them when they're experiencing negative emotions. But I'm going to say this again to help it sink in for you. Feelings are never wrong. I can feel my feelings, and at the exact same time you can feel yours. They're never in conflict.

Let me give you some examples. My son can be angry that I'm asking him to stop gaming and put away the dishes. And at the exact same time, I can be pleased that the dishes are getting put away before I start making dinner, and I can be happy that I don't have to put them away. Those feelings are never wrong or in conflict with each other. He can be angry, and I can be pleased.

Let me give you another example. Your daughter can be disappointed that her soccer game got cancelled, and you can be relieved because it's raining out and you hate sitting out in the rain. We don't need her feelings to go away or disappointment for you to feel relieved.

Let me give you another example. Your daughter might be really angry that she can't stay out past curfew. And you can be content with your decision because you know nothing good happens after midnight. You don't need your daughter to change her feelings. She gets to feel her feelings of

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frustration or pissed or angry, and you can feel content that you made the right decisions.

Feelings matter. Feelings, even the big ones, have a purpose. Feelings help us feel connected to others because we feel seen, heard, and understood. That connection helps us naturally want to cooperate. Feelings build confidence and self-esteem. Feelings teach us that our voice and opinion matter. Feelings allow us to express ourselves from a young age and teach us to unload our emotional backpacks and not stuff down our feelings.

When you allow your kids to feel their feelings while you're modeling feeling your feelings, you are much less likely to produce people pleasers. Much, much, much less likely. I don't know about you, but I definitely don't want to produce a people pleaser. When your kids develop a feelings vocabulary while living at home, it makes adulting so much easier. When you have a feelings vocabulary, you have a higher emotional intelligence also known as EQ. It all starts at home by letting your kids feel their feelings.

Now I know it's not easy to embrace your child's feelings. If you can't embrace them, at least let your children experience their feelings. Don't rush them, push them down, tell them they don't feel that way, tell them how they feel, or tell them to cut it out. Just let them experience their feelings. It's a gift to you and your children because it leads to deep connection and a sense of belonging.

Now I'm not going to lie. For most of us, it takes some work to get there. To be comfortable with big feelings, especially the big negative emotions. But it's so worth the effort. When you stay with your kid's feelings, you give your child the space to express in the moment what he/she/they is feeling. It is in these high intensity moments that your child is learning whether they

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can trust you or not. “Can I trust my mom and dad? Can I go to them with anything?” These are your moments for deep connection with your kids.

So I want to share with you five tips for letting your kids feel their feelings. Sound good? Okay. Number one, give yourself permission to feel your feelings. Right? The first step in acknowledging your child’s feelings is to feel your own. Take a moment and ask yourself. What am I feeling right now? Do it. Take a moment right now. What am I feeling? Try to give your feeling a name. Anger, disappointment, frustration, anxiety, eagerness, anticipation, joy, contentment, neutral.

You don’t have to tell anyone in the moment. It’s enough to just acknowledge what you’re feeling, especially while we’re parenting our kids. Give yourself permission to feel your feelings. Don’t try to deny them. Don’t be a martyr. Don’t try to turn them off. Don’t try to not feel them. Feel your feelings. Name them to yourself.

The second tip is to admit it’s hard. Take a moment to acknowledge that feeling your feelings and allowing your kids to feel their feelings can be hard and uncomfortable. Just know that you’re going to get through it. This often softens the hard feelings and helps you as the parent breathe and gain perspective.

Tip number three, you don’t have to like the feelings. But please, please, please, please, please don’t try to change them. Your child, your kid, your teenager, your adult child is entitled to their own experience. By showing that you understand that, you are inviting connection. You’re able to get your point across better. Cooperation is so much more likely to follow if you do not try to change your child’s feelings.

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Tip number four, understand that feelings are never in conflict. Never. Know that you can have your feelings and your child can have his own feelings, and progress can be made from that place. We don't have to be on the same page.

In the example I gave earlier, Malcolm can be frustrated or angry or irritated that he has to stop gaming to put the dishes away and I can be pleased. I don't have to put them away. They're getting put away before I start making dinner. He's doing what I asked. I can be pleased about that, and at the exact same time, he can be frustrated. He gets to have his feelings, and I get to have my feelings. Progress can be made from that place.

Understanding that feelings are never in conflict allows you both to move forward and find common ground rather than arguing over whose feelings are right. Oh my goodness. How good is that, right? Let me say that again. Feelings are never in conflict. When you have your feelings and you allow your kids to have their own feelings, progress can be made from that place. It allows you both to move forward and find common ground rather than arguing over whose feelings are right. Oh my goodness.

In the end, we all just want to feel heard. This is a great way to let your child know you hear them. By committing to the idea that feelings are never in conflict.

Number five, the fifth tip, is don't take your child's emotions personally. This is so important. When you don't take your child's emotions personally, you're much less likely to get triggered by their emotions. Remember, feelings come from unmet needs. Their feelings have nothing to do with you. They're not giving you a hard time. They're having a hard time. Feelings come from unmet needs. There's nothing to take personally here. Once you understand where feelings come from, it's so much easier to not

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take them personally. Which leads to not getting triggered. Which allows you to feel your own feelings and allows you to help both of you move through your feelings. Yeah?

Okay. So let me review again the five steps to letting your kids feel their feelings. Number one, give yourself permission to feel yours. Do it. Do it. Feel them. Number two, admit it's hard. "Wow. I don't like when my kid has a meltdown in aisle six or is irritated that I asked him to put the dishes away. Or giving me attitude that I won't extend her curfew an hour. Or angry that I'm putting limits on gaming." Admit that it's hard. This is uncomfortable.

Number three, you don't have to like them, but don't try to change their feelings. Let them experience their feelings. Number four, remember that feelings are never in conflict, ever. I get to feel mine. You get to feel yours. If they're not going in the same direction, that's okay. Number five, don't take your child's emotions personally so you don't get triggered. Good, right?

Okay one more thing. Let's say you like what you're hearing, but right now you're thinking, "Okay Lisa. I hear you, but every time I ask my kid what he or she is feeling they tell me they don't know. So what am I going to do about that Lisa?" Or maybe they have one go to feeling they name every single time. Like angry. "I'm mad. I'm mad, mom. How do you feel about that? Mad. How do you feel about that? Mad." What do you do then? Well, good question.

The answer is you can teach your kids the dictionary of feelings. You have to teach and expand the feeling vocabulary. The best way I know to do that is with good old-fashioned conversation. A great resource to get the ball rolling is to go to the internet and search for something called the feelings

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wheel. We'll link to it in the show notes. I would print it out and take it home. Maybe even put it up on the fridge.

Once you've grabbed your copy of the feelings wheel, start to talk to your kids at an age-appropriate level about the different feelings. Make a game of it. Take two feelings a week and define them for your family. Like sleepy and excited or lonely and playful.

Take two feelings, introduce them maybe at the dinner table one night, and talk about the definition and give examples of when you feel that feeling. I feel sleepy when I've had a long day. I feel sleepy when I first wake up in the morning. I feel excited when I know I have a whole day at home with you. I feel excited right before we go on vacation.

Give them examples, talk about the definitions. Talk about situations where those particular feelings come up. Then over the course of the week, try to use those two different feeling words in conversations with your kids. Teach them. Expand their vocabulary.

If you want your kids to have an extensive feelings vocabulary, you have to practice it and model it for them by talking about your own feelings. Get it out in the open. Make talking about feelings, expressing feelings a normal natural thing in your family for everybody in the family. Make sense?

Okay. Lastly, let's say you ask your kids what they're feeling, and they say they don't know. You can ask them to take a guess. Okay. I hear you that you don't know. Take a guess buddy. Guesses feel free to humans for some reason. So 99.9% of the time if you invite them to take a guess, they'll take a shot. Not surprisingly more often than not they'll be dead on with the response they give you. So if you feel like you're not getting

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anywhere, play the guessing game. “Hey, take a guess. If you had to guess, what would you say you're feeling?”

Feelings, feelings, feelings. They matter. It doesn't mean we can't guide our kids or be their emotional coach. But when we acknowledge their feelings and let them feel their feelings, a whole world of connection and cooperation opens up. Make sense?

Okay. Here's your homework this week. You ready? I want to personally challenge you to let your kids feel their feelings. Get them out in the open. Make them okay. Talk about them, welcome them, get comfortable. Don't take them personally. Remind yourself feelings are never in conflict. Don't try to change your kid's feelings. Acknowledge that it's hard when there's big negative feelings around the household and give yourself permission to feel your own feelings.

Deep connection and understanding lies around the corner for those who are willing to accept the challenge. I know you can do it. It's so worth it, I promise. Okay. 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.

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.