

Ep #35: Whaaatteeeverrrrrr!



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 to today's episode. Oh my goodness. I am so excited to bring this episode to you today. So let me ask you. How's it going? How are you doing? We are doing fantastic. My son Malcolm had his first day of junior year of high school today. The first day of school is always met with such mixed emotions, right? Happy, sad, excited, anxious, filled with hope, a little dread. This year's no different. No different.

What I know about our family is that we are at our best with rhythm and routine, and especially when everyone in the family knows what is expected of them. The school year lends itself to rhythm and routine. So for that reason, I am celebrating the beginning of the school year.

Today I want to share with you a tool that changed my parenting for the better immediately, and it can do the exact same for you. So I'm going to go ahead and say you're welcome in advance. Now I want you to tell me one thing your kids say or do that drives you bananas. Bananas. Tell me. What's the thing? Is it the eye roll? The sass? Is it a particular word or phrase? Maybe it's that your child ignores you or turns their back on you or stomps her foot. right? I feel you. I feel you.

Just thinking about it might have your blood pumping, your heart racing. As they say in the south, "You are seeing red." So let me ask you, what creates this response—the blood pumping, the heart racing? Any idea? Okay maybe you're driving to work right now, and you're yelling at me, "Are you kidding Lisa? What do you mean what caused my response? I thought you were smarter than that girl. My response is caused by my child's

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actions like the eye rolling, the sassing, the stomping the foot. Come on Lisa.”

Okay. Hang with me a minute because it isn't true. Your response does not come from your child's actions. Yes, it's 100% not true. The good news is you have the power to change your response without your child dropping or changing their behavior or actions. Are you curious? Are you like, “Okay girl. You got my attention. Tell me more.”

Well, my son has a favorite new word. Yep, you guessed it. It's “what-eva”, and he says it just like that. It's not whatever mom. It's “whatever”. You got one of those too? He's been saying it for about two months now. I must admit when it first started happening, I was really triggered by this.

Now a trigger is when you negatively react to an event or an activity because you're making it mean something that upsets you. Now let me say that again. We get triggered when we react negatively to an event or activity because we're making it mean something that upsets us. We're having a thought about the sass, the eye roll, the whatever mom. Yeah?

When I get triggered while parenting, I have a very specific feeling or sensation or vibration in my body. By the way, a feeling is a vibration in your body caused by a thought. Not by the eye roll, not by the stomping the feet, not by the hitting the brother. A feeling is a vibration in your body caused by a thought that you have.

After many years of doing this work, when I feel that vibration it feels the same vibration every time in the same place in my body. I use it as a clue or a signal or a beacon, and I take a pause. I work backwards to figure out what thought created this feeling or what triggered me. I work really mindfully to not parent while I'm triggered as this almost always causes dysregulation, which leads me to storming right alongside my kid.

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So back to the whatever. I noticed myself feeling triggered whenever Malcolm would say, “Whatever mom.” Really triggered. The trigger throws me out of alignment with my values causing me to parent in ways that are not pretty.

So I ask myself what am I making whatever mean? After some thought and reflection, I realized I was making it mean my son doesn’t respect me. So he would say “whatever mom” and my brain would whisper this quiet fleeting thought, “See, he doesn’t respect you. If he did, he wouldn’t say that. He would know better.” These thoughts did not feel good at all. At all. Ironically my thoughts about Malcolm disrespecting me would lead me to be disrespectful to him. Oh the irony. I promise you, it is not lost on me.

Now once I noticed the vibrations in my body and I worked backwards to the trigger—he is disrespecting me—then I can ask myself, “Is he really Lisa? Is he really disrespecting you when he says whatever? Really?” So I sat with it for a bit. I really examined it, and I observed him. I observed myself. I noticed what was going on. The rhythm, the pattern, my thoughts. I asked myself what else might be true here. I got curious instead of furious whenever he would say, “Whatever mom.”

After a cycle of “whatever” causing a vibration from a trigger, I realized he wasn’t disrespecting me. Not really. He wasn’t setting out to be disrespectful. So then I asked myself what else might be true other than he’s being disrespectful? I got really curious. I played detective. I realized that Malcolm almost always says it when he knows that what I’m saying or suggesting is true, but he doesn’t want to admit it.

Okay now here's the thing. Here's the beautiful thing about a trigger is that once you understand it. Once you observe it, recognize it, understand it, you have the power to instantly change it long before your kid modifies the whatever.

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So I decided each and every time Malcolm says “whatever mom” I would make it mean, “Mom, you're right. I don't want you to be right, but you are, and I love you.” These are the thoughts I chose to marinate in instead of see, he's being disrespectful. I decided each and every time he says “whatever mom” my brain would immediately fire up oh, he's trying to tell me, “Mom you're right. I don't want you to be right, but you are, and I love you.”

Now the beautiful thing about a trigger is that once you understand it, you have the power to change it immediately. Amazing, yeah. Let me tell you. Choosing a new better thought feels so much better than holding on to the belief that my boy doesn't respect me.

So we were out of town for a basketball tournament a couple of weeks ago, and we had the most amazing time as a family. Each time Malcolm said “whatever mom” I would just smile at him with this goofy smile on my face and say in my head, “Oh Lisa, what he means is ‘Mom you're right. I don't want you to be, but you're right and I love you.’” I have a giant smile on my face just sharing this with you.

Yesterday he said, “Mom, you keep getting this weird look on your face sometimes.” I just said I know. I know. I know. Because I know. I know that when he says, “whatever mom” and I make it mean, “Mom you're right. I don't want you to be, but you are right, and I love you.” I get this big, giant, goofy smile on my face and I feel amazing.

Triggers hold a lot of power over us but only if we let them. Triggers push us into negative emotions, and we are far more likely to negatively react as a parent rather than staying peaceful and regulated. Are you loving this? Are you like, “Wow, I'm so glad you shared this with me Lisa. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.” Yeah?

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So let's review. Working through a trigger looks like this. Identify the vibration in your body also known as a feeling. Let that be your beacon, your SOS, your guiding light. Know that that feeling is coming from a trigger that is a thought that you're having rather than what your kid is actually doing. Then look around, observe, get curious, find the thought that is causing the trigger. Choose a better thought that could also be true, and practice the new thought.

So working through the trigger looks like this in my story here. Identify the vibration in your body also known as a feeling. So when Malcolm would say "whatever mom" I was feeling angry. That's the vibration that I was having. Then I worked backwards to think, "Okay, what is starting this trigger?" Well, it's when he says, "whatever mom". Okay. That's starting it, but there's a thought that comes right after the event.

So the thought was there he is. There he goes again. He's being disrespectful. He's showing you disrespect. That was the thought causing the anger. So I decided to choose a better thought, which in this story is, "Mom you're right. I don't want you to be, but you are, and I love you." That's the thought I came up with.

Then it was just a matter of practicing the new thought. Rinse and repeat. Every time he says whatever, I would practice the new thought. "Mom you're right. I don't want you to be, but you are, and I love you." That, parents, feels like freedom even when things aren't going well. Even when there are big emotions coming from your child. Even when there are meltdowns and outbursts. Even when there's eye rolling or sass or stomping feet or ignoring or freezing out or using words like "whatever mom".

The process of working on our triggers, knowing where they come from, understanding they come from our thoughts and that we have the power to

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work on our triggers is the cornerstone of peaceful parenting. It's also where I find some of my greatest joy in coaching parents. Take a second and think about the last time you got upset, angry, frustrated, disgusted, bewildered with your child. What set you off? What was the trigger? Was your child trying to upset you? Or did you assign meaning in the moment that triggered your feelings?

Unraveling the stories that make up our emotional responses to the little things that happen to us opens a chasm of space to be calm and peaceful when parenting our kids. When we respond to them in a way that we'd like them to respond to us, guess what happens. Connection and cooperation. So I decided each and every time Malcolm says "whatever mom" I would make it mean, "Mom you're right. I don't want you to be, but you are, and I love you."

So what are you going to make it mean the next time your daughter rolls her eyes, or your son gives you sass or one of your kids walks in the other room or one of them says something. What are you going to make it mean? You're welcome to borrow mine, "Mom you're right. I don't want you to be, but you are, and I love you." Or you can come up with your own. What I know for sure is that coming up with a new response instead of getting triggered feels like deep connection. Deep connection. I want that for you. I want it for your kids.

Oh, and a follow up. Shortly after writing this article and adopting the new thought, "Mom you're right. I don't want you to be, but you are, and I love you." Ironically Malcolm stopped saying "whatever mom". The irony isn't lost on me. Because the resistance, the struggle, and the trigger went away.

Understanding that it is our thoughts about other people's words, actions, and behaviors. It's our thoughts that trigger us is one of the greatest tools

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we have in parenting or really any human to human relationship like spouses, coparents, coworkers, bosses, teachers, neighbors, mother-in-laws, etcetera. It is one of the greatest tools we have in human to human relationships.

So the next time you find yourself triggered by something someone else is doing, ask yourself what am I making this mean, and could I have a different thought when that person does what they're doing? I'm telling you. It's like jumping on the freedom train. It feels so amazing to know and to put into practice this tool. My gift to you today. You're welcome. Until we meet again, 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.