

**Ep #45: What is Parent Coaching? A Conversation
with Kiva Schuler from the Jai Institute for Parenting**



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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.

Lisa: Welcome, welcome, welcome. Welcome to today's podcast. Now listen, I know I say this every week. I know. It's starting to become the theme here, but I am so, so, so excited. In fact I've got to grab a Kleenex. I just got teary eyed. I'm so excited about this week's episode. I have an extra, extra, extra special guest. Nay I say someone who changed my life for the better in so many ways. Sometimes I don't even think she realizes it. So yeah, tears.

Kiva: Oh shoot. Now you're making me cry. We didn't even start yet. Geesh.

Lisa: I know. I get emotional anytime I think about the massive transformation that I have had in my parenting. Later I want to share sort of an example that happened this morning in my house as an illustration of the transformation. Today I'm joined today by Kiva, dear, dear, dear Kiva Schuler.

Who is Kiva? Well, let me tell you about this woman. She is a mom of two teenagers and has had her own massive transformation in her parenting, which she'll tell us about. Kiva is the founder and CEO of the Jai Institute, which happens to be the world's leading parent coach training institute. The most amazing place ever, and also the place where I trained.

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She is a serial entrepreneur, which if you don't know you can't stick serial in front of your name unless you've been successful. So she's a serial entrepreneur, a mentor, a coach, and a speaker. Kiva welcome.

Kiva: I am so glad to be here with you.

Lisa: I know. It's such good stuff. It's so good. It's so good. Kiva and I, we get up to some shenanigans every now and then and good stuff always flows. So let me start by sharing how I met Kiva, and then we'll jump into your story, and you can tell us a little bit about your parenting.

So I remember the day, and I know Kiva's heard this story about 12 times, but it's a good one. I remember the day that I had surrendered to this, what I'm doing, isn't working. There has to be a better way. The word surrender is literally what happened.

Shortly thereafter a friend of mine, give a shout out to Amy Pearson, was hosting a conversation with Kiva about parenting coaching. It caught my eye. I was like parent coaching? What the what? What is that?

Kiva: Is that even a thing?

Lisa: Yeah. What is that? It caught my eye because pretty much anything that started with parenting I was reading, digesting, obsessing about. So I jumped on a call. I remember we were living in California at the time. I was in my laundry room folding laundry when I heard your voice. I listened intently. You and Amy had about a 20 minute conversation about conscious parenting and parent coaching.

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I was on the Jai website signing up before you even finished. The calling, what you espouse and teach and share and model for the world spoke to me in a way that really nothing had up to that point. So let's talk about that.

Kiva: Thank you. Quivering with humility. I think it's a thing to kind of know intellectually that you've impacted people's lives. It still kind of takes my breath away every time we talk. To know how you've taken that torch and lit up your whole community with it. I was on a random entrepreneurial panel the other day, and someone was like, "I know Lisa Smith. I've worked with her." It was about like copywriting. So cool.

Lisa: Wow.

Kiva: Yeah. So first of all, thank you for that introduction. It's so good to be here.

Lisa: Yeah, it's so good to have you here Kiva. So let's talk. I do want you to talk about your parenting, but this feels like a good segue. Talk about the Jai Institute. The values, what you all, what we—I feel like I'm a part of it because I am. That's one of the beauties of it. It really is a community. What are we about?

Kiva: The thing that you just said about, "I've tried so many things and it's just not working and there has to be something different." I think that that is the through line that connects our global community of parents who are willing to do the very brave work of shifting their perspective, their world view, expectations. To let go of control, to surrender like you talked about.

I was certainly that mom. I was raised in a very...I had this bird's eye view to a very controlling ambitious for me, "you can do anything and yes you will go to an Ivy league school" mother. My parents were divorced. My dad

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remarried and my stepmother was incredibly punitive and you're nothing. It was always putting us down.

So as a kid, I was like this is crazy. This just feels awful. Both of those extremes felt awful. I promised myself. I was like man. When I become a mom, I'm going to do it better than this. This is not continuing. Of course kids come and all of those proclivities come out. Wanting to control, losing your temper, yelling, all of the things that we do when we don't have the tools that we teach at Jai.

My moment was my son Miles, who's 16 now. I used to watch *Supernanny*. I always feel super guilty admission. Shh the founder of a peaceful parenting institute who used to watch *Supernanny* for parenting advice. She would have you put the kids in timeout for as many minutes as they were old.

So I kid you not. My stellar and strong willed and brilliant incredibly certain child sat on that step at four years old for well over an hour because he would not apologize. He was not having it, and for the rest of the day wouldn't look at me. That was my this is not working moment. There has to be something better.

So I started. I had a podcast at the time. My parents are both newspaper journalists. I've kind of been raised in a culture of go find the answers. So I started interviewing parenting experts and learning these things. That ultimately led to starting this business because I believe that coaching is required for any time of real human change. We need support. We need accountability. We need compassion and empathy. We need a plan. That's what coaches do. That's what our coaches do at Jai.

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Lisa: Yes, yes. I love it. Talk a little bit about how does it look different for you now? How do you parent now? An overarching kind of philosophy?

Kiva: I mean what's really true, I talk about this with my kids all the time. they're 15 and 16. I am pretty far out of the way at this point. We like to say that I'm like the... You know the bowling games where they have the bumpers? I have been in a bumper role for about the last two years. Those bumpers are getting wider and wider.

My children enjoy an incredible amount of personal freedom and choice because I trust them implicitly. Because they know that I trust them, they make good decisions. I have no experience of rebellious teenagers. There's nothing for them to rebel against. I'm here for them. They, at their core, know that whatever is going on in their lives, they can come to me.

That sounds kind of a little hyperbolic or pollyannaish perhaps, but we've worked hard to get there. That is the outcome of me learning to put my ego in the backseat, to listen to them, to clearly communicate the values of our family, to tell them the why, to have them involved in the conversations around the limits and boundaries and values in our home. I'm so glad and grateful that that's how it is now. They're kind of cooked is how it feels like.

Lisa: Well what I really want parents to hear is what Kiva just described. I'm going to put some words in your mouth here. So if they're not true, speak up. What some of you listening are going to be thinking is, "Oh, that's permissive parenting." Right? Because that's what a lot of recovering dominant parents want to believe is that if we're not dominating, we're being permissive.

Please don't hear that. Because what Kiva is experiencing now with her kids is the direct result of lots of years of work. The work wasn't dominant

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work. It was peaceful work and opening up those lines of communication, building the trust by sharing expectations, by setting limits, by being kind even when things were going wrong. By saying no to the behavior while yes to the feelings, which I talk about a lot, by getting curious, not furious. The result of that work is, well the trust that's happening between the young adult and the parent.

Kiva: 1,000%. I believe that this flavor, if you will, of parenting, I like to think of it as human centric parenting. Every human has feelings and needs that matter. So it's not adult centric. It's not child centric. It's human centric. It's in many ways more challenging. I'm not going to say it's harder because in the long term it's easier, but it requires presence and attention.

I think we live in a time where so many parents, myself included, are stretched so thin. We have so little capacity, especially now after everything that's happened with the pandemic, that carving out some piece of your energy, your capacity, your attention to devote to being guide and mentor and leader for your kids. That's challenging work.

In some ways it would be easier to say, "If you don't go to bed by 10:30 and turn off the video game, I'm ripping the computer out of your room." Right? That would be easier in the moment, but the price tag is so expensive. The price tag is we create a breach in the relationship with this person who we want to trust us the most.

Lisa: That's right. Who is their own soul, I say this all the time. Their own soul who's come to Earth to have their own experience. We're just the guide for a period of time. They're not our trophy. We don't own them. They're not a robot. If you think about this—

Kiva: It's not their job to make us look good.

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Lisa: Yes. It blows my mind every time I think about a baby being born who is going to grow up and function in the world as an adult as their own soul. When you get that, it can really move you into that human centric parenting idea.

Kiva: Yeah. 1,000%.

Lisa: So let's talk about this. This is what parent coaches do, right? We show up and we coach parents so they can coach their kids. Because so many of us don't know, I'm going to use your word, how to do this human centric parenting. It is different than the tough love parenting many of us grew up with or the permissive parenting. I work with so many parents who grew up in permissive households. They're kind of lost on how do I set boundaries?

One of the hardest combinations is a parent who grew up in a permissive household and now has a strong willed kid, right. I've got a full contact sport 17 year old. So let's talk about parent coaching.

Kiva: Yeah. I mean I think just first of all to define coaching, coaching is not about treating something from the past. It's not about addressing mental health issues. It is not therapy. Coaching is a professional skill where we provide real space for people whether it's in parenting or any other aspect of your life. For a person to define their long term goals and desired outcomes.

So parents when kids are three, the goal might be oh my gosh how do I get out of the door to work on time with shoes on and a coat and lunch. If we focus all of our energy and attention and trying to control that in that short term moment, we're maybe not focused on the long term goal. Which perhaps might be to have a teenager who comes to you when they have a

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friend who's talking about suicide, when they are being presented substances, right. These very real things.

So a coach will help a family, really I think a family unit, to find the short, medium, and long term goals for that family. Then start to practice the ways of communicating, the relational skills that will most likely lead to those desired outcomes. So it's much more intentional than just kind of haphazard what's happening today, what are we reacting to, what's the crisis of the moment?

Lisa: Yeah, I agree. I agree. I couldn't agree more Kiva. I think the work I do with my clients, particularly my one-on-one clients, is we're going to define what success looks like for you because it looks different in every family. We're not cooking to a recipe here.

Kiva: So yeah, thank you. I get all excited. So I'm going to not cut you off her Lisa.

Lisa: I was just going to say we define what success looks like and then I give them the tools to get there. I think that's one of the things I really want people to hear is there are specific tools. There are tools that you can use to be successful in reaching your goals.

Kiva: Our work here at Jai is not child centric. It is not our right position as parenting coaches to determine for parents what is right for their family. It's our role to help them, parents, families, decide that for themselves and then help give them the tools to meet that.

Lisa: Yes. I have to say in my work, I embody that. That is so what I'm about. It's so important because, again, it looks so different depending on your background, your culture, your circumstances, your philosophy, your

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values, just what you want for your kids. We take all that into account when setting the goals.

Even if you have a three year old and your struggle is trying to get out the door on time, you can still take into account the big picture. I always think, I'm a former marketer. In marketing there's strategy and tactics. The strategy, I know you know this. Strategy is the big picture, and the tactics are the tasks that are going to ensure the strategy. So I like to think what I do is we develop a strategy and then the tools are the tactics at any age that help the parents reach the strategy of connection with the kids.

You know this morning my son woke up. I was out the door on the way to the gym. I was tired. I actually did an event last night with about 80 families. It was super awesome. I was tired this morning. So I'm dragging myself into my gym clothes and out the door.

My son wakes up to tell me he doesn't feel well. He's been struggling. We're not sure if it's allergies or cold or whatnot. He wasn't sure whether he should go to school. He wasn't trying to get out of school. He wanted some help in sort of sorting out should I go to school? Should I stay home? What should I do? I was in my car, and I was immediately frustrated because I'm barely getting myself going, and now I need to help another human sort this out.

The beauty I think of strategy and tactics is our conversation did not go well. We parted ways and then I was able to center myself and ring him right back and say, "Hey, I'm so sorry. I know that isn't what you were looking for. I wasn't very empathetic. I wasn't super helpful. Can we have a do over?" I heard this exhale. Like, "Okay mom, thank you." I know for me that is something I would have never experienced as a child.

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Kiva: Those micro moments are everything. This work isn't about some radical massive transformation. It's those micro moments that would have devolved into conflict, hard feelings, days of not talking to each other in the past that just don't. There's a ripple. I always really want to appreciate what you shared. I was thinking about this thing I would say to my kids. Even mommies make mistakes. It's from this book I used to read them when they were little. The reframe was even mommies make mistakes.

I think there's this idea out there of parents like, "Oh well, I'll be a good parent when I don't mess up." It's the mess-ups that actually provide incredible fodder for connection, for teaching values. Being able to own our mistakes and say to our child that wasn't our best moment. Can I have a do over? I have to do that all the time. It's a huge piece of that trust thing we've been talking about.

Because when we can do that, our kids are like, "Hm okay. Mom actually follows through on her values." They're not having that hypocrite story. Or she tells us to be one way and she doesn't act that other.

Lisa: Or she thinks she's perfect, and I can tell you I know she's not.

Kiva: Let me tell you, right.

Lisa: I'm counting her flaws. Yeah.

Kiva: Exactly. So it's actually like magical to just get to be a human being in a relationship. I said to my daughter recently. I was like honey. We had a breach that actually took about a year to repair. We were talking about it recently. We were kind of revisiting it. I just wanted to check in with her and see if there was anything that needed ironing out. She was saying that she's someone who notices in close friendships when people betray her or

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she feels like they haven't been a really good friend, she'll withdraw really quickly.

I said I appreciate that. Also there's not an intimate relationship that you are going to have in your life where someone isn't going to hurt you in some way. I think you experienced that with me, right. I hurt you, and then we had to figure it out. It took a long time to actually make it all in the past, but it was worth it, right? She was like, "Yeah, it really was. But I'm going to be really careful about who those people are." Smart girl.

Lisa: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. I did a whole podcast episode on normalizing mistakes for all the reasons you just said Kiva. To the listener, we'll link to that in the show notes. Really I couldn't agree more. Kids need to see us making mistakes and then recovering from them big and small. They need to know that we know that we're not perfect, right. That we make a ton of mistakes.

I made a big one this morning, but the other beauty is I forgave myself and I moved on with my day. I didn't ruminate over it. I love the saying guilt is the enemy of the effective parent, right. You can get really bogged down. The problem with guilt, there's many problems with guilt but one of the main ones is it pulls you into the past, right? You're ruminating over the mistake that has already happened.

What our kids really want, well what all of us want, is I want you to come and be fully present with me now in this moment. That's a byproduct that happens when you can repair and recover. I agree with you. Sometimes when my son and I do repair and recover, the relationship actually deepens.

Kiva: Yes. Yeah, I would say every time.

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Lisa: Yeah.

Kiva: It's really important.

Lisa: So who should hire a parent coach? Everyone?

Kiva: Well while I wish that parenting was a priority of every human on the planet, I'm aware that that might not perhaps be the case, crazy as that may sound to your listeners. Because obviously they're here, you're here, you're listening to this. So it's a priority.

I think that if you have a disconnect between the bar that you set for yourself. Or you can see that the relationship is heading in a direction where five years down the road, 10 years down the road, it's not going to be the connected intimate close relationship that you want. That's the time. If you feel like you need tools.

If you are like most people and at mercy of your reactivity, your emotional state, whether you're stressed or tired, things going on at work and you need tools, hiring a parenting coach. I have such good news for you, which is that these are learnable skills. It is a huge misconception that we cannot moderate our emotional activity. It's just wrong, flat out wrong. You can learn that, and a coach can help you.

Lisa: I love that. Learnable skills. I haven't thought about it like that, but it's so true. I always say when I introduce myself to a group of people, I am my own best client. I've had my own best transformation, right? Because I know the transformation I've had in terms of...

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Kiva: Remember when we were kids, there was that ad. It was like the Hair Club for Men. He said, "Not only am I the president of The Hair Club for Men, I'm also a customer." That's how I feel about Jai.

Lisa: Yes, exactly. Exactly. So let's talk about Jai institute because I'm sure that there are people that want to know more about this whole parent coaching thing. So what is it Kiva?

Kiva: Yeah. So we train coaches in this methodology. Really encompassing nervous system science, emotional intelligence, conscious communication, childhood development. I think that when parents have age-appropriate expectations of their children, a lot of stress in a household diminishes.

So Jai has been training coaches all over the world. We have, gosh, I don't even know anymore. 600 I think or so parents globally that have gone through our six month certification.

Some of them really come with an aspiration of having a parent coaching business and wanting to do this work. They're educators. They're pediatricians. They're teachers. They've been home with kids for many years and are looking for a way to start earning money again, and this just seems like a great way to do it, which is it.

Others just really are the kind of people who want the best education. Becoming a parenting coach is like the Master's degree in childhood development and communication and all of that. So that's what we do. We train awesome parents to be coaches.

Lisa: Yes, you do. You do it so well. I mean I just have the opportunity to interact with many trained parent coaches. What an amazing group of people.

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Kiva: Yeah. Our community just blows me away. The intelligence, the commitment, the sense of purpose. There's a quote which I'm going to butcher, but it says there's nothing more powerful than a community of people aligned in purpose. I believe here at Jai we're creating something I call the triple ripple.

So when a coach comes through our program, there is the immediate ripple of the impact of their own family, right, in their own four walls. That's enough, right. That's life changing enough. These kids are amazing when they're raised in this kind of environment. So that's the first ripple. Then they work with parents, and that creates all these other ripples.

Then the most powerful ripple is the third ripple. That's the witnessing of the greater community, the world, when a child's having a meltdown and a parent doesn't react and can be present, other people are like, "Wow, I didn't even know you could do that."

So that's how we're going to ultimately make this global shift from what is expected of parenting, which is power over. You need to be in charge. Control that kid. To relationship with parenting which is I have needs and feelings. You have needs and feelings. We're in a lifelong relationship together. How are we going to figure this out?

Lisa: Absolutely. I want to just add something to that that's powerful. I say to my clients all the time peaceful parenting, which is what I call what I teach. Peaceful parenting is when everybody in the family can get their needs met. Everybody, including the parents. I think that's a message that I really want people to hear.

When you work with me, and I can only speak to my work. I know this is reflective of the Jai Institute and what you all teach. When I work with

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someone, the goal isn't to turn them into servants who only meet their kid's needs. Peaceful parenting is we're all getting because we're all in lifelong relationships with each other. You may be three today, but then you're going to be nine and 13 and 23 and 35.

Kiva: That's right. I have such a good story about this if we have time for a quick story.

Lisa: Yeah, tell us.

Kiva: So my son Miles is 16. He's actually away at a semester boarding program this year, and he has his first girlfriend who lives in New York City. So he really wanted to be able to go visit her over the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. I was like, "Honey Nana's coming. We have plans. If you come to me with some solutions, I'm willing to consider them."

So about 12 hours later he said—We have a lot of conversations in our house about solution oriented thinking. So he's like, "I've been being solution oriented, and I have some ideas." He presented a plan for me. It's a plan that would work for me, but it was not a plan that was honoring of his grandmother.

What I said is, "Honey, can you explain to me?" Because he said, "I think this is a plan that's going to work for everybody." I said how is it going to work for Nana? He said, "You're right. This solution is not going to work for Nana." I said, "We are in a family where everyone's needs matter."

He just breathed that in. I could feel him really breathing that in. He was like, "Okay mom." I was like, "Honey, you're only going to be away from her for two more days. Could that maybe work for you?" He said, "Yeah, it maybe could. Let me think about it some more."

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Well an hour later he texted me back. He found a train from where we live to 30 minutes from where his new girlfriend lives. Communicated with her parents about picking him up, and he worked it out in a way that wasn't going to disrupt anyone. Wasn't going to take away from the family. This is what that does. Again, micro moment, right? He is learning to think about how to honor everybody that's impacted by the decisions he makes at 16.

Lisa: That's beautiful. What's also beautiful about it is you not shutting him down upon the first hey I have an idea, right? You fostered it. You said we need to find a solution here that works for everybody, but you didn't come back with something like what are you doing? What do you mean? You're not going away.

Kiva: It's Thanksgiving, right.

Lisa: You invited him to turn on the internal compass and look for the solution. You pushed back a little bit, what about Nana. Then he went back to the drawing board. That is real connection. My son and I experienced those kinds of moments a lot as well, and that just feels like connection.

It's really the result of years of work. I don't mean work in a sweaty, hard way. I mean it's a commitment to caring about everybody's feelings and needs early on. It's sometimes saying no to the behavior but always yes to the feelings. Your feelings always matter.

My son and I had an argument a couple weeks ago. He got really angry about something and stormed. Later in the middle of a school day sent me a text. Which he shouldn't be texting in school. Let's say it was on lunch hour. On his lunch hour he sent me a text and he said, "Mom, I'm sorry I got mad at you this morning." I texted back and I said, "Please never apologize for being mad. Your feelings are always valid. What I'd like us to

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focus on is the storming that came after the anger and how you can express yourself differently next time.

So we brainstormed back and forth on texting because my son takes this kind of information in better in the written word. So we brainstormed back and forth about what he could do. Then he said to me, "I'm going to save this text so next time I get really upset I can look at it as my guide on what to do." I thought boom, right?

Kiva: Oh my goodness. Yes. Yes. To your point, this is the outcome of a practice. There's no magical solution here. There's not overnight fixes. What gives me so much hope is that there are parents who have come through the Jai Institute of Parenting with adult children where there's been disconnection and a lack of family connection for years and been able to repair.

So I don't want you to as you're listening to think, "Oh but I didn't do that when my child was eight." It's never too late. There's always hope. Yes, old dogs can learn new tricks. We can learn new ways to communicate. We have to know that every child wants positive life affirming connection with their parents. It's completely available to all of us.

Lisa: I agree. I have worked with parents of adult children before and seen massive transformation.

Kiva: Miracles.

Lisa: So I want to echo that. I want to echo what Kiva's saying. It's never too late ever. You're not alone. You're not broken. You just need some tools. That's what I or another parent coach can offer. What I hope you're taking away from today's episode is that there's hope. I hope that you

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found my conversation with Kiva inspiring. It's one of the reasons that I offer a weekly podcast. I want to have a place for you to come back and learn tools and be inspired and grow.

I think my best advice to parents out there is to just jump in and learn. Do something. When you see something that works, keep doing it. Rinse and repeat. Rinse and repeat. Sometimes you only need a couple tools to turn the boat in the right direction. So what I'm really hoping is you were inspired by the success stories and the work being done in the world and the movement towards peaceful parenting.

So thank you for listening today. If parent coaching is like, "What the what? I want to learn more about that Lisa. I didn't know all of this." Kiva, where can those people that want to know more go to find out about Jai?

Kiva: You can visit our website at www.jaiinstituteforparenting.com. There is a plethora of information. Our syllabus, case studies, the brain science. If you're a brain science geek, there's lots for you.

Lisa: There is. Yes, there's a lot. Yeah. So the website is the hub, right. I always like to think of our websites as our hub of where to dive in and get started. We'll link to the Jai Institute in the show notes as well.

So Kiva, thank you seems just not even enough for the way you and your program and what you embody has I know changed the Smith household. As a result of that, I've had the pleasure of working with thousands of parents around the world. It's that triple ripple, as you say. So I also wanted to use this platform to just convey my gratitude to you, human to human soul to soul. Sister, you're amazing.

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Kiva: I deeply receive that. It really truly is my privilege and honor to somehow have gotten us, by us I mean me and my kids. Because I think that's where it started to have gotten us here. It's been everything.

Lisa: These journeys are beautiful, and I want it for everybody. If you're driving home from work, I want it for you. If you're listening while folding laundry, I want it for you. If you're listening as a couple, I want you to be able to bring these tools into your household and have this transformation. If you're a single parent and you're thinking, "How am I going to do this alone?" I want it for you. I want it for all of you. I want it for every one of you.

So keep coming back here week after week. Keep listening. Keep showing up. We're building community together. So thank you. Thanks again Kiva. Until next time, 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.