

Ep #54: What Finding Nemo Can Teach Us About Parenting



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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. Welcome to today's episode. Today's episode is about hope and encouragement not to give up no matter what's going on for you, for your kids, for your family. No matter what parenting challenges you're facing. I wanted to talk to you today and encourage and support and just really talk to you about not giving up and trying to find the connection with your kids.

I talk to parents all over the world every single day. I know the struggle it is to learn new tools, to create connection, to find your way. I'm here today to say number one, you're doing a great job. You're here. You're showing up. You're listening. You're learning. You're trying, and that counts for something. Number two, please don't give up. Don't stop trying. It takes time to learn a new skill. It takes output and input. It takes help and support, and that's my job to show up every week here to help and support you. Your job is to just not give up. Deal? Awesome.

So let me ask you as we jump into the heart of today's episode. Do you ever find that the challenge of parenting feels heavy? Maybe feels like swimming in a sea that's rough, in the middle of the ocean in the rough seas?

I was on a call with some parents recently, and I was talking to them about how what we see on the surface, which is our child's behavior. That what many of us focus on because it's all we know, is not the whole picture. We were talking about how what we see on the surface when we're snorkeling, our child's behavior, is not the whole picture.

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To build connection and trust and to avoid the cycle of head to head battles, we need to go below the surface. We need to scuba dive down below the surface and understand what the feelings and needs are that lie beneath the behavior. We've talked about this before in many episodes. I'm always encouraging all of you to transition from being a snorkeler looking at just the behavior at the surface to scuba diving down to the feelings and needs.

This got me thinking about a metaphor. I love metaphors. I started thinking about the ocean. I started thinking about one of my favorite movies, *Finding Nemo*. I realized that this is a really great metaphor for our parenting. That the behavior is the choppy and murky surface of the ocean, the stuff at the top. It's hard to stay afloat. It's tumultuous. It's choppy. The ocean looks murky, clouded, unable to see down below.

When we go beneath and we scuba dive down, it's beautiful. It's blue and there's all the gorgeous underwater life in technicolor swimming around. Whenever I'm recommending in a podcast or in a class or in coaching that we transition from being snorkelers to being scuba divers, it always make me think of *Finding Nemo*.

The theme of the movie is family connection, right. In the plot of the film, Marlin the clownfish is trying to find his son Nemo. Nemo is trying to escape from the dentist's fish tank to get back to his father Marlin. Neither knows that the other is searching and desperately wanting to be connected, to be reunited, to be seen, heard, and valued. Neither Marlin nor Nemo realize that the other person is searching and hoping to find connection. Father is looking for son and at the same time son is looking for father.

They're storming while they're doing it. They're storming. That's what the movie is about, the storming. But what it's really also about is scuba diving

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down to the feelings and needs. The need is connection. Seen, heard, and valued.

A parallel to this is when you feel really separated from your child by the storming, the fights, the shouting, the battles that have been going on in your home. The judgements. The lack of understanding. Why is she doing this? Why can't he figure it out? Why do we have to have the same battle over and over and over again? Why can't my kids just get along? The slammed doors become like walls, and there's no sense that you're searching for each other. You're lost at sea and your child is trapped in the dentist fish tank.

What I know for sure is that you're both trying to find your way back to each other. You're both searching for the other person. I guarantee it. While you're lost at sea, your child is searching for connection with you. While your child is trapped in the dentist fish tank, you're searching for connection with them. You know how I know that? I know it because you wouldn't be here listening right now if you weren't searching for that connection.

Is it possible that the truth, the beneath the ocean truth, is that you're both, both of you, desperately searching for more connection? Neither one of you just know how to make it happen. I talk a lot about how you can connect with your kids. Your kids are looking to connect with you equally as much. When they're storming, they're looking for connection. I know it may not always feel like that. I know. I know sometimes harsh things come out of their mouth. Big behavior, big explosions happen. I understand. They're always looking to connect with you.

Is it possible that your child wants to be deeply connected with you even though their behavior makes it seem like anything else but this? Yes. Let me ask you that again. Let me say it this way. Please remember that while you're lost at sea, your child is trapped in the dentist fish tank. He or she or

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they want to be deeply connected with you even though their behavior makes it seem like anything but connection.

This is why we need to scuba dive down to the feelings and needs and not spend all of our time focused on our kid's behavior. Because it doesn't tell the full story. Just like if you look at the surface of the ocean. If you were from outer space and you came to Earth for the first time and you went out on a boat and you looked at the ocean, it would not look like it was full of life. It would not look colorful and beautiful with gorgeous underwater life in full technicolor. It just looks choppy and murky and flat, right?

Your child wants deeply to be connected with you even though their behavior makes it seem like anything but. I promise. Your child needs you, and they need you to swim the ocean to find them. Stay with me on the metaphor here. You don't actually need to go swimming. They need you to keep searching for that connection.

Keep trying to find a way to connect. Ask questions. Tell me more. Tell me what was going on for you right before X happened. Tell me what you're feeling. Tell me what you need. Tell me what you're thinking. Let's go for a walk and talk about it. Let's run around the block together and see how we feel at the end, and let's have some conversation.

I encourage you to never stop swimming the ocean to find them. This is the work I do, helping parents swim across the ocean of disconnection and find connection with their kids. Be reunited. You could call me the Dory in this story, but much less forgetful. Dory helped Nemo find his way back. I help parents like Marlin, I help them find the connection with their kids. I help you hopefully by being here every week find the connection with your kids.

If you remember *Finding Nemo*, Dory's reframe throughout the film is keep swimming, keep swimming, keep swimming. That's what she kept

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encouraging Nemo. My encouragement to you is keep scuba diving, keep scuba diving, keep scuba diving. Scuba dive down to the feelings and needs. Never give up. If it doesn't go well today, try again tomorrow, later, the next day. Keep scuba diving, keep scuba diving, keep scuba diving.

Let me give you three steps to carry out. Let me be Dory in your ear, in your brain, and keep encouraging you. Step one, look beneath the murky and choppy ocean surface. Remember, get curious, not furious. Find out what's really going on for your child. Ask about feelings and needs. What was happening for you right before X? What are you feeling? What's going on for you? Tune into your body son, daughter, kids. Tell me what's going on.

Down below you're going to find the blue waters of great clarity. You'll see what's actually going on for your child. With that clarity can come a more informed and understanding response. When you can give it, that kind of informed and understanding response, it has the potential to change everything. It even has the potential to change behavior patterns that are so engrained they're like shipwrecks at the bottom of the ocean deeply stuck in the seabed. Yeah?

Then step two, keep scuba diving even when the parenting waters get choppy or stormy. Believe it's possible to stay connected with your kids, even when the waters are choppy and the atmosphere is stormy. It's possible even if right now you're separated by oceans of different views. Unmet expectations, raised voices, threats, and slammed doors.

How do I know this? Because I've worked with thousands of parents around the world who've had to overcome oceans of different views. Who've had to work on staying calm when the storming happens. Who have worked successfully on creating the connection. The result was a happy reunion just like Marlin and Nemo. It can happen for you too. Just

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continue to work on scuba diving down to the feelings and needs. Show up here every week. Keep listening. Take the tools back to your kids. Keep working on finding the connection.

As Marlin never gave up on Nemo, never. As the parent, he never gave up on finding Nemo. He never gave up on finding his way back to his son. I want this for you too. I know you can do it. You've just got to keep working on scuba diving down to the feelings and needs.

Yeah? Awesome. So this week as you're going about your week, remember *Finding Nemo*. Visualize yourself as Marlin. Visualize your kids as trapped in the dentist fish tank. Even though they're trapped in there with their storming, sass, eyerolling, door slamming, fighting, melting down. Even though they're trapped in the fish tank, they're still looking for connection. They're still working on finding their way back to you. Don't forget that.

Let me be your Dory. I'm there in your head. I'm that voice saying keep scuba diving, keep scuba diving. I know it's murky. I know it's choppy. Keep scuba diving. Scuba dive down to the feelings and needs. You've got this. Dory was there helping Marlin and Nemo unite. I'm right there with you helping you and your kids find your way back to each other through connection by scuba diving down to the feelings and needs.

Oh I love it. I love it. Do you? I hope you love it. I'm here for you. 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.

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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. See you soon.