

**Ep #55: Connection Can Come from Setting Limits:
Real World Coaching with Angela**



Full Episode Transcript

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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.

Welcome, welcome, welcome to today's episode. I absolutely love being with you here each week. I want you to know how proud I am of you for investing this time in your parenting, your kids, and your family. Well done you. Well done. Now if you've been listening to me for a while, you know I try to bring you ideas, tools, coaching, and support that helps you create deep connection and cooperation with your kids.

Today I have a special treat for you. I want you to listen in as I talk with one of my clients about setting limits that peacefully stick, boundaries, consistency in parenting, and ultimately how to create connection through setting limits. Yes, connection through setting limits.

This is a conversation with Angela who is a single mom of a very strong willed, very determined 11 year old boy. As a side note, Angela's from the UK. So wait until you hear her accent. It's absolutely divine.

Angela's been walking on the path to peaceful parenting for a couple years now. She reached out for support around getting her strong willed son to get ready in the mornings, which seems to be a daily battle for both of them that leaves them at the end of the mornings rung out, exhausted, and not sure what to do. I love bringing you these live coaching calls so you can hear the work, how it unfolds. You get a chance to really see the tools put into action, and the support that I offer through my coaching.

So listen in as I walk Angela through the tools to use with a strong willed son to peacefully set limits and create connection. You're also going to

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hear our follow conversation two weeks later as Angela walks us through the fruits of her work as she realizes that it's through setting limits that she's able to create deep connection with her son. Enjoy.

Lisa: So welcome Angela. So excited to have you here today and talk about setting limits and rules versus punishments and how to put these in place with your son. So welcome, welcome, welcome.

Angela: Thank you so much. I'm really excited to be here with you Lisa.

Lisa: Yeah, I just love you Angela. It's been a real pleasure to work with you over the years. So for everyone who's listening, Angela is a single mom. She has a 12 year old son who is very strong willed. Sweet as can be and in the same breath incredibly strong willed. Does not like to be told what to do. Angela is working with her son together to set some limits in the house. I had given Angela a homework assignment to come back to me with her top three limits, top three things that were incredibly important to her.

So this is what we're going to talk about today is three things, really three values that important to her and how she can work to set some limits around them. Then be in a position to present those to her son, let him know if then, if you choose to do this then this is what will happen. We've talked about this before about setting limits. If you choose to do this, then this is what will happen. Really work with Beau to put the limits in place, to really understand what they are.

Then for her to work to be able to enforce them or follow through on them. I think enforce is a little bit too strong of a word, but really to follow through on them. This is one of the struggles that many of us parents is setting the

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limits in the first place that are fair and equitable, that make sense. Then part two of it is committing to following through on them consistently 100% of the time so we build that trust with our child and we build the trust around the limit. This is certainly the sticky wicket, right Angela?

Angela: Yeah, I feel like I definitely have issues on following through consistently. As well as really as I had to think about choosing three limits because there's so many things I feel like I want Beau to do and really having to condense it down to finding what's realistic has been quite a task to be honest. And sticking to that, not throwing other things on top.

Lisa: Exactly. Exactly. This is what we often do. We make it complicated. We want so much for our kids, right. We want to teach them everything immediately. Oftentimes we want them to pitch in and help out and follow rules and do the right things. Sometimes setting limits can get very complicated in the sheer volume of limits we have and then how we want to go about reinforcing them.

This is definitely something I noticed in our previous conversations is that it can be tempting or you can fall into the pattern of bouncing all over the place. Throwing out too many, changing the rules all the time. I think I see a lot of parents from a place of frustration turn the limit into a threat or a punishment. That takes away the trust around the limit, right?

Angela: Yeah.

Lisa: When we go into...An example of that might be if I tell you that if you're on your phone after 9:00, you lose your phone the next day. I come into your bedroom, you're on your phone, and I immediately go into snatching the phone out of your hand, yelling at you, and telling you you've lost the phone for a week. Right?

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That's degrading the trust that we've built around a limit of I've committed that if you choose to be on your phone after 9:00, you'll lose your phone the next day. Then I start storming alongside you because I'm dysregulated. Now I'm threatening you that I'm going to take the phone away permanently by saying you can't handle this. I can't trust you. You're not worthy. We're going to take the phone away. I'm just going to throw it in the garbage. Or that's it, you've lost your phone for a month. That degrades the trust. Tell me your thoughts on that.

Angela: Yeah I definitely see myself, and I'm trying to work on that. Because I see myself that even when I put the limit, and it's obviously a natural response for Beau to try and overstep that limit that I get very dysregulated. That's what I'm trying to work on is I've set the limit.

I'm now trying to set the limit and make him very aware of the consequence. Not just saying it once at the beginning of the year, but kind of trying to repeat it to him every few days. To be like look, if this is what happens, that will be the consequence. Then when he oversteps it, I'm trying. Because I see myself losing my shiz and becoming dysregulated and angry and feeling disrespected. I can really see how that takes away from the connection.

Because there's been a few times now in the last few days where I've seen that if I stay regulated and I just in a calm and normal manner go like, "Okay well that was the consequence. This is now happening." Rather than going into a fury. He reacts a lot better.

Lisa: Yes.

Angela: But it's a process because automatically there's this feeling of my child's not listening to me. He's disrespecting me. I've said to him this is the limit and he's still not adhering to it.

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Lisa: Yeah there so many things that I love that you just said that I want to point out. One is the idea that our kids are going to push back. That's their job, particularly strong willed kids. I think a lot of us are under the illusion that when we set a limit because we've set it, because it's important to us, because we really mean it that they're just going to blindly follow it.

Angela: No.

Lisa: That isn't how strong willed kids work. So to know, and I think that this is one thing that you've really learned well is that he is going to push back. I need to be prepared for that. I need to be prepared in a regulated way. Because as I keep saying when he pushed back and you hold the limit and enforce the consequence from a regulated place, it builds trust between the two of you. I do what I say I'm going to do. I can do it without yelling at you. I can do it without being punitive. I can do it without calling you names and screaming at you.

That builds the trust that you're going to do what you say you're going to do in a calm way. It helps him build the trust in himself. It builds the trust in the relationship and the trust around the limit.

Angela: Exactly. I have also noticed how, and the more I'm paying attention to it is how inconsistent I am with enforcing the same boundary and the same consequence. It's really something that I'm trying to hold myself to account. It's quite amazing how difficult that is. How in the moment, it's like that's it. You'll never have the phone again.

Lisa: Right. Yeah. I mean our habit, especially if this is how we were raised. This was a big struggle for me too Angela. Learning to set a calm limit that I was willing to follow through on, and then following through on it. Because I was raised in a household where when you did something wrong,

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everybody became angry and loud and punitive. That's where I wanted to go.

Angela: Yeah, yeah. A thing that's been really amazing with the positive parenting course and specifically this that we've been working on with the limits. What I've noticed is that it takes a lot of preparation on my part to consistently prepare myself for how I'm going to react. Also really thinking about the limits. Like thinking about what is important to me and what is realistic.

Lisa: Yes. Yes.

Angela: Because when I sometimes watch myself, I'm like I want you to clean your bedroom and I want you to unload the dishes and I want you do this.

Lisa: I want you to smile and compliment me while you're doing it and thank me and tell me how much you love me. And you understand this will help you when you're 35. Yes. Yeah, that's what I wanted to walk into next. So let's go there.

So one of the things that is really important about setting limits is the prep work, right, as the parent. A couple things that come to mind that you and I have talked about in the past is they are far and few, and they're important, right. You can't have a scroll of 872 limits. So you pick the ones that are really important. I'd like to limit it to three when we first get started.

Then the next important thing you ask yourself is are they realistic and fair as you said? Does the punishment fit the crime, so to speak. Not that I believe in punishing anybody. What we don't want to do is be so punitive that the kid gives up or that they get frustrated or that they get angry and they rebel. The point in setting a limit isn't to punish the kid. The point is to

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teach a lesson. If we're shaming and punishing and being incredibly punitive, it is really hard for the child at any age to learn a limit.

So the consequence needs to be age appropriate. It needs to be timely. Like again back to the example if you're on your phone after 9:00. All phones get put away at 9:00. You go into your kid's bedroom and it's 9:05 and they're still on their phone and you take the phone away for a month. You're just asking for a string of bad behavior, right. Does that punishment really fit the crime, right? That's for every family to decide for themselves, but I like for us to really question.

You mentioned this. That you've really had to do a lot of prep work. Then the other part of it is am I willing—This is the most important question we ask ourselves. Am I willing and capable and able to follow through on the consequence? Again if I take the phone away for an entire month, I mean I'm punishing myself and the child and I'm creating a lot of conflict and stress in the family. Am I going to be able to hold out for an entire month?

Angela: Yeah I've noticed that I've previously done that a lot. Like had severe punishments where in the end, the punishment didn't work. I had to backtrack. I see that a lot as well within my community. Now I'm watching parenting from a totally different point of view. I see that a lot.

It's the kind of in the moment is that threatening thing of just behave otherwise because you're somewhere and you just want them to behave and cooperate. Then the threats come out. You'll never be on the phone again. I'll take the phone away. You'll never have sweets again.

I hear myself now sometimes saying that. I'm like but that's not, you know. This is where the issue then comes in. Because then in two days we're going somewhere and I'm and like ugh okay. I'll give you a chocolate if you

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can just. So there's a lot of mixed messages that I've come to realize that I have been giving to my son when it comes to consequence and limits.

Also that I myself am having to get really clear about what are boundaries? What are limits? Like I had an A4 list of limits. Then when you said to me three I was like oh my goodness. Okay. I have to really. Okay. What do I really want him to do? What is important? How on a daily basis does that look like?

So it's been an amazing introspection into also getting to know myself and looking at even just understanding. Because I think that I also wasn't very clear on boundaries and limits and realistic boundaries and limits. I think that also important. Because I see that a lot as well now in my friends that we have this unrealistic notion of what we want of children. The room must be always cleaned. The teeth always brushed. Never any sugar to be eaten.

Lisa: Right no outside influences. They self-regulate on the electronics. Yeah. That not the, yeah. I mean that's not the world we live in. Heck, most adults can't self-regulate on their phone. We're modeling that for our kids.

The other thing is when we're not clear and consistent with the follow through, that also breaks down the trust in the relationship because then we become Jekyll and Hyde parents, right. I yell at you and I tell you that you've lost the phone for a week. Or I tell you you're never having sweets again because I walk in and I brought home a bag of chocolates and you've eaten half the bag of chocolates in one sitting. I get dysregulated and I start. I take the chocolates away and I say, "Angela, you're never going to have to chocolate again."

Well first of all, I don't control that. That is not realistic. Then a week later it's a holiday in which we enjoy some chocolates. Now I've gone back on

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my word. So I damage the trust in the relationship between the two of us because I'm inconsistent.

I'm inconsistent because I punished from a place of dysregulation rather than setting limits upfront when I'm calm and able to be consistent and ask myself questions like am I really able to enforce? Am I willing to enforce this limit? Do I feel the limit is fair? Is it equitable? Is it reasonable? Is it fair? Can I enforce it? Those are good questions to ask ourselves.

Then the next step I want to talk about, and then we'll get into one of your examples and we'll dig into it. The other thing that's really important is that the limit is objective and crystal clear to the other party. Keep your room clean is not a limit. It's very esoteric. Your definition of clean and mine might be different. Yours might be everything's picked up off the floor and mine might be the baseboards have no dust on them. I don't even know if you all have baseboards where you live.

You know this is the other thing that trips us up as parents a lot is that in our mind, we know what we mean. Don't eat sweets. Keep your room tidy. Don't over game on your electronics. None of that is objective, right. No cell phone after 9:00 is objective. Tell me about that.

Angela: Elaborate, elaborate, elaborate because yeah. Wow. Okay. I haven't thought of it that way before, but that's true. Because very often he says, "But I've cleaned it." I'm like that's not clean.

Lisa: Right because you're a parent with a fully developed prefrontal cortex. You own your home. You care about it. Clean has a completely definition to you than it has to a 12 year old boy.

Angela: Yes. I'm also very obsessive when it comes to cleaning, for example.

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Lisa: Yes. So I'm often saying to my son, here's the list of chores that need to get done today before you get on gaming. All clothes need to be picked up off the floor. All food needs to be removed from the room. I would like you to make your bed. I don't care how it gets made, but I'd like you to make your bed. I'd like all clothes in the laundry room to be put away either in the closet or inside the drawers with the drawers completely shut.

Now that's a list that is a yes or no. He's either done it or he hasn't. I can go in and eyeball it. We can both agree whether the clothes are inside the drawers and the drawers are shut. We can agree whether all the dirty clothes have been picked up off the floor and whether there's any food containers in the room.

This didn't come naturally to me. I had to work at this. In making sure that I am incredibly specific and incredibly objective about exactly what I'm asking to do. The dishwasher needs to be loaded, and all the dishes inside the sink need to be in the dishwasher. The cellphone needs to be put in the kitchen on the charging station by 9:00. You have to be in bed lights out, everything done, lights out by 10:30, right.

These are very easy to follow instructions versus be in bed on time. What does that mean? Go clean up the kitchen. What does that mean? I guarantee most adults and most children have very different definitions of what cleaning up the kitchen means.

Angela: You're absolutely right. Yeah. Wow, ooh.

Lisa: I laugh Angela because even my husband and I have very different definitions of cleaning the kitchen. To me, a clean kitchen is everything is washed and either in the dishwasher or in the strainer. All countertops, all, are wiped down. The stove is completely cleaned. The floor might be swept if there's a lot of crumbs. For my husband, it just means everything is either

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in the dishwasher or in the sink soapy resting, soaking as he calls it. The countertops may or may not be wiped down.

I can't go to bed. I'm embarrassed to admit this, but I will. I cannot go to bed if my countertops are not wiped down. I can't sleep. So here's my husband and I, 31 years of marriage. He sleeps like a baby if the countertops are dirty. So even we have a different definition. So of course my son and I are going to have. So if I said to my son go clean the kitchen, that looks completely different through his young kid eyes than it looks through my eyes as the homeowner who can't sleep without her countertops being wiped down.

Angela: Yeah, wow. I have a lot of thoughts going. I think this is such an important point because I've never thought about it this way. It makes absolute sense to me. I think I'm having this thought of like as a parent, I think very often. I can only speak for myself. I fail to recognize that my child is a person. Obviously I recognize he's a person, but the same kind of detail I would give a friend, I don't do that.

Again, it's like having to really prepare and try and understand his underdeveloped brain and what it needs to be able to understand how to do the chores. How much detail does he need? How clear do I have to be? So it's a lot. Because I thought okay. I'm just going to write it on a piece of paper once, tell him, and that's it. But it's absolutely more complicated than that.

What you just said makes so much sense. In my head, it seems like this ah-ha moment. Like ah it's so clear. Of course I would have to elaborate exactly what I expect step by step. Because yeah, clean your room, make sure you're clean.

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Lisa: Yeah, yeah. You know I was just thinking. Here in America, we have a lot of fast foods chains, but we have one called Chick-fil-A. I don't know if you've ever heard of it.

Angela: No.

Lisa: They serve little chicken nuggets and fries and it's very popular. They often hire. It's one of the few places in America you can start working at I think 14 or 15. They often hire young kids. If you go into Chick-fil-A, they have tons of 15/16/17 year olds working they're. They're all smiling, or most of them have smiles on their face. They look like they're enjoying their job.

It makes me wonder. A place like that that's training a 15 year old brain versus Microsoft, let's say, who typically most of their workers are college graduate professionals or most of their workers. The difference between training a 14 year old on how to make chicken nuggets and fries and bag them up versus training a professional who's had four years of extra college development of their prefrontal cortex.

When we're working with our kids in setting limits, we have to be more of the Chick-fil-A trainer than the Microsoft, just to use an analogy. Because they remember very little. They're not 10,000 hours into the chores that we're asking them to do or the limit that we're setting. So we have to keep it simple, like you said at the beginning. We have to review it with them all the time.

I like the idea of writing limits out on a piece of paper. Both parents and all kids signing it or the kid signing it. I'm a big fan of posting it on the fridge so every time the child opens the fridge to get a snack, they're looking at it. It's imprinting in their brain. We're objective and we're willing to be consistent 100% of the time. That's really the foundation of really being able to set strong limits or good limits or solid limits and following through on them.

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So let's dig into one of yours and take it as an example. So let's pick one. Is there one in particular you really want to work on or do you want me to pick it?

Angela: Screen time.

Lisa: What's that?

Angela: The screen time. The limit on the screen time.

Lisa: All right so tell me about that. What happens now? Walk me through where the struggle is?

Angela: The struggle is that I have to obviously enforce the limit because Beau absolutely has no regulation and will just continue on the screen for 24 hours if allowed.

Lisa: He's the only kid in the world like that Angela. I can't believe that. There are people all around the world right now going girl, I get what you're saying. I get what you're saying.

Angela: So when then the screen gets taken away, obviously there's a reaction. What I'm trying to do is almost like an earning of the screen time, you know? Like first you have to... Your room has to be cleaned. You have to put the dishes in the dishwasher.

Very often because I'm running around trying to work or get things done. Rather than calmly getting regulated and preparing myself in the moment, I then either grab the screen or that's it. React in a furious manner. I never really enforce that whole the screen time has to be earned. This is again where just having this conversation, I'm really seeing how much preparation I need to put in.

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Lisa: Okay let me ask you a couple questions to help. Let's see if we can set a limit today and clarify this or at least get us started. So is Beau allowed to or do you want him to be able to have screen time during school days?

Angela: So I usually give him an hour and a half a day, and then I'm like that it. Then he's with his friends or his friends come over and then they ask, "Oh please can I just have another because of my friends." Then I'm like okay because then I have an issue with sticking to the limit. So he keeps asking and asking for another half an hour, another half an hour. I give it to him either because I'm busy and I need to work and I can't him disturb me, or his friends are there and they all want to be on the screen together.

Then all of a sudden I'm like oh my god, it's been three hours on the screen. Then I get angry. Then I'm like that's it, no screen time tomorrow. So I would ideally prefer in the weekdays, I mean I have to be realistic. So I'm going to be an hour. Ideally I'd like there to be no screentime, but I have to be realistic. So an hour a week, but no later than 6:00.

Because that's the other thing I've noticed. When he then is on the screen more towards the evening then he can't go to bed. Then it becomes this whole thing where then it's like 10:00 and he's still awake. I'm like? Then I get dysregulated because I'm like you need your sleep and I want to go to sleep and I have things to do. So it becomes this spiral then.

Lisa: What I heard you say Angela is on school days, you'd like Beau to have one hour of screen time and off all screens by 6:00.

Angela: Yes.

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Lisa: Okay. What are you going to do? Does anything needs to be done before he gets the hour of screen time? Like homework completed or chores? I don't care what you pick. If you're flexible about that, that's fine. Or if does it work better if homework's done first before he has the hour of screen time?

Angela: Definitely homework, but the homework is not so consistent. So there isn't always homework. So I would say if there is homework, that has to be done before. With the room now I've said okay once a week, I want the room cleaned. Like yesterday he cleaned it spotless.

Lisa: Okay we're not bringing cleaning the room into this. This is where things get cattywampus. So we're doing homework has to be completed if there is homework. Homework done. Okay so the limit is you get one hour of screen time on school nights, no screen after 6:00, and the hour can start after homework is done.

Angela: Yes.

Lisa: Okay. Now are you able and willing to make sure that at the end of the hour, you're paying attention and you're getting him off the screen time? Because what's not going to work is Monday night he does it for an hour. You're consistent because you're all fresh and it's the beginning of the week. Then Tuesday night he gets two and a half hours because you got stuck on a Zoom call or a neighbor walked over and chatted with you in the backyard or whatever happened.

Then Wednesday a friend comes over, so he has an hour from 3:00 to 4:00 let's say. Then the friend comes over and you give them another two hours while you're cleaning out closets or food prepping or doing your own work. Next thing you know he's had Monday one hour, Tuesday night two and a

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half hours, Wednesday night he got three hours. Now Thursday night you want to go back to the one hour.

Angela: Yes, this is where I'm going to have to hold myself accountable regardless of how uncomfortable it's going to get and really stick to it.

Lisa: Yeah and it's hard because sometimes we want to use it as a babysitter. Sometimes we want to give in. Sometimes we want to, "Oh but Lisa he's having such a good time." I'm not saying you can't ever stretch the rules. In the beginning we have to build trust around this and that mom is serious. So in the beginning, we have to be willing.

This is a good gut check. Because if you feel like you know what? An hour's not enough. I'm not going to get anything done. He's barely going to get into it. We're going to have a battle. This is the point at which you really sit down and visualize. Can I see myself Monday through Friday after an hour of screen time putting down what I'm doing and engaging with him? Maybe we make dinner together. Maybe we go for a walk. No Lisa, an hour feels like the right amount of time.

Or maybe you're like wow, he's going to push back. That's not going to work. We're going to have world war three. Or maybe you're like you know what? I feel like two hours would be a good amount for him. It's good for him. It's good for me. It's like everyday from four to six basically. He gets home from school at 3:00. It gives him an hour to get homework done. Then I'm going to give him from 4:00 to 6:00.

Then at 6:00 we're going to put it away for the night. I'll be done with my work. We're going to spend the evening together. This is part of the process of not just picking something and going with it but really visualizing can I see both of being successful with this limit?

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Angela: Yeah, yeah. It's just not as straight forward as picking something. Because it then fails.

Lisa: Right. It's basically looking at fantasy versus reality, right. So it's does this feel realistic? Does it feel doable? Am I willing to follow through? Does this feel like we're going to win and be cooperative? Now I'm not suggesting that you go from an hour to seven. It doesn't matter to me. An hour, two hours, three hours. I want it to work for you and Beau, but I'm just trying to illustrate this the point where you gut check yourself. You go wow, suddenly does an hour feel good or not?

Angela: Yeah. I'm gut checking. I think maybe an hour and a half is more realistic.

Lisa: Okay. I like that. So we're going to do 90 minutes after homework is done with the agreement of no screen time after 6:00.

Angela: Yep.

Lisa: So now the other step in this is the realization that you're going to have to be the timekeeper. He's not going to be. He doesn't want to keep time. He doesn't want to get off. He doesn't have a fully developed prefrontal cortex. Even if you tell him to set a timer, the way the screen time works.

So you're going to need to set a timer. Maybe the limit is I'm going to give you a five minute warning. I'm going to let you know your time's up. I'm going to give you a five minute grace period. If you choose not to get off the gaming or the screen, you use the word screen so I'll use your word. If you choose not to get off screen's after 90 minutes then the consequence will be X.

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Angela: Yeah.

Lisa: Right? The language is important that you communicate to Beau. He is in control here. As a strong willed kid, as we've talked about before, the number one thing they want is to feel in control. So what we're saying here is not, and this is important to the people listening. It's not Angela if you this then I will that. It's Angela is in charge here. Angela is you choose not to get off the gaming then you will lose screen time the next day. I'm just going to make that up for now.

Angela: Yeah.

Lisa: Okay.

Angela: Yeah no that's good. I like that one.

Lisa: So you're buying tomorrow's screen time by following the rules today. You are in complete charge of that. This is so important that we present it in a way that the strong willed kid can hear it.

Angela: Yeah.

Lisa: Right? I give my son an allowance every week for gas and food and whatever. If he isn't lights out by 10:30, if lights are not out by 10:30, it costs him \$20 on his allowance. We're both very clear on this. It's very measurable. It's not I'll take money away from you. It's \$20. So he knows exactly how much it's going to be.

It's funny because a couple nights ago he had something to do. I said hey, if lights aren't out by 10:30. He said, "You know what mom? I understand that, but tonight I'm just going to have to lose the \$20. I forgot I had this to do. I need to get it done before school in the morning. I realize the

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consequence. I'm willing to pay the price." I was like okay. \$20 off. He understood it and was willing. We can communicate this way because there's a lot of trust and a lot of consistency around the limits.

Angela: Yeah. That's my aim to get to that point.

Lisa: Yeah.

Angela: I realize I have to be consistent. The way you phrased it, that's great. I'm going to write it down and just keep repeating it to him as well. This exactly in detail. Start with those three, you're absolutely right. Because otherwise it's just too many actually.

Lisa: Yeah. We don't want to bring cleaning the room once a week in and confuse it. Then you've given me this directions that I can't follow, right. These are like directions. You're going to go to First Street and make a left. Then you're going to go to Main Street and make a right. You don't want to be like you're going to 150 yards to the clock tower due north and then make a westwardly turn. I can't follow that. I can't follow those directions.

So super clear 90 minutes on school days after homework's done and before 6:00. Then you're going to give them a five minute warning, a onetime warning, and a five minute grace period. If he's not off by—Now that's 15 minutes. You want to point this out to them. So whatever he's doing, he's got 15 minutes from the first warning to wrap it up and get off to buy himself his pass, if you will, or his ticket to screen time tomorrow.

The other thing you want to add. There's going to come a day where he's going to flub it up, right. He's not going to get off. You're going to give him the five minute grace period. You leave the room, you come back in, he's still on it. You want to stay really regulated. Like hey buddy. It's not that big of a deal. Today's Monday. You don't have it on Tuesday. You'll get it back

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on Wednesday. You want to support him, right? You want to believe in him that he can be successful.

You don't want it, "Well, this is all your fault. You lost it. I gave you a warning. I told you and you just didn't listen. You just pushed the limits. You just can't follow through. You don't do what I tell you. I can't believe this." You don't want to do that. You want to give him confidence that this too will pass.

Because remember, we're not punishing. We're not harming or taking our anger out on him. We're teaching him that these rules are to be followed. When they're followed, you get the ticket to gaming to the next day. When they're not followed, you lose the privilege. It's all super calm and regulated. We don't need to attack their character, storm alongside them, or get dysregulated while we're enforcing the consequence.

Angela: Yeah. That's a very important point. I think that's where the importance of working on the soothers and staying in the higher brain. Because I saw this today. I requested for the dishwasher. It was supposed to be done last night. I just stayed calm. I was like before you do this and this, that dishwasher has to be packed. In this tone of voice. Then it was done. I was quite surprised actually because it's the first time I've put this in place. Now you pack the dishwasher.

In the past few days when I've tried to get into do it and it would yeah, like you said. Rather than being his ally, I would become the enemy. Then it just becomes a very unbearable power struggle.

Lisa: Yes. If I lose the privilege of screen time, I'm already upset. I'm disappointed in myself. I'm upset. I'm sad about losing it tomorrow. I don't need my parent to pile on either to my bad choices or attacking my character. It is not helpful, and it is necessary to point out the obvious, how

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I've already screwed up. Instead if you say to me it's okay. You'll get through it. I understand you're upset. You'll pay your dues. We'll live to have screen time another day. It helps me stay regulated and build the trust around the limit and not get completely dysregulated or lined up against the punishment.

Again, the goal here is to teach Beau to follow the rules. The big picture, the really big picture is to teach our kids to follow the limits when they're set. Because this is how the world works. There are natural consequences in adult life. At the end of the day, a part of this is about teaching him to regulate the 90 minutes of screen time. The bigger part of this is teaching him that when limits are set, he has a choice whether he's going to follow them or not. There are consequences to following rules and there are consequences to breaking rules.

That teaches our kids respect of rules, when to push back. It teaches them how to take responsibility. It teaches them about consequences. It teaches them critical thinking. It raises their emotional intelligence. There's a lot at work here. So when we stay calm, when we're helping them learn to decide whether to follow rules or not, we build trust in the relationship and trust around the limits that we've set.

Angela: Yeah. This is great. I'm looking forward to this practice.

Lisa: Yeah. So here's what I want you to do to wrap this up Angela. I want you to take this one limit. 90 minutes, school days, after homework's done.

Angela: Noting it down.

Lisa: Yeah no screen time after 6:00. I'm going to give you a five minute warning. I'm going to tell you time's up, and a five minute grace period. If you continue to game after the five minute grace period, then there's no

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screen time the next day. Then I want you to take that one simple limit and just put it in place. Introduce it, talk with Beau about it, write it out. You both sign it, paste it on the fridge, the icebox, and then follow it. Just stick with this one limit until you get it under your belt and then bring another one in.

Part of this is just you getting in the swing of it, getting him in the swing of it, you guys building that relationship with each other and around it. You working on being consistent. It's much easier to be consistent with one limit than 14.

So what I want you to do Angela is put this limit into place. Then we're going to have another call in two weeks. You're going to come back to the call and share with me what worked, what didn't, how it's going. What it was like for you, what it was like for Beau. We'll have part two of this where we have a chance to follow up with you. Sound good?

Angela: Great. Yeah, that sounds amazing. I'm actually really excited about it now.

Lisa: Perfect. Me too.

Angela: A new challenge for myself.

Lisa: Yes, yes. The setting limit challenge. Yeah. The setting limit challenge. I love it.

Angela: Yeah, the setting limit challenge. That's great.

Lisa: Okay. Perfect. Well we'll speak to you soon.

Angela: Thank you so much Lisa.

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Lisa: So we're back with Angela having a conversation about setting limits and boundaries. It's been a couple weeks. It gives us a beautiful opportunity to follow up with Angela, hear about her progress, check in with what's going on with her and her son, and take the next step in setting limits that peacefully stick. So welcome Angela. Welcome.

Angela: Thank you so much Lisa. I'm excited to be here again.

Lisa: Yeah. Give us an update. It's been a couple weeks. So tell us how it's going or not going. It's all good.

Angela: So it's been interesting. I feel I've succeeded 50% of the time, which I think for me is quite a lot. I've definitely gained more insight into my issues around consistency and the consistency of putting limits.

Lisa: Great. 50% of the time is a major step forward. I mean it is worth celebrating and patting yourself on the back. There aren't many things that we do as humans that we have a 50% improvement out of the gate. So tell us a little bit about the improvement piece.

Angela: Yeah and can I just say what you just said there is really important to give some perspective. Because at the beginning, it was going really well and then it was kind of like I wasn't being consistent. I was going into that same loop of being really hard on myself.

Then I just realized I was like you know, I really had to drill that mantra progress over perfection into my mind. It kind of helped me to—Because as well I had to keep at the back of my mind that the connection with Beau is more important than me trying to enforce any limit. Again when we were connected, he was just so much more cooperative.

Lisa: Oh say that again. Say that again.

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Angela: When we were connected, he was just so much more cooperative. I want to add that in the moments we were connected, he out of his own...I just said that once and now out of his own he is just unpacking and packing the dishwasher. So that's like an added bonus that's happened.

Lisa: Well that's the essence with there. That is the essence Angela, and you know this, of what I teach. That connection leads to cooperation. Not 100% of the time because no human cooperates with another human 100% of the time, but the odds are in your favor. The numbers are so much higher when there's connection. I say all the time you can't mandate cooperation. You can mandate compliance, which is what many parents are trying to do. We're trying to mandate compliance out of our soldiers that we call children.

When we flip the lid and we focus on connection first, not as the only thing but first, then the cooperation naturally follows. What you're telling me is that you've spent time prioritizing the relationship over the behavior in that exact moment. The behavior is still important. We still want the dishwasher unloaded, right.

Let's use that example. We still want the dishwasher unloaded. We want our kids to participate. We want them to do chores. We want them to do what we ask. Unloading the dishwasher is important, but it's not more important than the relationship and creating the connection, which ironically when the connection is created leads to your son unpacking the dishwasher voluntarily or with cooperation or on his own.

Angela: Exactly. This is where I really, because I had some moments where I would go into my old way of parenting because it was with a screen. What I also saw was if sometimes I give a bit more leeway because for me—Also the one thing that I've noticed is at Beau's age now, it's really difficult for us to find things to do together that we both enjoy.

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So watching funny episodes of series together is something he loves to do with me. When he goes like, "Oh can we watch something?" I'm like you've already had your hour and a half. No. I'm taking away from that connection of us sitting together laughing about it snuggling in bed. So there's been moments where I've had to, and I've become quite good of really putting the work in of regulating myself where I go ah okay. This is the moment now. What am I choosing?

Am I choosing the fact that you've used your screen time and that's it? You don't get more. He's going to storm off and get upset. Or am I choosing you know okay for today and then tomorrow, but then I also have these. I say to him okay, we're going to go over the screen time today, but then tomorrow you get less. Then he's okay with that.

Then we have moment of connection where we're watching something together and we're connecting. We're laughing together. We go to bed, both of us, feeling good, feeling happy, feeling connected. So it's like I'm really retraining my brain into this way of being now with him.

Lisa: Yeah. Training your brain into peaceful parenting and connection. You gave us a beautiful example. I just want to talk about this for a minute. You gave us a beautiful example of what it means real time to value the relationship and the connection over the behavior.

What you just told me is that my son connects through these silly videos. What you told me is do I love them? No, I don't love them. I recognize that I need to connect in ways that are meaningful to him. It would be easy to say, "You've already used up all your screen time. We're not going to watch that. I don't know why you watch that. That's silly. I don't want to watch that. No you can't do that. You've used up your screen time today. You've used up your allotment." In no way is that going to feel like acceptance, respect, and connection for your son.

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So instead you said, “Oh he likes this. He likes watching these. He likes snuggling in the bed watching these silly videos, short videos together. I can do this to connect with him and still hold the boundary of we’re going to borrow some screen time tomorrow. I can present it in a calm way. I can set this limit in a calm way that leads to connection, right.”

Angela: Yeah.

Lisa: That’s the thing. It leads to connection.

Angela: It does. It’s amazing. Then he does the next day. He’s like, “I know.” In the morning he tells me, “I know I’m not getting my screen time today because we used it yesterday.” It’s amazing. Sometimes I do notice when I’m, example, when I have PMS, I find it a lot more difficult to get into my higher brain. But it is amazing to see and to just see, the dishwasher was so...I was gob smacked. I was like wow, this is amazing. This is like a bonus, you know. I just mentioned it in passing and it’s something he’s doing.

Also I think from him he’s recognizing the fact that I am connecting with him and that I’m letting the screen time slide. So this is him doing his part as well in that sense. It’s really amazing to see.

Lisa: Yeah. You're meeting each other halfway. You're respecting what's important to him as much as he’s respecting what's important to you. You're modeling respect. You may not realize that, but you're modeling respect. I respect that this is important to you. I can see that this is a piece of the connection puzzle. I may not always be able to do it, but in this moment I can connect with you this way.

Then tomorrow he’s putting the dishes away no because he wants to. Not because he’s excited about it. But because there's been a level of respect

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built, and it's two way. It's a two way street with our kids. As you practice this more and more and more, this will become a natural part of your relationship.

Angela: Yeah. This is what I'm excited about. Because I think for me also the realization that I'm having with this process is that he's a human being. Also throughout these two weeks very often I've asked myself okay how would I treat my friends?

Because what I've noticed about myself and like I'm sure a lot of us parents have this that we don't really think of our children as whole human beings, autonomous human beings. They're just kind of like children. We tell them what to do, and they have to follow those orders and we expect things from them. Actually reminding myself continually he's a human being. How would I treat, for example, my friends or someone who is equal to me? So that's also actually helped me a lot to in those moments be like okay, relax. Connect.

Lisa: Yes. I would say recognizing that our kids are human beings with free will and opinions and ideas and thoughts is part of valuing the relationship over the behavior. It's that piece of the puzzle. When it clicks for us as parents, when we really get it and then we set about to have our actions reflect that, it's a game changer in the relationship. Because I'm recognizing that you are your own soul here to have your own experience.

I'm recognizing that you're not a robot that's going to do everything I tell you to do the first time, nor do I really want that. None of us really, really want to raise robots. Because then they're going to be robots out in the world doing what other people tell them the first time. It is recognizing that you are a human and that I want to build trust and respect between us. I have to do my part by connection.

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It might mean watching a silly video snuggled in bed one night that you don't really want to watch because there's 8,000 other things to do like laundry and dinner prep and returning emails and getting back to people and relaxing and self-care. All these other things. This is important to him. This is how he connects.

So I can set the boundary of, "Hey you used all your time today. So we'll borrow out of tomorrow. I would love to connect with you for 15/20 minutes watching some silly videos together to build that connection, respect, and trust.

Angela, it's just the perfect...I think we should just end right here because I think it's just the perfect ending to this story of setting limits and how connection can come. This is what we're going to name this podcast episode is Connection Can Come From Setting Limits. You've taken us on an absolutely beautiful journey of how to do this. So thank you for being our teacher. Thank you for showing us the way. We are grateful for the work you put in and for the example you set for us. Thank you.

Angela: Thank you Lisa. Thank you for all the work you do to, yeah, to have support in me to get to this point.

Lisa: My pleasure. Yeah I feel blessed our path's crossed.

Angela: Yes definitely.

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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