

Ep #56: What to Do When You Are Not on the Same Page as Your Co-Parent



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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. It's been a year, can you believe it? This past week on January 27th, I celebrated the one year anniversary of *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. I am so excited to begin year two with you, to meet you here every week and share tips, tools, ideas, support, and coaching on your path to peaceful parenting.

Today I promise is going to be an amazing episode. You're absolutely going to love it. Today we're going to talk about what to do if you're not on the same page as your coparent. I don't care whether you're living together, currently in a relationship, separated, divorced, living in different households. Maybe you were never together.

If you're coparenting with someone and you're not on the same page, you're going to want to tune in, take notes, and stay opened minded. Because what I'm about to share with you is probably not what you're expecting. If you listen with an open mind, it has the opportunity to make a huge impact on how you think about your parenting, your coparent, the relationship they have with your children, and your family as a whole. So let's dig in.

I'm going to start by breaking down peaceful parenting into three phases. There are three phases to becoming a peaceful parenting. I love threes. Phase one is you recognize that you're not parenting the way you thought you would or the way you want to. Or you recognize that the way you've been parenting your kids is not working. Maybe because you're

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dysregulated all the time, you're not getting the cooperation you're looking for, or you feel really bad about your parenting.

In phase one you don't like the behaviors that your child or kids are presenting, and you're realizing that your desperate need for compliance is adding fuel to the fire instead of producing effective results. In phase one maybe on your path you realize that enjoying your child has become nothing more but a bitter fantasy you dreamt up a long time ago, and you've lost all hope.

Maybe you're feeling exhausted, guilty, incapable, stuck, and certain your child's going to be living under a bridge with a shopping cart one day. So you have this recognition. Phase one is this absolute recognition that you're not parenting the way you want to or getting the results that you want.

That causes you to move into phase two. Maybe I show up in your Facebook feed one day. Maybe someone recommends me to you and you find me. Lisa Smith the peaceful parent. Maybe you've read my book *The Angry Parent: How to Find Peace in Your Parenting Through the Message of Anger*. Maybe you've started tuning in weekly to the podcast or occasionally. Maybe you've listened to an entire year's worth of episodes. Maybe you've participated in my three day challenge or in one of my workshops. Maybe you're following me on Facebook or Instagram.

Then you take the next step and maybe you buy one of my courses like Peaceful Parenting 101, The Anger Cleanse, or Peace and Quiet. Maybe through all this you start learning about the source of your anger or your triggers. You start learning about thought work. You dig into what's really going on for your child when or she or they are storming. You start to really grasp the principals of brain science and how to stay neutral when your kids are storming by working on decreasing your triggers.

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Then you start practicing the peaceful parenting tools that I give you, that I teach you. You start noticing little connections with your kids that weren't there before. You start noticing increased cooperation. You start to notice yourself staying calm when all hell's breaking loose in your house. You start to feel successful. You start to feel enlightened. You start to have some success. You're moving down the path of peaceful parenting.

Sometimes while we're moving down this path of peaceful parenting, we move into phase three, and really the topic of today's episode. Phase three is you've made progress. Maybe a little, maybe a lot. Yet the person you coparent with remains stuck in their own parenting paradigm or stuck in their dominant parenting ways, and they show no interest in making any changes to the way they're parenting.

Maybe your coparent argues that dominant parenting worked on them when they were a kid, and they turned out just fine. Maybe your coparent seems more concerned about compliance from your child and doesn't understand how connection with your child can lead to cooperation. You starting to experience personally the benefits of connection.

You're starting to experience and understanding of why your child's storming, of compassion and empathy. You're understanding that your child isn't giving you a hard time, they're having a hard time. So you're personally experiencing the benefits of connection over compliance. With this enlightenment, you have this giant urge, desire, compelling sense within you to teach your coparent the principles and tools of peaceful parenting. You try to explain what they're doing wrong or talk to them about the essence of peaceful parenting.

Unfortunately what might be happening is it drives you further away in your relationship with your coparent rather than uniting you, which is frustrating.

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You can't understand why they can't get on board with this new way of parenting. You feel torn between your relationship with your child and your relationship with your coparent.

There might even be times where you feel like you have to choose. You have to choose between showing up in a compassionate understanding way for your child, in this new way of parenting or in this evolved way of parenting, or jumping back to the old dominant way you were parenting before. But that feels like you're selling your soul or you're turning your back on the relationship with your child.

So subconsciously you feel torn between the old way and the new way. Torn between your coparent and your child or children. Then maybe sometimes you feel like a mama or a papa bear, having to defend your child against your coparents dominant ways.

Yeah? Oh, I hear you. I understand. I understand that this is painful, really painful. I like to say pain is inevitable but suffering is optional. Pain is the circumstance and suffering is our thoughts about the circumstance. Suffering comes from your thoughts. In this case, it's not your coparent that's causing you to suffer. It's your thoughts about the way that coparent is showing up or what they should be doing or how they should be listening to you or how they should be getting on board with this new enlightened way of parenting.

The good news is that you have 100% of the power to change your thoughts. I imagine sometimes your thoughts are, "My coparent is hurting our child. My coparent is undermining and undoing all the work I put into building a connection with our child. My coparent doesn't value my ideas or my desires. My coparent refuses to learn or change." Maybe your thoughts are, "My coparent is teaching our child or modeling dominance for our

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child.” Maybe you're thinking, “My child is acting the way he or she is because of the coparent.”

Okay here is the news. Thoughts are neither true or untrue. They fall more into a category of useful or not useful. The thoughts you might be thinking about your coparent may not be useful. They may not be serving you or your coparent or your relationship or your child. Your thoughts are causing you suffering, which is absolutely not useful.

So what to do about this? Well, my suggestion might surprise you. What to do when you're not on the same page with your coparent. Now in the past you probably tried to teach, lecture, share, inform with little to no success. Yeah?

All right. So let's try something different. I have three suggestions for you. Remember I love the number three. So let's try three new ideas to help you and your coparent work towards getting on the same page.

So un-useful thoughts can't be wished away or ignored. They need to be replaced. So the question is what new thoughts can serve you better when your coparent is parenting with dominance? You can try, “My coparent is passionate about raising our child to be a good person.” You could try, “My coparent is right where I used to be. I get it.” You could try on the thought, “My coparent is confused about my sudden change in parenting philosophy and fearful that I'm abandoning our partnership by moving in a new direction.”

You could try the thought, “My coparent needs empathy, patience, support, and validation from me.” Right? That's a better thought. You could try on the thought, “My coparent, like all humans, is resistant to change. I was too, and that's okay. I'm just a few steps ahead. I'm okay with taking the lead,

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modeling the new way of parenting, and waiting for my coparent to catch up.” Ah I love that one. That’s my favorite.

You could try on the thought, “My child was marked for greatness and is resilient.” Here's another one. “My coparents relationship to my child is none of my business. It’s something they need to figure out together.” You can try on the new thought, “My peaceful parenting is a blessing to our family, and I'm so lucky that at least one of us is bringing these tools into the family.” Finally you can try on the thought, “I can stay on my path of peaceful parenting regardless of what my coparent does or doesn’t do, how they show up.”

This leads me to the second thing you can do about your dominant coparent. Model peaceful parenting. Just like children, adults learn too best by example. Not by being talked at or reprimanded or judged. You can't use dominant coaching to dominate your coparent into peaceful parenting. It makes me laugh just to say it.

Just like children, adults too learn best by example. Not by being talked at or reprimanded or judged. Adults need proof and evidence and time to accept new ideas and actually see them working. Modeling is the most effective tool you have in bringing your coparent onto your page. It takes time, and it takes you focusing on your own thoughts and your own reactions to your storming child and your tools for connecting with your child. It takes a real commitment to peaceful parenting no matter what your coparent is doing.

I've seen this over and over and over again. I've seen this all around the world with thousands of parents at this point. What I know is that the change in your relationship with your child will become apparent and desirable. So desirable that it will encourage your coparent to take notice of

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what's changed and what's working. As you're modeling, you will show them what's possible and you will inspire them to change. That's less likely to happen when you're using dominance to try to convince them to take on peaceful parenting.

So just stay convicted and all in on peaceful parenting and then stay convicted and all in on modelling peaceful parenting for your coparent with your kids. Be patient. Stay the course. Focus on your thoughts, your reactions to your storming child, and your tools for connecting with your child. Hopefully overtime your coparent will take notice and start asking questions.

You can also tell your coparents stories about your own situation. "Hey I tried this today. Oh my goodness, to my surprised it worked. We connected. He did what I asked. She calmly put her shoes on and we got in the car for school. Oh my goodness coparent. Guess what? This works. The whole time I felt connected with her." Inspire rather than command your coparent to change.

Then be patient. Maybe they'll change and maybe they won't. That's okay too. Your coparents response to your peaceful parenting and their relationship with their child is not something you can control. I like to say it's not really any of your business. Your child and their other parent have to find their way.

Your job is to stay in your business of staying committed to peaceful parenting. Focus on the benefits that you're bringing to your relationship with your kids and let the rest go. If you're bringing peaceful parenting to your kids and to the relationship, they're at least getting peaceful parenting 50% of the time. That's 50% more than they were getting when there was constant dominant parenting in the household.

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Another suggestion could be to separate your relationship with your coparent from the relationship that you have with your child. Consider discussing and offering to take the lead in the heavy lifting role of parenting in your home. Maybe it's true that not everyone was built to parent. Your coparent may be an ideal partner for you, but maybe not necessarily be an ideal parent or be ready to parent.

That's okay. It doesn't make your coparent a bad person. Maybe he or she has been given different gifts. Peaceful parenting may not be one of them. Help them thrive in using their own gifts that benefit your family and consider offering your gift of peaceful parenting to your kids.

Lastly through it all hold space for your coparent, for your child, for yourself, for your family. Hold space that you all can get where you want to be. Recognize your own growth, how far you've come in understanding your child, why they storm, how to stay regulated, how to recognize their feelings and needs. Recognize your growth and how far you've come and believe that your coparent can get there. Believe before you even have any proof. Believe. Believe.

In the coaching world we call this holding space. Many times I am holding space for my clients that they can have the transformation that they want to have before they have any evidence. Before they believe. We call it holding space. When you hold space for the other person, you're bringing empathy and understanding. You're bringing compassion to the relationship.

You're saying, "I know you can get there. I'll hold space. I'll hold a safe container that you're going to get where you need to be. While I'm holding the space, I'll be committed on my own to peaceful parenting. While I'm holding the space, I'll model peaceful parenting for you so you can see what it looks like. So you can see the connection building with your kids. So

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you can see the cooperation that I'm getting rather than compliance. I'll hold the space that you're going to catch up or at some point be interested and ask questions.”

It's such a beautiful gift we give people when we hold space for them. When we believe in them even before they believe. When we believe without their being any exact evidence that it's going to happen.

So to recap, if you're not on the same page with your coparent whether you're in a relationship or not, whether you're living together or not. If you've moved down the path of peaceful parenting and you want, want, want your coparent to follow you down the path, I suggest three things.

Number one, manage your thoughts. Pay attention. Observe, listen, witness your thoughts, and choose thoughts that cause less suffering. I can stay on my path of peaceful parenting regardless of what my coparent does. My coparent, like all humans, is resistant to change. I was too. I'm just a few steps ahead. My coparent is right where I used to be. I know he or she or they will get there.

Number two, model, model, model. Don't lecture. Don't teach. Don't coach. Model and share your successes. This was the greatest tool for me that I've brought into my home with my husband. Model and share successes. Be committed to peaceful parenting no matter what and model that.

Number three is to hold space. Believe. Have an energy of I believe you're going to get there. These are the resources I'm using, by the way, if you ever want to tap into them, but I know you're going to get there. I'm going to hold space until you. You've got this. You're doing great. I mean look how far you've come.

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Stay focused on your commitment to peaceful parenting. Keep building the connection with your child. Keep holding space for your coparent. What you're doing is changing the trajectory of your family for generations to come. You're a rockstar, and I believe in 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.

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.