

Ep #63: Help! My Partner is Lazy



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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. As we venture further and further and further into 2022 and the year of being a better parent, I have a really important question for you. Before I ask it, I want to tell you that today's podcast is a little bit different than any episode I've recorded so far. It requires a little bit of a commitment from you to listen until the very end before you decide if this is useful or not.

So my challenge/appeal/encouragement/question is can you listen today with an open mind all the way through, and then decide if this is a practice you want to put into place or not? Sound good? Wonderful.

So let me ask you do any of these thoughts or scenarios sound familiar to you? "Lisa, my husband or my spouse or my ex-partner or my co-parent or my current partner is so lazy." So for the sake of today's episode, we're going to use the word husband and he, but honestly, it could be she or they. Again, it could be your spouse, your partner, your ex-partner, your co-parent. You could take out the word husband and substitute whatever is appropriate for you. But for consistency today, I'm just going to use the word husband because that's what I happen to have.

So does this sound familiar to you? "My husband, Lisa, is so lazy. He does nothing to help me around the house or with the kids. I have to do everything. Everything Lisa while he watches Netflix all evening, and sleeps in until the last possible second before leaving in the morning. All he does in the evening is retreat to a different room and sit and watch Netflix for hours with his glass of whiskey or beer and leaves me to deal with all the chaos happening all around by myself.

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“Lisa, I want to sit on the couch and binge watch Netflix too. Then you will take care of the kids? Who will do laundry? Who will feed them? Who will pay the bills? Who will make sure homework is done? I don't really care, Lisa, what's going on for him. I don't even care why he feels he needs a retreat.

“I'm struggling, but I'm still showing up every day for my stressful 40 hour a week job. Plus, I'm taking care of the kids. Plus, I'm taking care of the house. Plus, I'm taking care of all the chores. Where's my Netflix, Lisa? Where is it? I have no empathy for my husband at all. I don't have the luxury of checking out when I'm overwhelmed. So why does he get to? It makes me so angry. It's affecting my self. It's affecting my anger. It's affecting my marriage and my parenting.”

Does this sound familiar to you? I'm sure it does. Believe me. My brain loves to catalogue every single thing my husband does wrong. My brain loves loves loves this game. It used to live for this game. So believe me when I tell you I get it. I totally get it. You are absolutely not alone.

But let me tell you what I've learned over my 31 years of marriage. Most of what I've learned in the last few years and has been an absolute game changer in how I think about my marriage and how I approach my parenting.

What you're suffering from actually has nothing to do with your husband, spouse, co-parent, partner, or ex. Now this is going to be hard to hear, but what you're suffering from his self-victimization and self-martyrdom. I know. I know it's hard. I know it's not what you want to hear. I know you just want me to agree with you that your partner is indeed lazy and self-centered. hey, maybe that is true. That may 100% be true.

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But I can tell you this. The thought that your partner is lazy and doesn't help is not serving you. It's not serving you. It's not serving your partner, and it's absolutely not serving your relationship with your kids. Yeah.

So let me take this a layer deeper and help you. Taking care of everything because I have to is a thought, and it's a painful thought. The truth of the matter is you really don't have to do anything. Taking care of your children, your home, the laundry, the dishes, other family members, your paid job is a choice that you make. No one is making you do any of it.

The thoughts that you ruminate on in your mind are also your choice. You absolutely have the choice to continue with your line of thinking, which is getting you nowhere. There's no judgment, but you can continue your line of thinking or you can choose new thoughts. I really do love being in control. So sometimes it's a blessing to do things myself because then things get done my way.

Or you could choose to think he can't read my mind. When I need help, it's on me to speak up and ask for it. Not everyone is born to be so insightful and aware of what needs to be done. My husband has other gifts, and maybe this just isn't one of them. If I need help, I need to ask.

Now, here's what I 100% know for sure. You can not control your partner, your spouse, your ex, or your co-parent. But what you have full dominion over and what you can control are your thoughts about your partner. You have free will to choose the thoughts that will better serve you, will better serve him, will better serve your relationship, and will better serve your parenting.

It's also perfectly okay if someone like your child asked you to help them with something. It's perfectly okay for you to say, "No, honey, I can't help you right now. I'm taking a timeout. I'm taking the night off. I'm not doing that right now. Go ask your dad for help." There's nothing wrong with being

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honest about your own needs. When you are honest, you are much more likely to stay regulated even if your rejection instigates someone else's storm.

Let me say that again. There is nothing wrong with being honest about your own needs. When you are honest, you are much more likely to stay regulated, even if your rejection instigates someone else's storm. Sometimes it might be your partner storming. Maybe he sighs, rolls his eyes, or expresses in some way his irritation when you ask him to do something.

As I say to my clients all the time, who cares? Who cares if he rolls his eyes or expresses some irritation? He's entitled to his own feelings. That's his job, his feelings. Your job is to absolutely not get caught up in them. You can actually try practicing not even being capable of reading his reactions at all. He gets to have his feelings, and you get to not notice them. You can simply respect his feelings for what they are without turning them into meaning anything about you. You can simply remain neutral.

It is not your responsibility or business to try to talk him out of his feelings to make you feel better. This might be a surprise to some of you, but you can ask for help and give him space to be irritated. You can also ask when you are in a regulated headspace what was going on for him when you asked him to give your kids a bath or do the dishes or take out the trash?

Maybe he has a lot going on at work. Maybe as big concerns about money and how he will provide for his family. Maybe he's getting disapproving remarks from his mother that he doesn't know how to manage. Maybe as physical pain that he will not admit because he feels he needs to suck it up and hold it together. Maybe he's feeling shame or guilt for not being able to manage his anxiety and just get up on his feet and take a step forward.

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A lot more could be going on for him than what you see on the surface. Most people do not choose to fail or be unable to stand up and take a step forward. Binging on Netflix may simply be a coping mechanism or his way of processing big thoughts. Maybe not just an opportunity to be lazy.

So you could consider what else could be true. What else could be going on here? We all have a different process for working things out. You don't have to like his way of processing, i.e. watching Netflix, but you can have empathy and understanding about it without thinking things like he's lazy and he never helps me. You can not like it and have empathy at the same time. Let me say that again. You can not like it and have empathy for him at the same exact time. So good, right.

Another side to this is even when you ask him for help, he does have a choice to say no. We all have free will. That's okay if he says no. You still get to choose if you want to do it yourself or not. So if your children need a bath and you ask your husband to do it and he says no, you can simply say okay, they're not going to take a bath tonight. Not because you're trying to hurt him or make him feel bad or guilt him into doing it. If he doesn't want to and you don't want to, so what? So the kids don't have a bath one night. It's not the end of the world.

This is how you can be happy and at peace in your relationships when the other person isn't following your manual for them. We all have a manual for people. Sometimes we haven't given them a copy of their manual. Maybe your manual says our kids take a bath every single night. When I ask my husband to do it, he says yes. Well, he doesn't have a copy of it.

So you ask him, can you give the kids a bath? He says I can't tonight. Then we get mad and hurt and upset and disappointed. We could just say, all right, I don't want to do it. You don't want to do it. Let's take the night off. The kids won't have a bath tonight. This is how you can be happy and at peace in your relationship when the other person isn't doing what you want.

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Now, some of us, like myself, are empaths, and we create big problems by over anticipating someone else's energy. If you fall into this category, I want you to know that you're allowed sometimes to just turn the dial down. You can just turn your empath off. It is possible. You do not have to go around and read everyone's energy.

In addition to often feeling angry at your partner, you may also recognize and relate to this thought. "All right Lisa, I hear what you're saying, but I simply cannot relax until all the work is done and the kids are tucked into bed at the end of the day. I can't punch out of doing and momming and choring until it's all done. I've checked everything off the box, and the kids are in bed. That's when I finally get to relax."

Well, I used to be that person. So I know that statement. I know that thought, which feels so justified in the moment. I know how that comes around and bites us in the butt. Because by that time of the evening, by the time you've made it through the crucial bewitching bedtime hour, if you're anything like I used to be, you're overwhelmed, and you're white knuckling it. You've held it together all day long, and you're just done. Can I get an amen on that one?

There's this deadline to get the kids into bed by a certain time because that's when your relief comes. You're close to the finish line, and you're feeling the pressure to finish the day's marathon. I mean, you've been running all day long. Maybe this is the same exact time that your partner checks out for the evening and leaves you to finish everything up on your own.

If that's the case and you're white knuckling it and you're overwhelmed and you feel like you've been running a marathon all day long. You're just waiting to get those little kiddos tucked into bed so you can take a deep breath and finally, for the first time all day, relax, then it's very likely that at that moment when the partner checks out, you're going to get triggered and

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storm right alongside your kids. The problem is you're sneaking in unscheduled, unproductive time so you don't get caught. I just need this all to stop.

So here's what I suggest. This has been a total game changer for me to take time for self-care several times during the day so that your tank isn't so empty by the time you need to get the kids to bed. Reconfigure your day so that you give yourself permission to relax and do self-care at times other than the hour your children and husband always seem to need you most at bedtime. When your kids need help sorting out their own emotional backpacks and your husband needs to check out for the night.

Everything you're longing to do once the kids are tucked in for the night, do for yourself throughout the day. Take 10/15/30 minutes a couple times a day to do the things that fill your cup. Relax, energize.

Now we have to be careful here. Please do not think self-care means listening to intense self-development podcasts or catching up on emails or scrolling through Facebook or Instagram. This is the time to do absolutely nothing, and nothing productive. Nothing.

So you might exercise by taking a walk outside, exercising, listening to self-help podcasts, reading how to books, responding to friends and family and social media is not for most of us restorative. It requires learning, giving, producing something. Self-care is meant to be restorative. We all need to reconfigure our days so that we are getting restored throughout the day, not just at the end of the day.

Think about it. If you're running a marathon, they have water and food breaks along the way and bathrooms. Maybe every few miles, you decide to walk for 30 seconds or a minute. That's restoring during that long marathon. Self-care needs to be restorative, and we all many, most, if not

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all of us need to reconfigure our days so that we're getting restored throughout the day, throughout the marathon, not just at the end of it.

Some examples might be go for a leisurely walk. Not where you're tracking your heart rate and exercising, but you're just walking outside. Sit outside and breathe in fresh air. Be still for 10 minutes. Play with your pet or your fur baby for 15 minutes. Maybe take a bath or read a trashy novel or paint your nails. This is not the time to be cleaning up after everybody, planning menus, or paying bills. Maybe consider stops trying to squeeze the chores into your breaks and just do nothing.

I've been doing a lot of work with a model for managing my time. I've broken it down into four quadrants. Purposely productive, purposely unproductive, unpurposely productive, and unpurposely unproductive. What I'm learning is that when we are unpurposely productive, squeezing in chores and cleaning up on our breaks throughout the day, we are unknowingly burning energy that we should be protecting for the time we have planned for being purposely productive.

Let me say that again because I feel like it's really important, and I want you to really consider it. When we are unpurposely productive, squeezing in chores, cleaning up on our breaks throughout the day, doing things for other people, we are unknowingly burning energy that we should be protecting or putting in the reserves for the time that we have planned for being purposely productive.

Now, the flip side is when we are purposely unproductive, we are restoring our energy, not wasting it. The truth is for many of us sometimes we're mad at our partner for binge watching Netflix, but we're really just mad that they know how to do nothing and be purposely unproductive and restore their energy and we don't. So we project our anger onto them.

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If you're anything like I used to be when I had this realization, I didn't even know what I wanted. I didn't know what purposely unproductive looked like. I didn't know how to do it, and I didn't know how to give myself permission to just do nothing. Ah, it's so important.

I used to think purposely unproductive was self-help or chores or cleaning out the closet or this cabinet underneath the sink or baking. Even though I love baking, I didn't find it restorative. So now I do things like sit down for 10 minutes and do nothing. Stare out the window, go for a leisurely walk, go outside, and throw the ball for my dog, read a book for 10 minutes with no goal other than to just read.

I'll do a meditation for 10 minutes to quiet my mind. It's so restorative to my energy. It sets me up to stay calm and regulated and show up in the times that I need to be purposely productive, whether it's in my parenting or working in my business.

Now what I also know is that nobody wants to live with a martyr. Even if you have the best of intentions, you're not going to get a medal at the end of your life for getting more tasks done. There's no award someone hands out for getting more done than anyone else. Learning and practicing being intentionally unproductive is a game changer if you find yourself mad at your partner all the time for his or her or their laziness.

When we learn to be intentionally unproductive, it helps us stop being a martyr and stop being resentful. It forces us to look inside ourselves and figure out what do we find pleasurable? What is it that fills the cup?

If you don't know the answer to that question, I encourage you to immediately figure that out. Ask yourself questions. Ask a friend to help you out. Ask your partner to help you figure out what you find pleasurable, what fills up your cup. Find it and do it several times throughout the day, not just

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when the kids are in bed, not just at the end of the day when you're done and tired and drained. Yeah.

So to recap, stopping a victim. Move away from being a martyr. Choose what tasks you're willing to do and not do. Manage your thoughts. Recognize and manage your thoughts. Stay out of your partner's thoughts. Practice self-care and do nothing more often. Here's a crazy idea. Doing nothing more often helps you be more calm, connected, and cooperative parent. Doing nothing takes you further on the journey of 2022, the year of becoming a better parent.

Ah, I hope you love this. I hope I gave you a lot to think about. I hope your brain is scrambled right now. You're going, "What the what? What Lisa? I need to listen to that again." Yes, the challenge is to find time throughout the day every day to be purposely unproductive. That is the goal. Manage your thoughts about your partner. Manage your thoughts about your parenting, about what you should be doing, about what he, she, or they should be doing.

Understand that planning purposely unproductive time restores your energy. Understand you benefit from that, your relationship benefits from that, your parenting benefits from that. Oh, I want that for you, and I want that for your kids. Go for it. All right. 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.