

**Ep #69: How to Stop Rescuing Your Kids
from Their Big Emotions**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

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Ep #69: How to Stop Rescuing Your Kids from Their Big Emotions

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. I want to begin today's episode by giving a Real World Peaceful Parenting shout out to JGConsumer. JGConsumer wrote, "This podcast is very accessible. Absolutely fantastic. Information presented very concisely with color and a human touch. Lisa has a fantastic energy, and I really enjoy listening to her. I'll be using the tips from this podcast probably forever."

Aw, JGConsumer, thank you so much for leaving that review. I so, so, so appreciate it. Also when you leave a review, it allows other families that need to hear this information to find me easily, and it allows us together to change the world one family at a time.

So if you're loving *Real World Peaceful Parenting*, you're loving hearing from me every week, you love the tips and the ideas and the coaching that I bring, would you do me and the rest of the world a big favor? Would you pay it forward by going to the service where you hear the podcast and leave a review for me? Again, I want to thank you in advance for doing it.

All right, on to today's episode. What I've noticed is that we often when we see our children at any age struggling, there's an inclination. There's an impulse to want to rush in and rescue our children's big emotions. To want to fix the situation, to want to stop the emotions or solve the problem, right? I'm sure that you've felt this way.

We often want to make the sadness, the disappointment, the fear, the frustration for our kids go away as fast as possible. Yeah? It's such a

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natural response to want to rescue the humans that we care about from feeling big things, hard things, especially if we can see the solution or we know the solution.

We think to ourselves, let me just tell them how to fix it. Just think this. Just say this. However, our kids, especially our strong willed kids who like a lot of autonomy, resist this. They resist us rushing in to fix, motivate, solve. Instead of solving the problems, sometimes it can actually feel like we've created more problems or new problems. Does feel familiar to you? Are you like, "Whoa, Lisa, were you in my house last night? Do you have a camera?" Well, I don't. I promise, but I know this all too well.

Let's say your son gets in the car after school. He says he got a bad grade on the spelling test. You can tell that he's really upset, like really upset. Maybe in your heart of hearts you know that he didn't study as hard as he could. As you're driving, he's going on and on and on about school, about the teacher, about the test, about himself. Maybe he's not saying nice things. His feelings, his words, his attitude is making you more and more and more uncomfortable.

Or maybe your kid is saying things to you like, "I'm so ugly. No one likes me. I'm dumb. I suck at baseball. I hate my curly hair. I'm not good at singing. I'm not good at soccer." For many of us, these words bring up our own feelings of not enoughness, of not good enough. In some instances, it reminds us then when we were that age, we didn't work hard enough. We weren't dedicated enough. We didn't stick with it long enough.

This feeling of not enoughness makes us want to rush in and fix and rescue our kids from their uncomfortable emotions, from their big emotions. So we tend to rush in and blurt things out like, "Well, if you'd study more, you would have done better." Or don't hate your curly hair. Or you're good at baseball, or you just need to practice more. Been there?

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Well, if your kid is anything like mine, typically this rushing in to motivate, rescue, save is 0% helpful. In fact, many times it just reignites the storm for my son. Suddenly he's not only upset with the grade, but now he's also mad at me. He's letting me know in a very loud voice that my suggestions were not helpful. Can you relate?

So often we think our job as a parent is to rescue, motivate, make suggestions, solve problems, lecture, fix, especially when our kids are sad, upset, in pain, hurting themselves with their words, have flawed thinking, beating themselves up, concerned about not being fair, causing discomfort, right?

You might be thinking, "Well, duh Lisa." Okay, but it's not duh. What if this isn't true? What if your job is apparent isn't always to rescue, motivate, or make suggestions? Say what? What are you talking about girl? I know. Stay with me here. Stay with me. What if this isn't the whole story about parenting? What if this isn't the best way to serve our kids? What if you only have half the parenting recipe?

Today, I want to share with you four reasons this might actually not be true. That our job as a parent is to always rush in, rescue, motivate, fix, problem solve, lecture. I'm going to share with you four reasons this might not actually be true, and what to do about it. I'm going to give you the other half of the recipe. If you follow it, it will create more trust and more connection with your kids.

Now for some of you, this is going to be new and completely mind blowing. It might even be incredibly disruptive to your brain and irritating, especially if you grew up in a "You're okay. Get up, brush it off, keep going." Kind of household. Or if you grew up in a household where no one cared about your feelings, let alone ever asked about him or gave you space to feel

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safe feeling your big emotions. But hang with me and be open minded as we go on this journey. Sound good?

Okay, so four reasons it isn't your job to rescue, motivate, solve, fix your kids big feelings and problems. Reason number one, when we rush in with a pep talk or a solution, when we rush in with you're not dumb, don't say that. Your hair's pretty. Don't hate your curly hair. You'll get there. You just need to study more. We need to make flashcards, etc. When we rush in, we unintentionally invalidate our child's feelings and create disconnection.

Remember, connection is when the other person feels seen, heard, and valued. So when we rush in and we invalidate our kids feelings, your kid is thinking, "I'm sharing with you my thoughts and feelings, and you're not validating them. You're not understanding where I'm coming from." It doesn't feel good to your kid. It doesn't feel good to any humans, but it doesn't feel good to hear good to be told, "You're not feeling that. Don't hate your curly hair. You're not dumb." It doesn't feel good, and it doesn't help.

Reason number two, when we rush to rescue, motivate, solve, or correct, we send the message to our kids that it's not safe to feel what they're feeling. To feel sad or frustrated or disappointed or let down. Let me say that again. When we rush in to motivate, solve, or correct, we send the message to our kids that it's not safe to feel their feelings, like sad, frustrated, or disappointed.

Ah, it hurts me just to say it out loud. I don't want any kid in the world to feel that way. Heck, I don't want any human to feel that way. I've done it. I've rushed in to motivate, to solve, to correct. Unfortunately, I've probably sent my kid the message that it's not safe to be sad or disappointed. If your kids feel that it's unsafe to be sad, disappointed, frustrated, they get the message that safety equals hiding or pushing down feelings.

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The negative feelings become like a beach ball. Have you ever tried to get in a swimming pool and hold a beach ball down underwater? What happens? Well, first, you're suppressing or holding the ball under the water, which takes a ton of energy to just hold it down. Then when you let go, the beach ball comes rocketing to the surface and makes a splash and a big giant mess.

We want our kids to know that we are a safe place for them to express their big negative emotions. That we can be trusted to sit with them. That we've got their back, even if it's things like hating their curly hair or their height or their weight or their culture or their talent or their lack thereof coordination or talent or smarts or getting picked for a team. We want them to know that we are the safe place for them to express their big emotions.

Reason number three is when we rush in to motivate, solve, or correct, we end up missing the opportunity to connect and validate how our child is feeling. We all want to know that we matter and bring value to the world just as we are. Our kids want to know that how they feel, their big emotions in that moment, are normal.

It's normal to be disappointed when you do terribly on a test that you know you could have studied for. It's normal for many young girls to dislike that they're tall or short. It's normal to dislike your curly hair or your straight hair. It's normal to be disappointed you didn't make the varsity basketball team or the all-star soccer team or get the best grade on the test or get the job. Our kids want to know that their emotions like sad and disappointed and letdown are normal and valid.

Finally, reason number four, when we rush to motivate, to solve, to correct, we miss an opportunity for a deeper understanding. We miss the opportunity to ask ourselves and our kids what's really going on here. What's going on underneath the surface? Because there's always things

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going on underneath the surface. We miss the opportunity when we rush in to really understand what are they thinking.

Let me give you an example. Let's say your kid says I suck at baseball. Maybe you're on your way home from practice. As soon as he says this, you feel your heart speed up and your chest tighten as you're listening to his self-criticism. Maybe his self-criticism brings up a lot of uncomfortable feelings for you, and you jump to the conclusion that what he's really saying is, "I'm not good enough. I'm not measuring up."

And it reminds you of feeling not good enough when you were that age, of not measuring it up. It reminds you of your own lack of coordination and athleticism. His saying I suck at baseball brings up for you your own discomfort and sadness and frustration and disappointment. Only this time you recognize all that's going on. Rather than rush in to fix the situation, to motivate him, to correct "No, you don't suck at baseball. Stop saying that right now."

Instead, you take a deep breath and you wait. You take a deep breath, and you recognize what's going on. You give him space to feel his feelings. You make it okay. You don't judge. You don't make it about you. You take notice of your own discomfort. Then from that place, you say tell me more. Your son starts to tell you that what he really wants to do is practice the baseball so he gets better. He wants to practice.

What you realize is he's not saying he's gonna suck forever. What he's saying in his own language is I want to get better. So, again, you calmly say tell me more. He says he noticed at the beginning of the season that he and his friend Andrew were about the same. They threw the ball the same. They batted the same, but now Andrew is better.

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So your son went and asked Andrew, “Hey, how come you're better?” And Andrew said, “Well, I've been practicing. I've been practicing throwing with my dad every night in the backyard for 20 minutes.” So now your son wants to do that. So what started out as I suck at baseball was really a cry for I want to practice more. I did some research. I found out Andrew got better by throwing the baseball every night in the backyard for 20 minutes, and I'm reporting that I want to do that because I really have a desire to be better at baseball. It all started out with I suck at baseball.

But because you didn't rush in to correct or fix or motivate, because you didn't let it mean that he's saying he's going to suck forever at baseball or that he's not enough for measuring up, you were able to dig deeper and ask tell me more. What's really going on?

Later as you reflect, you're proud that you didn't rush in when his big feelings got uncomfortable. You gave him space to feel sad and frustrated and disappointed. Even though those emotions are uncomfortable for us at times as parents, what I know is they're critical to learning and growing for all of us. Letting those emotions sit in the uncomfortable moments allow your child to learn, they allow you to learn, and they allow the relationship between the two of you to learn and grow and for trust to be increased.

I see this dynamic a lot when I coach parents. A lot. Kids will say things like, “I'm so ugly. No one likes me. I'm dumb. I can't figure it out. I'll never get it.” For us parents, it brings up a lot of our own feelings of not enoughness if we spend a few minutes reflecting, if we're able to be honest. That feeling of not enoughness causes us to want to rush in, fix, motivate, rescue our children from their uncomfortable emotions.

What I know is that when we rush in to rescue, to give a motivational pep talk, to fix, to solve, we are unintentionally invalidating our children's feelings and creating disconnection. When we rush in to solve, fix, correct,

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motivate, rescue, we send the message to our kids that it's not safe to feel sad or frustrated or disappointed. We end up missing the chance to connect and validate feelings. Most importantly, we miss an opportunity for greater understanding.

I am continually surprised at how much discomfort parenting brings up. But it's also a gigantic opportunity for growth and connection and trust. Can you see this? What's it like for you? Do you experience your own discomfort when your child or kids are self-critical, complaining, or storming? I know. It's so hard. It is that discomfort that leads us to want to rescue, motivate, fix, solve, lecture. Can you see this? I hope light bulbs are going off for you right now.

Maybe you're saying, "Okay, Lisa, I see this. But how do I create enough pause so I don't continue to go straight into rescue, fix, motivate, solve, lecture." Yeah? Well, here are the four steps. Step one is to pause and breathe. There's no emergency. Just take a pause. Maybe take three deep breaths, and let that discomfort just sit in the space.

Step two, take notice of your own discomfort. Take notice. I'm uncomfortable because of the emotions. I'm uncomfortable because I felt this way when I played baseball. I'm uncomfortable because I'm worried. I'm worried he won't get over it. I'm worried I won't be okay. I'm uncomfortable because I'm scared. I'm uncomfortable because I'm angry.

Take notice. Take notice that your child's self-criticism brings up a lot of uncomfortable feelings for you. It reminds you a feeling not enough or not measuring up. Then remind yourself that you are safe. This is not about me. This is about him, her, or them.

Step three. Give your kid some space to feel their feelings. Make it okay. Validate. Don't judge. Just give them space. This is called holding space,

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and it is the most important step. When you give me space to feel my feelings, I feel safe. I know they're valid. I trust. I feel safe. So important for our kids. Now more than ever in this day and age.

Step four, only after you've completed step one through three, do you try step four. Step four is to go into the what else could be going on here? Tell me more. Scuba dive down to the feelings and needs. Ask questions. If your kids are older, one of my favorite questions to ask is do you want me to listen, make suggestions, or get involved?

Another great question is tell me more. Your son says I suck at baseball. You say tell me more. He says I want to get better. Tell me more. I noticed Andrew's gotten better. Tell me more. I asked him how he's gotten better. He says he plays catch in his backyard every night. I want to start playing catch in the backyard every night Mom. Can we do it? Can we? Can we? Can we? Absolutely sweetheart. Let's go home and start right now.

Imagine if your kid gets in the car and says I suck at baseball, and your immediate response is no you don't. Don't say that. That's ridiculous. You just shut down the entire conversation. The feelings aren't validated, but neither is the kid coming up with his own solutions. He's got a lot more to say. I noticed Andrew's better. I've done all this homework. This is what I want to do. That is connection. That is turning on the internal compass. That is validating the feelings and the solution. That is what I want for every one of you. I want that for you, and I know you want it for you.

So rather than rushing in to rescue, fix, motivate, solve, or lecture, I want you to learn the four steps. Step one, pause and breathe. Step two, take notice of your own discomfort. Step three, give your kid space to feel their feelings. Step four, dig in to what's really going on. Tell me more. What else? Do you want me to listen, make suggestions, or get involved? Yes. Awesome.

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Ah, I love it. I love it for me and I love it for you. I love that you're committed to moving away from rushing in to rescue, fix, or solve. That you're going to drop coming from a not enoughness place, and that you're going to work on pausing and taking a deep breath, noticing the discomfort, validating your kid's feelings, and digging deeper down into what's really going on here. I love it. Okay, until next time, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

Thank you so much for listening today. I want to personally invite you to head over to thepeacefulparent.com/welcome and sign up for my free peaceful parenting minicourse. You'll find everything you need to get started on the path to peaceful parenting just waiting for you over there at. 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.