

Ep #76: Progress, Not Perfection: A Real-World Success Story with Francene and Kiran



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. Welcome to today's episode. I love being with you each week. I am so proud of you for investing this time in your parenting, in your kids, in your family. Well done. Now if you've been listening for a while, you know I do my best to bring you tips, ideas, and support that helps you create deep connection and cooperation with your kids. Today I have an extra, extra, extra special treat for you.

Today I'm joined by Francene and Kiran. Francene is a mom of two boys. She lives in New Zealand, and she's been a member of The Hive for about a year. The Hive is my membership community. I'd love to have you join us there. So if you have any interest, jump over to thehivecoaching.com, and you can learn all about it and sign up and join us.

So Francene has been a member of The Hive for about a year now. She and her family have had a massive transformation. Her 15 year old son, Kiran, reached out to me and asked if he could come on the podcast and share his ideas and his thoughts and his family's success on their path to peaceful parenting.

So what I want you to listen in on today is a conversation with Kiran, Francene, and myself. It's an open honest conversation about what it's been like for the two of them to travel this path together. What makes this conversation so special and extra sweet is the honesty and vulnerability that both Kiran and Francene share with us. You see, Kiran struggles with anxiety in general and anxiety about going to school, and he struggles with his body image.

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In today's podcast, we get to hear a little bit about this. About what it was like for him before, what it was like after his mom found peaceful parenting, and what it's like now a year later. I know many of you have teenagers that may be going through this or something similar, and you can totally relate to this. So I'm so grateful to Kiran and Francene for coming on and talking about what the transformation has been like for them. One of the things I love is how open and honest Kiran is as he shares his story with us.

A couple things that I really hope you're going to take away from the conversation is it's never ever, ever too late to get on the path to peaceful parenting. It's never too late. This is a beautiful family and a beautiful example. In addition to Kiran, Francene has an older son around 18. She just started this about a year ago. As I mentioned the entire family, mom, dad, and both kids, have had a massive transformation, which is created deep connection and cooperation in the home.

Another thing I hope you'll hear in today's conversation is that here Real World Peaceful Parenting, we're a community of people that really understand progress over perfection. Peaceful parenting is not perfect. So many things in their household, as they share with us, are still loud and messy and stormy, and there are setbacks. This is how it goes.

What I know 10 years into this is that peaceful parenting isn't about our kids behaving or getting it right all the time or being perfect or always doing the right thing or never storming. Rather peaceful parenting is about having the tools to help. It's about navigating the big emotions. It's about understanding what's going on even when you don't like it. Most importantly, as parents, it's about scuba diving down underneath the behavior to the feelings and needs.

We get to hear this beautiful example of the unfolding of this conversation from both the mother and the teenage son's perspective regarding this.

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You will hear how Kiran's anxiety was there all along. The difference is after Francene joined The Hive and started doing this work, she really worked to get curious not furious, which by the way didn't come immediate or naturally. But she's learned to scuba dive down to the feelings and needs that open Kiran up to sharing, explaining, connecting, and in some cases cooperating.

Now please note, peaceful parenting tools didn't fix everything. Kiran still has anxiety and some days he struggles to get out of bed, but now he feels more connected than ever to his parents, while at the same time he's still struggling. He realizes there isn't anything he can't share with his parents, which ironically helps him get out of bed.

Towards the end of this conversation, there's this really sweet moment that I want to bring to your attention so you can listen for it. Where Francene says to me, "Lisa, I really thought joining The Hive was to fix my sons, my kids. Then I realized it was to fix me," Francene says. There's this quick little pause and Kiran jumps in. He looks at her and he says, "Mom, Mom, the truth is you were never broken. In fact, neither one of us were broken. We didn't have a character problem. We just had a process problem all along. Now we have the tools to connect and cooperate."

Ah, can you just take a moment and imagine your kids being able to say this to you? The mom is saying hey, I thought I was going to fix you. Then I realized I needed to fix me. Your kids say but mom, you were never broken. There was nothing to fix. We just needed tools to connect and cooperate. Ah. I want that for every single one of you. Every one of you. I want that. It's a parent coach's dream come true. Oh, so good, right. All right. Let's dig into the conversation with Francene and Kiran. Enjoy.

Lisa: All right. I have the absolute pleasure of being joined today by two peaceful parenting rockstars who have been on quite the journey and have

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agreed to share with you all their story and what success looks like for them. They are joining today from the corner of the world known as New Zealand. We have Francene and her 15 year old son Kiran. I've been just checking the clock every 10 minutes all day waiting to talk to both of you. So let's dive in, sound good?

Francene: Yeah.

Lisa: Beautiful. All right, Francene, give us some background and history of where you guys started so that we can talk about where we are at today.

Francene: Yeah, so Kiran started high school two years ago. Of course, what happened two years ago was a global pandemic obviously. I really think the whole working from home, not being able to go out, be able to see his friends, I really think that actually took a toll on him. Anyway, he developed anxiety. We didn't fully understand the whole anxiety thing. We've done a lot of research on it.

Then, of course, last year in August, I joined with one of your three day workshops in August, and it's just changed everything, really. Yeah. So he's just, for two years, he's basically off days, he just doesn't want to go to school.

Lisa: So school has been one of the struggles and one of the ways that the anxiety has manifested itself. It's just anxiety over going to school in person.

Francene: Yeah.

Kiran: Absolutely. Yeah.

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Lisa: What are your memories, Kiran? What was your life like before? Then we're going to talk about after your mom started this journey, but what do you remember about the before? For you personally. Hard for your parents to hear you? You felt like you were talking and they weren't listening? What would you say was sort of the big disconnect between you and your parents?

Kiran: Well, probably the first thing I could say is that I tried to hide, and I wouldn't say anything about it. I'd sort of most of the time I'd probably hide in my room. Like, because that's your safe place for most people. But I couldn't share what I was feeling and stuff like that. It was just it was quite a quite a struggle for me.

Lisa: Yeah, thank you for opening up on this podcast because I just wanted to take a second to say you're helping so many kids. There are so many kids that are going to hear this, and they're gonna say, "Yeah, I get you. I'm there, or I was there." The room does feel like an incredible safe place for the teen, doesn't it? I think you described it well. It's the safe place. It's the place to go and check out from the world and feel safe, but also hide those difficult conversations. Right?

Francene: Avoiding, yeah. The avoidance.

Lisa: So the pandemic is coming down. You're in your room. Your parents want you out of your room. What was that like for the family, Francene? Was that creating a lot of conflict and misunderstanding at the epicenter of that?

Francene: Yeah, a lot of it was I took it personally. I felt like he didn't actually want to spend any time with us. But now I totally understand why he was doing it.

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Lisa: Say more about that for a second, taking it personally. What were the thoughts that you were marinating in? So he's in his room. You're saying come out of the room. He won't come out of the room. What were you telling yourself?

Francene: I'm telling myself that he'd rather spend his time on his games and with his online friends than with us, which hurt.

Lisa: Yeah.

Francene: You know? It was upsetting.

Lisa: Then as a result of that you focus more on the behavior instead of less because you're so dysregulated.

Francene: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah, dysregulation is, it's an uneasy feeling.

Lisa: Yeah. Then my guess is is then the catastrophizing set in. He's going to be living under a bridge or the shopping cart. He's never gonna come out of his room. He's not gonna be able to live alone. He's never gonna hold the job. Talk to us about that.

Francene: Yeah. Because he wants to be a policeman. He's not going to be able to be a policeman and all those sorts of things. It's like he's not helping himself. We're doing everything we can to help him, but he's got to do that extra step to help himself, but he's improved.

Lisa: What was the kernel that started to turn this thing around? What was the ah-ha moment? Can you speak to that?

Francene: Oh, what was the ah-ha moment?

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Lisa: Where the couple of them?

Francene: Yeah, getting him moving. Out of his room and moving, I think, was a big thing. So we've started box fit classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So the two of us connect, and we go down to those on a Tuesday and Thursday night, and then afterwards we get a Subway after it. It's my way of connecting with him because both of us are getting rid of our tension and that hormone that needs to be released. I can't remember the name of it, but it's good for us.

Lisa: Yeah.

Francene: How you've often said that motion changes emotion. I think Kiran, he's proof of that.

Lisa: What can you add to this, Kiran? Did you feel like your parents weren't trying to understand you, and all of a sudden at some moment, you felt like they were trying to understand you in an open way?

Kiran: Yes, well, I can agree with it. At first, like Mum said, is that the parents wanted me to help myself. But in reality, I couldn't. I had no motivation. I had nothing. I couldn't do anything. I didn't want to get out. I didn't want to do all that stuff. But when I realized that I can't just stay in my room and not do nothing. I had to get out and actually try to get myself some sort of position where I can get motivation and actually go to school and all that stuff.

Lisa: So it sounds like what I'm taking from that is some hope kind of came into the family. You all started to believe that change was possible. Then you were all aligned. I'm hearing that maybe in the beginning, it felt like, Kiran, mom and dad were on the other side of the table and you guys were working against each other. Something led you to believe the mom came

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over to your side of the table. All of a sudden we're working to the same goal and cause.

Francene: Sounds exactly right. Yes.

Kiran: Yeah.

Francene: Yeah.

Lisa: That's pretty cool.

Francene: Yeah, it's a great feeling.

Lisa: Yeah.

Francene: Yeah. I mean he still struggles to talk to us sometimes. But progress over perfection.

Lisa: Yeah.

Francene: We tried journaling last year, but that didn't really eventuate.

Lisa: But I have to speak to that for a second, and I have to say that sometimes as parents and in a relationship, figuring out what doesn't work can be as powerful as figuring out what does work, right. Because we talked about journaling back and forth in our membership community. For some families, it works incredibly well. But what you all know is okay, that doesn't work. So we just have to keep trying until we find something that does work.

Francene: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. But yeah, box fit nights is working.

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Lisa: So spending time together, connecting. So, Francene, would it be true that cooperation between the two of you comes easier when there's connection?

Francene: Absolutely. Yeah. 100%. Yeah.

Lisa: What you did is you never gave up. This is what I'm proud of you of. You worked at this for almost a year. Looking for something of connection so that the cooperation could follow. What I'm really proud of is you never gave up. Every time we talked about tried this, you'd go dry it. Well, that didn't work. You didn't go to all is lost. This is never going to happen. You just kept trying and magic happened the moment you found the connection, the connecting vehicle.

Francene: Yeah, I won't deny I've had those thoughts of giving up, but you can't give up any children.

Lisa: Yeah.

Francene: At all.

Lisa: Did you feel Kiran like she never gave up on you and you and her and the love and the relationship and the connection?

Kiran: Yeah. Mom did an amazing job. Obviously, there was sometimes where I felt that mum was a little bit off. But in the end, Mum was always doing her best in keeping up the happiness and the...

Francene: Positivity.

Kiran: Yeah. Positivity.

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Lisa: Yeah.

Francene: Yeah. That's it, right? The whole anxiety, depression. You've actually got to counterbalance that with positivity.

Lisa: I would guess that you felt like she always believed in me. Was that a component to it as well?

Kiran: Yes.

Lisa: Yeah.

Kiran: Absolutely. Even if she didn't voice it, it was always there. I really do appreciate that. So.

Lisa: Yeah.

Francene: Yeah, we've all been teenagers.

Lisa: Yeah, I mean being a teenager is hard. The brain is pruning itself. It's preparing to go out in the world. There's hormones, there's body changes, there's thought changes. The leaps and bounds, there's a desire for risk, right? I've read so much about the teen brain. I have so much empathy for what an explosion it is, mentally, hormonally, physically, emotionally. Then throw a pandemic in there, in many instances, it's scrambled the brain and the brain is looking to get unscrambled.

Francene: Yeah.

Lisa: It sounds like in some ways your anxiety, Kiran, came to a peak, and your mom, fortunately, was awake at the wheel and was able to not ignore and stick her head in the sand at one extreme or have anxiety herself and

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stop looking for solutions. You found that middle ground where you just said, “You know what, I'm just going to keep trying, trying, trying until I find the thing that works.”

One of the things we talked about, Francene, is, when you find one or two things that work, you just rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat. We don't need eighty-seven things that work. This is not a menu. This is not a buffet. We're going to pick a couple of foods, and we're going to do them really well.

Francene: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. We've found a couple of things. Not saying we're going to stop trying other things, but we'll continue to try other things and see how it goes.

Lisa: I love it. So what's it like for you now, Kiran? Tell me what's different for you now then at the beginning of the pandemic.

Kiran: At the beginning of the pandemic, there was more of like there was no hope. But now it's actually more motivation to do stuff and push ourselves to actually get past these walls that we create in our mind. Obviously, our mind is super powerful when it's like sometimes it's really scary to think that these things can stop you, but you're gonna push past and make sure you're pushing past those boundaries. That you've gotten through your anxiety or whatever it is.

Lisa: Yeah. Yeah. So your brain has matured. You've worked on your thinking; this is what I'm hearing. You found ways to cope with your anxiety. You found some hope in the world. You have people on your team, and you're putting one foot in front of the other. That's so great. It sounds like, as a family, you all have also embraced progress not perfection.

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Because I know that some days have been a little bit more of a struggle than others. What I understand is that, Francene, when you guys have had some small setbacks, you don't catastrophize over that and go oh well. See, this isn't going to work. I knew it. I knew he couldn't do it. I knew he wasn't going to hold it together. You just pick yourself up and move forward.

Francene: Yeah. Yes. Move on to the next day.

Lisa: Yeah. Kiran, it sounds like you're being very loving to yourself and practical, and when you don't get it right, you're not holding that against yourself.

Kiran: Yes and no. There can be a few moments where I do put it against myself. I think I'm... There can be moments where I'm like oh, you're stupid or stuff like that where I say to myself. But like, I just understand what's actually happening. Sometimes I just rethink it and go oh okay. This is what's happening. Yeah.

Lisa: What do you want other kids to know who are dealing with something similar? What would you want them to take away from today's episode?

Kiran: Just push yourself and try to do what you can. For anxiety, you think that a lot of people are actually judging you, but in reality, it really doesn't matter who judges you and what people have grudges on you or anything like that. You can just push through and you can be yourself and do what you want, really.

Lisa: What's the greatest tool you have now? Is it having a schedule? Is it talking with your parents? Is it managing your thoughts? Like what's kind of your one or two go to things that you're doing now that maybe you weren't doing in the past that feels like it's making a big difference?

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Kiran: I think it's thinking through my thoughts and making sure I know what I'm doing. Yes, I can agree. The schedules are amazing. I love schedules. Or making a list or anything like that can really help. You just know what you're doing and understand how to go through the day really well, how to how to go through the year and all that stuff.

Lisa: Putting one foot in front of the other and keeping you on point.

Francene: Yeah. On track, yeah.

Lisa: Okay, my last question for you, Kiran. What do you think is different about your mom now? How is she different than she was before she started doing this work? Like big picture, what are the things that feel different? Or you could also answer this in telling me how the two of you's relationship is different now? Can you speak to that for us?

Kiran: To be honest, at the start, I love my mom, but there are sometimes where I thought I hated my mom. I know hate is a very strong word, but it was just in my head for so long. But really it's over the time just the motivation and all that and the push from Mum was really good in just making sure our relationship was staying together and all that.

Lisa: So it sounds like, again, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like her proving to you that she was not going to give up on you and not attacking you when you were already down on yourself was just lifesaving.

Kiran: Absolutely. I can agree. Like before Mum really started doing this, I didn't like myself. To be honest, most of my anxiety comes from me hating my body. Because like over the years, I've gotten a bit chubby and fatter and all that. But with this box fit stuff, it's really pushing me through everything. It's doing good. Yeah.

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Lisa: Beautiful. Well done for working on that. I had to go on a journey myself through my teenage years and into my early adulthood to really learn that your worth is not tied up in how you physically present. Your worth is not about your body. It sounds like you're learning that, and your family is. You're all working on that together and you're supporting that.

I'm guessing here because your mom constantly reinforced that she wasn't going to give up, your brain has been able to settle down and really work on your image of yourself. I mean this is all, as you beautifully said, this is all commingled in our thoughts about ourselves, our thoughts about others, our thoughts about what people think about us, right. This is all thought work.

Francene: Yeah.

Kiran: Yes, absolutely.

Lisa: Do you think that the thought work that we do together, Francene, helped you gain a perspective on what he was thinking about himself?

Francene: The thought work is, if anybody's new to joining The Hive, I'll just say the thought work workshops that you have in there are 100% spot on. Everyone needs to do them. I've never been a deep thinker, but the whole thought workshops and in changing thoughts and everything is, it's an absolute game changer.

Lisa: Hmm. That's great.

Francene: Yeah.

Lisa: I can see you're passing it over to Kiran, and he's really appreciating that.

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Francene: Trying to, yep.

Lisa: I think so often as teenagers, as humans, but really I think it sort of comes to a head in the teenage years. We think all of our problems in life are our circumstances. What other people are doing, what's happening, what our friends are doing, what they're not doing, how people are treating us. That certainly can play a role in creating our thoughts, but what teenagers really benefit from is understanding that a lot of the suffering. I'm not saying all. I'm not saying everybody's suffering. But sometimes the suffering can be alleviated by really understanding the thoughts we're thinking about our circumstances.

This is what I hear you learned, and then brought to Kiran, which really helped with anxiety, motivation, schedule, getting out of the room, working on his body. It's all sort of culminated in him understanding that his thoughts are driving his feelings, and his feelings are driving his actions.

Francene: Yes.

Lisa: Ah, so good. Gosh. I mean what would you have given for someone to have taught this to you, Francene, at 15?

Francene: Oh.

Lisa: Right?

Francene: A lot.

Lisa: Here we're sitting today and have the pleasure of spending time with a mother who really dove into this headfirst, and then it's been able to model and teach this to her son, and it's transforming his entire life.

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Francene: Yeah.

Lisa: Oh.

Francene: Yeah. As I said on Thursday on our little chat message, I came into this thinking that you had fixed Kiran, but he didn't need fixing. It was my parenting. It was me that needed fixing and my thoughts.

Lisa: Your thoughts. It was getting away from taking it personally. It was focusing going underneath behavior to the feelings and needs, really trying to understand what does he need, not taking the behavior personally and thinking he's doing something to me. But really appreciating that he had a struggle, a problem, a need that needed to be solved that.

Francene: Yeah, exactly.

Lisa: Yeah. Because what I remember is that once you two got on to the real problem underneath, the need underneath the behavior, and you set about the solution, the path, everyday got just a little bit easier. Right?

Francene: Yeah. It did, didn't it?

Kiran: Yeah.

Francene: Yeah.

Kiran: I just want to add on to what Mum said about the fix. To be honest, I don't really agree with fixing. It was a more of an understanding about what you need to do. You didn't need any fixing. Like this is for any parent out there, you don't need a fix. You just need more understanding about what the world is all about and how our actual brains work. Because humans are

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very interesting. Biology is very strange to us, even though we are us, if you know what I mean.

Lisa: Kiran, I just fell in love with you. I know our listeners can't see this, but I am smiling ear to ear. I love that you shared with us it's not fixing. I love that you told your mom she doesn't need fixing. I could not be more proud and more pleased for the two of you. Yeah.

Fixing is not a word that I use very often because I don't think anybody's broken and needs to be fixed. We have process problems not character problems. You guys just had a miscommunication in the process problem. Once you got on the same page, every day got better.

I just love that you're affirming for her that she didn't need to be fixed. We just had to understand each other better, more, differently, ask different questions. So I love that you gave that advice to parents. I know that there's people smiling all over the world after hearing that. Well, I am just so pleased for both of you, for the relationship, for the entire family because I know there's another brother and a dad.

Francene: Yeah.

Lisa: I'm just I'm so pleased for all of you. For the deep connection that you found through this process. This will serve you for years and years and years to come. I like to say that a rising tide, not that I made the saying up, but I love the saying a rising tide lifts all boats.

The work that the two of you, Kiran and Francene, the work that the two of you have done is the rising tide that will lift all boats in your life. As a result of this, all the relationships in your life, Kiran, are going to get better. Your friends, your future bosses, your teachers, your brother, your dad, your

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future partner, your future children. The way your mom is parenting you is how you will parent your children.

So this work is—And we're getting a bird's eye view today from the two of you in the way you're showing up here and what you're sharing with us that this work is worth doing because it creates deep connection. Any other challenge the two of you face together or separately, you'll come back together through this connection and create cooperation. I just know that.

Francene: Absolutely. Yeah.

Lisa: Yeah. So number one, well done between the two of you. Number two, thank you so, so, so much for sharing and telling your story and giving all the listeners a glimpse into what this transformation can be like for them. You're paying it forward. I like to say we can change the world one family at a time. Here's a family that's changing the world through connection.

Francene: I want to thank you too, Lisa, for everything you've done and what you do. You put your heart and soul into it. We are all very, very, very appreciative.

Lisa: I love that. Thank you. I receive that. Thank you. Kiran, it's just been an honor to spend some time with you. I love your story. Keep going. You know progress, not perfection. I just salute the work that you've done on your part to create this connection with your parents. Well done.

Kiran: Thank you.

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

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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.