

Ep #78: Why Do My Kids Ignore Me? Here's What's REALLY Happening...



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

[Real World Peaceful Parenting](#) with 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 just love being with you each week. I am so proud of you for investing this time in your parenting, in your kids, and your family. Well done. Now, if you've been listening for a while, you know I try to bring you tips, ideas, and support that help you create deep connection and cooperation with your kids.

I know that sometimes it's easier to hear a real world peaceful parenting problem and challenge as if we were working together one-on-one, and you were telling me the exact problem you're facing. Then I walk you through the solution. Yeah?

So today I have a special treat for you. Hannah, who has been a reoccurring guest on our podcast a few times now, has gone out and crowdsource some parenting questions for me to answer to help you find the deep connection and cooperation with your kids. Today we dig into the topic of why do my kids ignore me? It's so frustrating. I tell them to do something, and they ignore me. Then I lose my shiz.

Right? Sound familiar? Are you in this camp? Do you have your hand raised? Are you like yes, ma'am. Let's go. I hear you. This was a big one for me as well. I was convinced, and I mean convinced, that the only way for Malcolm to hear me was by me yelling at him.

So in today's episode, I dig into why this isn't true. I give you a different way to look at or think about yelling and offer up some effective and proven tools that will work instead of yelling. I know. I know. Yes, it's possible to

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get your kids to do things like put their shoes on and get in the bathtub and get off their phone without yelling. I promise. So listen in as Hannah and I walk through exactly why our kids are ignoring us and what to do about it.

Lisa: Welcome, Hannah. Welcome.

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

Lisa: Oh, it's so great to have you back. So give us the question that you crowdsourced for the audience to ask me today. We'll jump in and have some coaching and conversation and inspiration around it.

Hannah: I love it. Okay. So the question that we are going to talk about today is being ignored constantly by my girls, ages 10, six, and three. I know they heard me and understood what I asked. Can ignoring the address more? I really lose it when constantly ignored after I've asked, explained, told, repeated my reason, then lose it when I'm still ignored.

Lisa: Yes, great question. Being ignored by our children, or honestly anybody, pretty much feels awful, and nobody likes it. Right?

Hannah: Right.

Lisa: Yeah. So the thing is, there's a lot going on here. So read the question for us again.

Hannah: Okay. Being ignored constantly by my girls, ages 10, six, and three. I know they heard me and understood what I asked.

Lisa: Okay, pause right there. Okay. being ignored by my girls, and I know they heard me. Okay. First part of the question that we want to address. Mama, they did not hear you. Let me explain how I know this. First of all, let me say even just entertaining the thought, "I know they heard me," is going to trigger you into dysregulation.

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Anytime we think the thought, "I know they heard me. I know she's being disrespectful. I know he's being difficult. I know fill in the blank about anybody." We're setting ourselves up to be triggered because we do not know. I know my girls are ignoring me is the perfect opportunity to storm because it doesn't feel good to know that you're being ignored by somebody.

The truth is you don't know. Let me give you some evidence to support this. Kids are not multitaskers. We talk about this, Hannah, all the time inside The Hive. It's important to be reminded. I have to remind myself of this all the time. I have to remind myself of developmentally what my 17-year-old is capable of. I also have to remind his dad when he is and isn't capable of as well. Because it's very easy for our brains to assume our kids are capable of more than they are.

So these three young girls, what I know is that their age at their stage of brain development, they do not have a fully developed prefrontal cortex, which is what's required to be a multitasker. So starting off the bat, I know they listen to me. I encourage this parent to just never think this again because the kids are single taskers, and they're doing whatever they're doing.

So if I'm staring off into space, daydreaming, coloring, reading a book, picking up toys, eating my lunch, thinking about my day, that is all I am doing. My brain is not scanning the universe for what else is my mom telling me to do? On top of it, if she's telling me to do things that are not F-U-N, because remember, as a kid, I'm hardwired for F-U-N then my brain isn't immediately cueing into what she's saying. So I really think that this parent can have a complete transformation by dropping the thought I know they hear me.

Hannah: Yeah, that's so good and so key. Yeah, I mean she said the ages 10, six, and three. That's such a good range of children, but as you said,

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developmentally that prefrontal cortex, it's just not ready yet. So you're so right.

Lisa: Yes. All right. What's the next part of it? They're 10, six, and three. I know they hear me. And.

Hannah: So she had asked if ignoring could be addressed more, which we're doing. I really lose it when constantly ignored after I've asked, explained, told, and repeated my reason. Then lose it when I'm still ignored.

Lisa: Perfect. Ask, explain.

Hannah: Repeated.

Lisa: And then lose it.

Hannah: Yeah.

Lisa: Okay. So this is a great example of an ineffective pattern interrupter. So back to I love that we're having this conversation, Hannah. This is so great. I know that so many people are benefiting from this. In order to get someone's attention, we perform things called pattern interrupters, right? We do this adult to adult. You work in an office, I knock on your door, you say come in. That's pattern interrupter. I walk into my favorite places in the whole world, Starbucks. The first thing they say is welcome to Starbucks. That's a pattern interrupter.

You go to buy something. Someone says how can I help you? We greet each other. Hello, how's it going? I see someone. I run into you at Trader Joe's, and I go Hannah, how's it going? You look up from your list. These are pattern interrupters. We're pretty good at them, most of us adult to adult. Where we're not great at it sometimes is adult to child because we're

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trying to perform adult to adult pattern interrupters, and they don't work. Right.

Let's say you and I are away for a girl's weekend. I go in the kitchen to get a brownie. I call out Hannah, you want to brownie? You're probably going to hear me for a couple reasons. You have a fully developed prefrontal cortex. You're trained to scan the universe for input. You hear me calling, and your brain switches gears quickly and tunes into what you're telling me right? Plus, I'm going in the kitchen for a brownie, and let's be honest.

Hannah: Let's be honest.

Lisa: Right?

Hannah: Yeah, absolutely.

Lisa: So. Now let's fast forward to this parent, 10, six, and three. She's in the kitchen getting the breakfast dishes kind of tidied up, and she's ready for the kids to put her shoes on. She calls out from the kitchen girls get your shoes on. That is, for most children, an ineffective pattern interrupter. Especially if you do it one time with the expectation of my kid is going to listen and comply. It's not just listen, but they're going to listen and get it done. That's a two-step process. Not a one. Right?

So she calls out from the kitchen put your shoes on. She looks out a few minutes later. They're not doing anything. Now she tells them again to put the shoes on, and she goes into explain mode. Well, they didn't hear the first part of it anyway. So all of this work she's doing to ask, to explain, then maybe she goes into yelling mode. Comes out into the living room and girls get your shoes on now. They look up. Her brain registers that yelling is the only way to get her kids to listen.

Hannah: Yes.

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Lisa: Okay, here's the deal. Yelling is a pattern interrupter. It is. In some households, it can be effective. Not the best pattern interrupter to create connection and cooperation. It creates more of compliance and command. Right? I command you to do this and so you comply. I don't love it in real world peaceful parenting as a go to pattern interrupter.

Now certainly if your kid's about to run out into the street with a moving car, it's a very useful, effective pattern interrupter. Your child is running down the stairs with hands in his pockets, running with scissors, running around the pool while the cement is slippery. All useful, very useful, pattern interrupters.

Trying to get the shoes on in the morning, probably not the best pattern interrupter because now I've yelled at you. We get in the car to go to school, and I feel bad now because I yelled and lost my shiz and stormed alongside you, and maybe you stormed as well.

So a more effective pattern interrupter might be come out of the kitchen, go into the living room, be in close proximity with your kids. Call their name. Hannah. Hannah, Hannah. Hannah. Finally you say yes, Mom? Hannah, can you please put your shoes on? Okay. Hannah, what did I just ask you to do? Oh, I have no idea. Okay, great. Hannah, can you put your shoes on please? Yes. What did I ask you to do? Put my shoes on? Yes, awesome. Can you get it done? Yes.

That is a much more effective sequence of events than the pattern interrupter that was described where you ask and explain and then get dysregulated and then lose it. That doesn't feel good to anybody. It doesn't really model the calm pattern interrupter that we want our kids to follow. Right. So then later down that day, the 10 year old wants the toy the six year old has. She's probably also using the same pattern interrupter that you're modeling for her.

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Hannah: Yeah. You know, that is so true. That really reminds me with my own kids. I think when you first told me this about how they don't hear you, I kind of didn't believe it. There was a part of me that was like I know they heard me. But it's so true. Sometimes I'll be right next to my son. As you said, the staring off into space. He's not even doing anything. I'm like Miles. Nothing, no response. Like Miles. Then it's like, "Oh, you're talking to me?"

It's a conversation when you're right looking at them, and they're looking at you and you're saying can you please put your shoes on? What did I ask you to do? Can you do this? You're asking them questions. You're engaging them, and really creating and aiding in that connection. Because, as you said, they'll copy you.

So when I'm in the middle of talking to my mom or an adult, Carmela, who is my older one, will come up to me and she puts her hand really quietly on my hand. She's learned not to just interrupt mom or from the other room, mom, because again, that doesn't feel good. When I'm done with my sentence, I look over at her and I say yes, Carmela? So that's kind of what we do in my house.

But it's like you said. I wouldn't like her to yell from across the room, mom, and asked me a question. So why would I assume that it's going to A, work and B, feel good if I'm yelling at her from across the house to put her shoes on, which I wasn't connecting before I started peaceful parenting. I was the mom in the kitchen who expected that I would yell it, and that they would line up in a row with their shoes on ready to go. So.

Lisa: Well, think about this. It's a good point Hannah. When we're in the kitchen yelling, all of us, we're barking out orders. Put your shoes on. I mean maybe we're even being nice. Hannah, can you put your shoes on? We're expecting them to hear, register, obey, and get it done right then. That's a lot brain developmentally for a 10, six, and three year old to

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accomplish on their own the first time they're asked with no pattern interrupter.

Hannah: Right.

Lisa: When we do this as parents, we're setting ourselves up for failure. We're setting ourselves up for frustration, which is the gap between expectation and reality, right. Let's visit this.

Hannah: Yes.

Lisa: So I'm in the kitchen. I say put your shoes on, we gotta go. I expect they're just going to do it. That gap between the two is the equivalent of my frustration that I come in the living room, and they're still all doing what they were doing. I cannot express this enough how single task and single focused kids' brains are.

If you look in a classroom, let's contrast what we're doing at home versus what goes on in the classroom. Right? All my teachers out there, y'all know this. Like it's just so natural to go into a classroom, a preschool, a sports team. My son has been teaching at a basketball camp all summer with second graders. It's so great. He's like oh mom, now I understand why you do what you do. Like trying to get second graders' attention is really difficult.

So we talked about pattern interrupters, right? So now he has this little clap game he does where he claps three times when he wants their attention, and then they clap three times back. It takes four, five, or six times for all 10 of his kids to be clapping three times back. Then he knows he has all of their attention, and then he makes the request, right. So I like to say we need to get their attention before we make the request.

This works, again, back to the classroom. Let's say there's 22 kids in a classroom, and they're all sitting around in groups, pods of three, reading

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books to each other. Doesn't matter what grade we're talking about. Second, fourth, sixth, right? They're all sitting around in groups of three, and it's time to go to lunch.

The teacher doesn't just say hey, come on everybody. Put your books away and line up and go to lunch. Right. It would be chaos. It would be pandemonium. Instead, she does a cute little pattern interrupter like 1, 2, 3, and then she waits. The first time three, four, or five of them go eyes on me. Then she does it again, and then eight of them do it. Then she does it again, and then 15 have caught on. Then she does it a fourth time, and all 22 kids are now looking up at her going eyes on me when she says 1, 2, 3.

Then she says okay, when I give you this signal, you're all gonna put your books away and line up single file in line to go to lunch. The probability of success is so much higher when she knows she has their attention before making the request.

By the way, I recommend if your school already has a pattern interrupter that your teacher's using, bring it home and use it at home because your kid is getting trained four or five or six times a day with that pattern interrupter. Right?

Now let's talk about high school real quick. What do they do in high school? They ring bells, right? It's time to finish first period and go on to second period. They ring the bell. The bell is the pattern interrupter. The teacher finishes up and dismisses him, and all the kids file out.

Then there might be another bell with two minutes to go. They get a 10 minute break, right? Then there might be another little like shorter bell like ring, ring. Then they know okay, I gotta get to class. Then there's a final bell, ring, that's like okay, this period two has started. These are pattern interrupters for high school kids.

Hannah: Yes.

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Lisa: Right. So this is how we move large volumes of underdeveloped brains around and get them to cooperate. We can take a page from that lesson book and utilize the same process, effective and connected process, at home to get maximum cooperation.

Hannah: Yes, exactly. I've done the same thing for my daughter. I found out what they said at school, and I do it. She gets all excited because it reminds her of school, especially in the summertime. Then her brother feels cool because he gets to do with the school kids do.

Again, kind of like you said with the younger kids and what your son is doing. Again, it's also kind of making it F-U-N, you know? Malcolm claps his hands three times and the little kids say oh, time to clap. Something to do with my hands. Something fun. I think that's really helpful.

I kind of want to touch on how you said there's so much going on when you yell from the kitchen and make your request. I think one aspect of that, especially for me, is that I understand there's a time constraint. So I assume that the urgency in my voice is conveying okay time to get your shoes on. My mind is saying I have to go to my mom's. After I go to my mom's, I'm going to go to the store, and I have to do this all by 11:30. I'm expecting that they somehow understand all these unspoken things because I get it.

So then when I go in there and the shoes aren't on, there's a small part of me that's like are you kidding me? Don't you understand what we have to do today. Again, it's just taking those steps back and realizing, again, they truly don't. They're not giving you a hard time. They just don't understand that. Especially if I haven't said that. It's kind of wild of me to expect that they would get that.

So if I know okay, I have to go in five minutes. I make it a F-U-N. So it's my son loves to count. So it's like can you get your shoes on in under 10 seconds or something reasonable? Can you get to the car? Who can get

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there faster? Something to make it F-U-N because that way they don't have to worry about the timing, and I know that it's still going to get done.

Lisa: Awesome. I love that you shared that because that is 100% true. I've never thought about that. Yes. You're in the kitchen thinking oh Lord, oh Lord. I'm running out of time. I gotta get all this done. I hope I remember to get lemon juice at the grocery store. Right? I didn't write everything down. I'll try to keep it all in my brain and juggle it around. Whoa, we really need to get going.

So you say come on. We've got to go. Get your shoes on. In your brain, you're thinking that that just communicated to them the urgency, the stress, the time limit. I'm really serious now. Let's get going. They have no idea that you just said that. I mean they probably didn't even hear you. But even if they did, 10, six, and three are not picking up what you're putting down. Right?

They don't really care. They don't care that you're stressed. They don't care that we're running out of time. Their brains are not developmentally appropriate to care the way you care. They do not have a sense of all the factors going into this. The time, the commitment, the things that have to get done, the tick, tick, tick, tick of the clock. So I agree with you 100%.

Then on top of it, if you're super stressed and you're making it less and less and less fun by the day, and then if you're making it less and less and less F-U-N by the minute, we're not making progress. We're not connecting. If we're not connected, we're not going to get cooperation.

I think what you're also saying, Hannah, is in your mind, you're trying to connect through the stress, right? Come on guys. We gotta go. I got a lot to do. Work with me here. Let's get it done. Are you kidding me? The problem is that kids do not connect your stress. They don't.

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Hannah: Right. Then they're confused. It's like why are you suddenly yelling at me? What did I even do wrong? They're just sitting there. It's kind of comical when you look at it in hindsight because they really don't get it. They're like this lady just likes to yell or whatever.

Lisa: Okay, now let's talk about this. Now, maybe this mom is going to say okay Lisa. I like your ideas. This sounds great. But are you kidding me? I don't have time. You know how busy we are in the weekends? I don't have time to go in the living room and squat down and call their name and ask them what I said. Oh. I hear this a lot from parents. But the truth is, you do have the time.

If you have the time to ask a bunch, explain, get upset, and storm alongside them. What I know for sure if you have all the time to do all that, not to mention the guilt you're going to feel afterwards after you drop them off at school and drive away. If you have time for all that, you have time to connect before making the request. Here's the thing. Connection is the thing that leads to cooperation.

So when you leave the kitchen and go to the living room, it's like a 401K. You're investing in the cooperation you're going to ask for by connecting with your kids. Right? When you go in and say Miles, Miles, Miles, buddy, buddy, I need your attention for a minute. Can you look at me? Oh, yes, mommy? Miles, can you put your shoes on? You're gonna get so much further. You've seen this. You've experienced this. You can speak to this.

You just get so much further, not only in that moment but in the long run, because you're creating this connection between you and your kid. So you're not only getting a payoff now, right? You're not only getting a return on your investment now, but you're getting a dividend down the road. Because you're creating all this connection that leads to cooperation. Not 100% of the time, certainly not guaranteeing, but you're gonna get more cooperation than you're getting making commands from the kitchen.

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Hannah: Yes, that is so true. For those of you listening who haven't experienced that yet, it is actual magic. I mean I can really speak to this. We really, really struggled with my son. That's when we reached out to Lisa in the beginning. We were really struggling with him on all cylinders.

I have a perfect quick example of this from this morning. He and I went on a date to Chick-fil-A, which he loves. He loved being in that little play area. I knew that we had to leave in about 10 minutes. He loves timers. So I said okay Miles, I'm gonna set a timer for five minutes. Again, I in my head realized it might take a little bit longer. So I'm going to set shorter alarm. That way I can stay regulated if it takes a little bit longer. He doesn't need to know all these things. I just need to leave in 10 minutes. Okay.

So we set a five minute timer. He agrees to it. We've built this mutual trust. I've followed through with what I've said I was going to do. As a recovering permissive parent, I've held limits. I've done the work for a while now. So the timer went off, and he just looked so dismayed. He just said, "Oh, Mom, do we have to go?" I said I know you're having such a fun time, honey, but the timer went off, and we do have to go.

As he was kind of complaining, "Oh, I wish we didn't have to go." He was getting his shoes. He was walking towards me with his shoe saying, "I really wish we didn't have to go." He's putting them on each foot. He's saying can we come back again, but he's actually cooperating as he's still struggling with the emotions of wanting to leave. Because he trusted me and he knows that A, it's safe to share his feelings, and B, when mom says it's time to go. When the timer goes off, it's time to go.

So we were able to leave in like seven minutes. I was just kind of floored when I was in the car driving to realize that this was the same child who we had had to drag literally kicking and screaming out of places before. He was still allowed to be upset. He was allowed to not want to go, but he was cooperating because we have a connection and we trust each other.

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Lisa: That's such a great example. Thank you. Yes. Also I really love that you have wrapped your brain around I need to set the timer for five minutes rather than 10. I don't need to push this the last minute, which is going to dysregulate me, and I can give us some wiggle room. So there was a lot of tolerance and patience and understanding for the storming while he was putting the shoes on.

Hannah: Yes.

Lisa: You didn't have thoughts like come on, buddy. Get your shoes on. I gave you the 10 minutes, and this is how you pay me. We're not going to come back. You didn't start storming alongside him or take personally that he didn't want to go because you didn't push the envelope to the last second and stress yourself out as a parent.

Hannah: Yeah. All tools I've learned from listening to your podcast and working with you. So thank you.

Lisa: Ah, so great, Hannah. That's so great. Well, hopefully we helped this parent understand that this requires a different approach. It requires a little bit of proactiveness and some connection. It requires a little bit of working on our thoughts. My kids didn't hear me. It requires understanding what they're capable of. What is the maximum they're capable of developmentally at this age? That has nothing to do with intelligence. It just has to do with pure brain development. What are my kids capable of?

If you don't know, dig into it, look it up, figure it out. It's so helpful to understand my three-year-old's only capable of this much, my six-year-old this much, and my 10-year-old is still only... I mean at 10-years-old, the prefrontal cortex is not fully developed until 25. So that 10-years-old oldest daughter of hers is still 15 years away.

Hannah: Yeah.

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Lisa: From a fully developed prefrontal cortex. So understanding they don't hear you. They need a pattern interrupter. They need help being successful. It's worth that connection to get the cooperation, like your Chick-fil-A story with your son, Miles. Hopefully, this is really helpful to everybody listening. Wrapping our brain around why don't my kids listen, right? It's not that they're giving you a hard time. It's that they're having a hard time in listening, follow through on the commands, and being successful.

So use a different method. Right? Albert Einstein said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. So if every day I'm standing in the kitchen barking out orders, it's not working. Let's try something different. Go into the living room, get their attention, make sure you have the attention before you make the request, and then get confirmation of making the request.

Hannah: Yeah. I've mentioned this before, but for those of us who are adults and still single taskers, me. I know it's not everyone. I mean my husband can do 18 things at once, God bless him. I cannot. I just kind of want to give a little hope because sometimes when I listened to the podcast in the very beginning, I would get a little bit overwhelmed.

So I just kind of want to say if it's helpful to just start with one thing, maybe just finding the pattern interrupter and trying that for a day. I just want to really commend any work, any effort that you put in. I mean you're here. So let's just commend you for that.

But just for some of us who might get a little overwhelmed, I just want to say that it's so possible, and you can break it down into as small of a bite sized piece as you need. You don't need to change everything overnight. It's most likely not going to change overnight, and that's okay. I just kind of wanted to give a little love to those people who might be feeling

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overwhelmed and just say that you can absolutely do this. Nothing's broken. No one's been ruined. You can do it one step at a time.

Lisa: Beautiful. Good advice, Hannah. Good practical advice from someone who's had a massive transformation in her own parenting. Awesome. Thank you so much, Hannah, for being here and bringing us the question. Hopefully, all of you listening found it useful. 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.