

Ep #80: Breaking the Cycle and Becoming a Peaceful Parent: A Real-World Success Story with Samantha



Full Episode Transcript

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. I just want you to know how much I love being with you each week, and how proud I am 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 my goal each week is to bring you tips, ideas, and support that helps you create deep connection and cooperation with your kids. Today I want to take you on a journey to see what is possible for you, your parenting, and your family.

Today, I want you to listen in on a coaching call between myself and Samantha. Samantha is the mother of an incredibly strong willed six year old boy, Julian, who is one awesome human being. In today's conversation, you'll hear the journey Samantha's been on, as she navigates the path of peaceful parenting with her strong willed son, and all that comes up for her and her own childhood wounds.

I know many of you will relate to Samantha's story of growing up in a dominant household and the wounds that come from the power over dominant parenting style, and the many aha moments she's had as she breaks the cycle she inherited and moves towards real world peaceful parenting.

I'm excited to share with you this real open and authentic conversation between Samantha and me because I want you to know what's possible. I

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want you to know what moving down the real world peaceful parenting path looks like. I want you to know so you can walk the path too.

As you listen, keep an ear out for specifically how Samantha is healing and re-parenting herself right alongside her son, and how this is helping her break the cycle of dominant parenting and be fully present with her son. How this work, which we do inside The Hive, my monthly membership community is helping her overcome her triggers, stay regulated when Julian is storming, and not storm alongside him. So good. I love it so much.

Many, many, many parents I coach and work with inside The Hive are cycle breakers just like Samantha. These parents are breaking the inherited parenting patterns. Patterns that create disconnection, cooperation, and impact trust between you and your kids. Patterns like yelling, shutting down conditional love, conditional acceptance, disconnection, punishing, hitting, shaming, judging, etc.

So enjoy listening to this coaching conversation between Samantha and myself. If this speaks to you, and you recognize unhealthy familial patterns you inherited and want tools and support like Samantha to break the cycle and not pass these along to your kids, come join us in The Hive. You're absolutely going to love it. I promise. You can jump on board at The Hive by going to www.theHivecoaching.com. I'd love to have you join us. In the meantime, enjoy this conversation.

Lisa: Welcome, Samantha. I am so excited to be talking with you today.

Samantha: Thank you. I'm excited to be here. Thank you for having me.

Lisa: Yeah, it's great. So for the listeners, Samantha is a Hive member who's been on the path of real world peaceful parenting for about a year now. Right?

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Samantha: Maybe six months, seven months.

Lisa: Okay. Samantha is a mom to a beautiful, wonderful, amazing, strong willed six year old. Today we're going to talk about and do some coaching around process problem versus character problem. Which I'm super excited for us all to listen in on as we have a coaching session on how to help her son Julian understand process problem versus character problem. So give us some background and let's get started Samantha.

Samantha: So I've been thinking a lot about process problems versus character problems and where the idea that something that's a process problem then becomes in your mind that it's a character problem. Where do we get that idea? I think for myself, I got the idea because growing up my mom was very stressed out.

She was the breadwinner. She was the one doing all of the working, and she was stressed out and overwhelmed. She came home from work, and she just wanted compliance. She did not want anyone to question her. You had better have the house picked up. There better not be shoes on the floor.

There was one time that my brother and I left our shoes out of our cubbies. She got home and she said, "I told you. I have told you a million times these shoes need to be picked up, and they are not to be on the floor." She grabbed our shoes, and we didn't have a lot of money nor shoes. They were our only pairs of shoes.

She grabbed them. She walked downstairs to the dumpster. She threw them in the dumpster. She said if you want to have shoes, you'll go into the dumpster and pick them out of there. So my brother, who's older, jumped in the dumpster and was like, "Here, I'll find them and throw them out to you." Growing up, I thought that was pretty harsh. That wasn't a very nice thing

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to do. What would she have done if we hadn't gone in there and gotten them? But, of course, we knew that we weren't going to have shoes if we didn't. So we had to. I'm not trying--

Lisa: So let me just jump in here and say so what you're saying sounds like you grew up in a home where obedience was the only way. Obedience, do what I say, there's no wiggle room. You will do what I say. You understand where your mom was coming from. That's probably the only capacity she had. She was juggling a lot. It was stressful. She only had so much, but you grew up in a household where it was all about obedience. Do as I say.

Samantha: Yes. My grandfather had a saying, actually, that was do as I say, not as I do. I grew up in a household with—That was my mom. That was my experience of my mom growing up. My father is much more willing to slow down and connect.

Lisa: Compromise.

Samantha: Compromise and really kind of—He's big into introspection. My mom is not. So we just knew that we had to comply, and if you didn't comply, and if you didn't do everything perfectly then there was going to be some kind of trouble around it.

Lisa: Sure. Now let's talk about now you're the parent of a six year old who's very strong willed, opinionated in a good way, has ideas and wants to be heard. So where does this idea of character problem come from? Let me take a guess. Let me explain. You can comment on it.

It's this paradox that happens because I grew up in a house very similar to yours. Very similar. The paradox is this. I don't want to raise an obedient child. I want them to have a say. Kids are people to was my mantra as a kid. Kids are people too, you know. I didn't feel like I grew up in a

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household where people understood that, respected that, had any room for that. So I swore that if I ever had a child that I would understand the kids are people too.

So I have a son. I want him to have all this white space to push back, to question. But in the moment of when it happens, because my brain was trained in obedient household, I would get triggered by his lack of obedience. I would go into judgment of him. He's being disrespectful. He's being difficult. He's being rude. He's being non-compliant. Then that would cause me to open my mouth and statements that would come out that were character problems instead of process problems.

It's the paradox until you do the healing work. The paradox is what causes the judgment that causes us to go into voicing the challenge or the task at hand as though it is a character problem.

Samantha: Right. I was thinking about it and thinking about how everything was a character problem. Everything that you did wrong. It was because you're lazy or you're disrespectful or you don't care about my time. I have found myself thinking, my husband and my son do not care about my time because they know that they just do something and then leave it all a mess. They know that it drives me crazy, and they do it anyway. It's because they don't respect me.

But really, that's not why. It's because they get into a creative idea, and they just leave the last thing behind. So that's a process problem, not a character problem. Like I'm starting to see where my upbringing and my expectation that everything has to be done right now at this moment perfectly. That's creating in my son and my husband and I's relationship that there's no room for anything except my expectations.

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Lisa: Yes. I would say that when you were a child, the way it was voiced to you Peggy O'Mara says, who's one of the early child psychiatrists. She says our outer voice becomes our kid's inner voice. Okay. So you grew up in a household where your outer voice, your mother, who same sex parent has the greatest influence in a kid's life till the age of 10.

So you have a mother that is constantly languaging to you that you have character problems. I don't doubt that your mother loved you. She was doing her best. It's not an attack on your mother. But she was languaging to you in a way, the corrections, the coaching, the parenting was languaged in a way that you have a character problem. This is why this is so powerful and important for parents to understand this because that outer voice became your inner voice.

Now, you look through a lens of when you see your son do something that you did as a child, your brain wants to automatically go to that to that's a character problem. Let's take an example of the shoes. Okay. So let's say he comes home, and he takes his shoes off in the doorway and walks right past. Nobody wants to trip over shoes, right? So your brain looks at it and goes, "Mm, that's so disrespectful because that's what your mother said to you." So you go into judgment.

Then we want to language to our kids that there's a character problem around putting shoes in a bed. It's just a process problem. He's six. He's just got to learn that you don't leave the shoes here. You pick them up and put them in the bin.

So part of this is healing the inner child. It's coming up with new thoughts where you catch yourself going you know what? I don't need to judge him. He's not a bad person because he took his shoes off in the entryway. I can work with him to understand that the process in our home is we walk in the door, we take the shoes off, and instead of leaving the entryway, we put

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them in the bucket or the bin or the basket that we ran out to TJ Maxx to buy. The cute little basket. We put them in the basket automatically.

Eventually what will happen is his habit brain will take over because 75% of our lives are ruled on habit. His habit brain will take over and go shoes come off, they go in the pretty basket. But until then, we don't need to make him feel like a bad human being because he's not obedient and compliant and putting the shoes away. Tell me what you think about that?

Samantha: Well, yeah, and because he doesn't have a developed prefrontal cortex, and he doesn't have executive function. He's just thinking I have to go wash my hands. It's not important that I put the shoes in the basket. What's really important is that I washed the day off of my hands. That is a process that we have set up that is has been very successful.

So it's like what else is going on here? I try to ask when you can catch yourself and remember all of the tools, and all of the things that we're learning in The Hive especially. You go oh, wait a minute. Okay. No, this is not the end of the world that the shoes are on, that someone's going to trip over them. He will learn it. He is very concerned with other people. He does the right thing.

Lisa: And coachable. You know what else is a beautiful thought you could bring in here, Samantha? Wow, we're 50% of the way there because at least he's taking the shoes off. Right? So I'm halfway to my goal of teaching him that the process in our home is A, step one, shoes come off. Step two, they go in the basket. Well, I mean 50% of the way there. That would be a beautiful thought to cling to as well.

This happens to so, so, so, so, so many of us that were raised in obedient homes, is that we were made to believe that obedience is everything. If we don't obey, we're of poor character. Now it's just a matter of healing that

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little girl whose shoes got thrown in the dumpster, who was expected to when someone said jumped, your only response was yes ma'am, how high? Right? So it's healing that and then rewiring the brain that my kid is six. So all of the things that aren't going well in a given day are just process problems.

Here's the beauty. If you language it that way for him, that will become his inner voice, and he will grow up to be a kid that looks at everything as like well, let's just figure it out and fix it. Let's go buy a basket. Let's put the basket near the door. When we come home, we'll take our shoes off and put them in the basket. Then we'll wash the day off our hands. These are just process problems that can be solved.

Samantha: Yes. I realize that I started, as a child, to anticipate what she wanted me to do, to anticipate doing something so I wouldn't anger her, get in trouble. I don't want it to come across like my mom is a horrible person. My mom and I get along great now because I have a child, and I see what her life was like. I have perspective.

But I see how it has turned me into somebody who tries to fix things before they become a problem. That's not helpful to anyone, and that doesn't help me grow or them grow or leave any kind of room for the way that somebody else wants to do something, and that they have good ideas as well. I don't need to be in control of everything.

Lisa: Right. Yes, that's a very common thing that happens. So when there is obedience and punishment is at the core of the child rearing, then you're at a fork in the road. You're either gonna go towards rebellion, which some people choose, or what happens is you begin to birth a people pleaser. Let me get ahead of this. Let me keep the peace. Let me anticipate what she's going to find fault with or upset.

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Also, if every time I do something wrong my character gets attacked, and I feel bad about myself then, of course, I'm going to want to get ahead of that. So then I become a scanner, a diligent watcher of things going on in the universe. I'm sure as a little girl as you grew up, your mom walked in the door, and you're sensing our mood. Which person, which parent is walking in the door? Do I have everything as it should be?

Then the problem with that is it might feel great as a parent, but then what happens is then we raise people pleasers who go out into the world and continue scanning the world for how do I please you? How do I not get in trouble? Maybe how do I not get caught? Maybe the things you do decide to do were motivated to not get caught instead of doing the right thing from the wrong thing.

I call myself a recovering people pleaser too. It was the exact same thing. I wanted to constantly scan my environment so that I could do everything I could to keep tempers down, to keep the storms down, to keep people's attacking me and my character down to a minimum so that I didn't feel bad about myself.

Samantha: Right. The greatest gift that Julian has given me is that none of it works on him. He doesn't care. If you get angry, he actually is unfazed by or angry.

Lisa: Is comfortable by your anger.

Samantha: Yeah, he's completely unfazed. You can't get compliance out of him by trying to dominate him. It just doesn't work. I think that, as frustrating as that can be when you're trying to gain compliance through dominance and before I joined the peaceful parenting revolution. It's like this is untenable. I can't keep this up. This kid, he doesn't care that he's getting in trouble right now. He doesn't care that I'm angry. But that's a gift.

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Lisa: Well, I would offer, Samantha, in my experience, it's usually a marriage of the strong willed child and the parent who doesn't have the personality to dominate. It's a combo. It's because you're a recovering people pleaser that you don't have it in you to dominate over him, and he's not taking it. So same exact thing in our house. My son is very comfortable when his father I am angry with him. He's not panicked, like I was.

When someone got angry at me in my childhood, there was often very dire consequences as a result of that. So the anger was a precursor or an aura to very bad things that were going to happen, whether it was attacking my character or some physical punishment or something being removed to punish me into submission.

So because we don't do that here, when I am upset with Malcolm about something, he doesn't like it, but he's not panicked or trying to fix or get ahead of it. Sometimes I just look at him and I'm like wow. I'm blown away by it. It's a compliment to you and the environment you're creating with Julian.

It's also, I just think as recovering or current people pleasers, it's virtually impossible to stay on top of that dominance 24/7. Right. So then you end up waffling between dominance and permissive. That actually is not good for our kids, the waffling between. Because then they feel insecure because they don't know which person you're going to present.

But I also want to go back and say this. Let's go back to the shoe example. When the shoes come off and they're left in the entryway and you're not attacking his character, it's really just about the shoes. You're just wanting the shoes to get in the basket. He feels this. So it creates this beautiful opportunity for you to encourage, coach, teach, remind.

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Because there's no attack on his character. You don't listen. You only listen when I yell. You're so disrespectful. You don't do anything. When we're not attacking the character, there's all this space to just work on getting the shoes in the basket. Then it literally just becomes about the shoes getting in the basket and not about how I feel disrespected, and how you feel beaten down. It doesn't turn into this big thing.

Samantha: Yeah, because really there are big things going on in our lives. Shoes are not one of them. We can turn every molehill into a mountain if we want to.

Lisa: Yeah, but because you're just making it about the shoes, he doesn't have to panic when you get frustrated. Because let's say it's day 12. You walk in the door, and it's day 12 of the shoes not getting the basket, and you trip over them. You don't fall down and break your leg, but you sort of stumble. You've got groceries in your hand. He came in before you. You don't look down. Your foot feels the shoe and you kick it out of the way. Maybe you have a frustrated moment. Right? Like Julian, Julian, we need to get the shoes in the basket. Come back here and get them in the basket.

But because you're not attacking his character, it can just be about—He doesn't have to get super dysregulated by it because he doesn't fear some big thing coming. Whether it's an explosion or attacking his character or punishing him, sending him to his room or taking TV away for five nights. It's just hey, buddy, gotta get these shoes in the basket. It's really beautiful.

I mean I think everybody listening can agree shoes getting in a basket are just about—It really is just a process problem. We don't need to attack someone's character at six years old who is 19 years away from a fully developed prefrontal cortex and at six years old has little to no executive function, which is the ability to see a couple steps ahead and make connections and understand things and logic and plan ahead. We don't

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need to attack a six year old who's 19 years away to feel like a horrible human being because the shoes aren't getting in the basket.

Samantha: I have a question about when that does happen, when you're six years old and you get criticized and attacked constantly, what does that do to the way that your brain develops going forward?

Lisa: Good question. There's definitely evidence in the world that high stress rewires the brain in a way that we don't want it to. So that happens. I would also really bring us back to the idea that if I grew up in an environment where on the regular my character is attacked then I grow up with low self-esteem. Right? Because I think that then I take on, I'm disrespectful. I can't get it right. I only listen to people when they yell at me. I never do what I'm told.

To a parent, telling a kid you never do what I tell you might seem innocent, right? Or you're disrespectful, or the only way I can get you to listen as they yell at you. But then that is the lens that I see myself through. I'm disrespectful to people. I don't do what I'm told. So I take it on. I feel bad about myself. It lingers, as you described.

This is the work that we grew up then to have to do. We have to heal the child in us because it has affected our self-esteem. Maybe not our self-love but our esteem, how we view ourselves. This is why I'm passionate about making sure that we language with kids as though it is a process problem and not a character problem.

Samantha: Right? Because it feels like it becomes then you take it in, you tell yourself over and over. Yes, I am a lazy person. Then well, why should I bother putting the shoes in the basket ever? I mean, it doesn't matter. I'm lazy anyway. I'm just gonna mess something else up eventually.

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Lisa: Or you're afraid to try as an adult or a young teen because you identify yourself as lazy. I think the bigger picture is if there's constant attack of character. You grew up just feeling generally flawed, less than. I can speak from experience. I grew up feeling audibly flawed and just less than other people.

So I either worked extra hard to win people over, to a ridiculous level that prevented authentic relationships, or I wouldn't even try or enter the game because I was lazy or flawed or just not worthy or not good enough. Or if I entered the game and wasn't amazing from the start, couldn't get the shoes in the basket right away, my brain would go see? See? Well, you're just less than. You're lazy. You can't accomplish this.

So it does affect your esteem and how you view yourself. Even if someone else tells you you're amazing, you don't believe it because this is your inner voice. Hopefully, I'm explaining that well. It leaves a mark.

Now, if you're someone who's relating to this as an adult, and you're like whoa, whoa. Samantha and Lisa, just, yeah, I'm with him, sister. I'm right there with you. I have the same upbringing. I thought or think I'm flawed and less than. Don't lose hope. You can heal your childhood wounds. One of the beauties of being a parent is we have the opportunity to heal the six year old Samantha right alongside the six year old Julian, right? The 17 year old Lisa right along the 17 year old Malcolm.

So it's part of the process of peaceful parenting is to heal those wounds right alongside. I have to say this, and I think Samantha you can attest to this, this is a lot of the work we do inside The Hive, right. We recognize how we're getting triggered by the judgments, by the thoughts, by the experience, and our languaging to our kids. Then we have an opportunity to rewire our brain so that your languaging, that the shoes in the entryway is a process problem.

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I want to be clear it isn't that we're going up to our kids and saying, "Julian, we have a process problem here." It's the words we're using like hey, buddy. Remember, we're working on getting those shoes in the basket. Go pick them up please and put them in the basket. I look forward to the day when you remember to do it. But you are 50% of the way there in that you are remembering to take your shoes off when you come in.

Samantha: Right.

Lisa: Right? That is how we would parent with a process problem rather than what is wrong with you. How many times do I have to tell you? Every day I tell you to put those shoes in the basket. Every day you don't listen to me. You're so disrespectful. I can't believe this. I cannot believe you cannot remember to put those shoes in basket. How many more times am I gonna have to ask you? That is parenting as though the shoes are character problem. I don't want you to do that listener.

Samantha: Yeah, I mean I'm guilty of saying at least a few of those phrases, not about the shoes necessarily but just in general. That was because that's the language that was used with me. Like you said, parenting. I'm not just parenting, Julian. Really what I'm doing mostly is parenting myself. I'm showing myself compassion for the little inner child in me. Seeing Julian is just the mirror that's holding the mirror up to me.

Lisa: Yeah, the little girl in you that that forgot to put the shoes in the basket and mom came home and threw them in a dumpster. You're thinking, well, now what are we going to do? I'm not gonna have shoes for school tomorrow. Because it's nine o'clock at night. I know we're not getting shoes, and I know we don't have money for shoes. Why is she throwing them in the dumpster in the first place? Now we have to go get them. She's really angry. I could have done a better job. Yes, yes. You're parenting not child.

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When you have compassion, when you can look at Julian and say it is hard for a six year old to remember. It will happen. I will hold space that it will happen, but I also have learned from Lisa that he doesn't have executive function. He's not doing it to me. He's not trying to stick it to me when he forgets to put the shoes in the basket. He hasn't connected all the dots yet. The habit brain hasn't formed. The executive function isn't there.

It wasn't there for me. So I wasn't trying to disrespect my mom or be a bad girl. I just forgot to put the shoes in the cubby that she wanted them in. She didn't get that. Neither did I. But it would have been great if the shoes wouldn't have ended up in the dumpster. I can have compassion for myself. I can understand that I wasn't flawed. I just didn't have the ability to remember day in and day out to put the shoes in the bin.

Yeah, it's very beautiful. It's why it's the path to peaceful parenting. Right? Because we're always working on it. We take two steps forward and step back. It's why I have a membership so that we can come and be in community and we can work on this, and we can heal and grow. Parenting is like an onion. You just get one thing solved, and the next day you go okay, we're 27 days into the shoes being in the basket. Now something else pops up. Right? There's another layer to peel back.

So it's why inside Real World Peaceful Parenting and inside The Hive, we say progress, not perfection. I have setbacks. You have setbacks, but we don't need to make it mean anything about our parenting character. I mean, let's come full circle, right? When you when you have a setback, when you say something to him that afterwards you go oh maybe I shouldn't have said that. Like okay, let me have compassion for myself. I was triggered, right? It's progress, not perfection. That was a process problem. I'm not of bad character. I just need to work on it, and continue to want to do better. It's all inner connected.

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Samantha: I'll say this about The Hive. Not only is it wonderful to feel like you're not alone in your process problems. But it's taught me ways to deal with not just my myself or Julian, but my parents, my brother, my friends. I am my own boss. So I don't have a boss. I don't have coworkers. But it's changed the way that I speak to myself. That is, I think, a very important building block to parenting your children better is like speaking to yourself with some compassion and giving yourself space and holding space for yourself and not being so judgmental.

Lisa: Not attacking your character. Right?

Samantha: Yeah. Not attacking my own character. Like, how is that helpful? Yes. Yes, I love what you said, Thank you for saying that about The Hive. I love the saying, as you know, a rising tide lifts all boats. I think when people come and join the membership community of The Hive, which we'll link to in the show notes. If you want to know more about it, you can go to thehivecoaching.com. But I like to say a rising tide lifts all boats.

When you come into The Hive and join in the community and get coaching and listen to others get coached, every single relationship in your life gets better. Your self, your co-parent, if you have a partner, your mother, your mother-in-law, the neighbor next door, your children, and most importantly, your relationship with yourself. When you do this work, when one does this work, and heals and grows, then you're also modeling that for your children.

So the more compassionate you are Samantha, and the more you think and model and say oh, that was a process problem, not a character problem. The more you model that for Julian, the more he learns that too. So he learns not to self-deprecate. He learns not to flog himself. He learns not to hate on himself. He learns not to judge themselves harshly and assume that he is flawed.

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So that is so beautiful. That is what happens is we begin to model that. We begin to experience it, which feels good. We get a feel good chemical release in our brain. We like ourselves more. We model it not only for our children, but we model it for our partner and our co-parent and everybody that's around us. It's like oh, I'll have what she's having or what he's having. We have everybody in The Hive from all around the world. But that is the beauty of what happens when we really learn process versus character problem, we also stop assaulting our own character.

Hmm, so good. So good. Thank you for being here today. This was just, I think, a conversation that people are just really going to value and learn from. So thank you so much for coming and being here.

Samantha: Thank you for having me Lisa. This was great.

Lisa: Yes. Listen, if this resonated with you, if you're thinking whoa, that was amazing. You've got tingles. The hair on your arm stood up. You had any kind of experience from listening to Samantha and I, I want to encourage you to come over to thehivecoaching.com and check it out. It is an absolutely amazing community of like-minded parents on the path to peaceful parenting.

I promise you, after just one week in The Hive, you will feel different. You will feel more connected to your children. You will feel more connected to yourself, and you will get more cooperation from your kids. So come on over there and check us out. Again, my thanks to Samantha for being here and for sharing so openly. I just love it.

I know you all are giving her a big round of applause as well. I love you all so much. I'm proud of you for showing up here every week and doing this work. I really am just so, so, so proud of you. You benefit, your kids benefit,

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your parenting benefits. Well done. As I say each week until we meet again, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

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.