

## Ep #83: What to Do When Needs Conflict in Your Family



### 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. Each week I talk a lot about triggers. I encourage you to take notice of what they are, understand why they're there, think about where they come from, and decide what thoughts we marinate in to support them. What I know for sure is the more you practice being a real world peaceful parent, the more you recognize the triggers that dysregulate you and get you stuck in your middle brain. We work here diligently on figuring out how to move past our triggers so we don't storm alongside our kids.

But triggers are not necessarily the only thing that dysregulates you. Today I want to point out another element that can cause you to storm alongside your kids. It's a conflict of needs. The collision of your immediate needs as the parent with the immediate needs of your child or children.

So this collision happens for a variety of reasons. It can happen when a parent's trying to work from home, and has to be on a call in two minutes with the big client or their boss, or maybe both, and the three year old is having a meltdown with no one else available to help. Or a collision can happen when one child is throwing up in the bathroom, and another two children are throwing punches downstairs.

Or the collision can happen like in the case of a mom in my community, The Hive. This particular scenario happened when a parent was trying to pack for a 12 day road trip. Now think about this. 12 days for her family of six. Her 12 year old son was itching to pick a fight with all three of his

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younger siblings downstairs. Been there? You can just see the situation playing out in your mind, right?

Collisions arise when the need of one person intersects with the need of another person. In this case, a parent and a child, and a massive storm makes landfall. I think we've all been there. We all can close our eyes and think of a collision that happened when you had a need and it intersected with one of your kids' needs, and a massive storm was the outcome. I get asked this all the time. Lisa, what do I do in this situation? What do I do? So I wanted to address this today. I want to dive right in. Sound good? Okay.

So one of the moms in my have community recently provided the perfect scenario for today's topic. I'll call her Sandy. Now allow me to set the backdrop for the approaching conflict of needs that Sandy experienced with her son. Again, he's 12 years old, and we'll call him Max. Max is strong-willed, articulate, deeply connected to his friends and the social scene, desperate for more autonomy as the oldest of four children, and he wants what he wants when he wants it. Do you have a Max? Can you relate to this?

Now, Max has been suffering from the news that his family will be going on a vacation, taking 12 days to drive from Pennsylvania to Wisconsin, spending time with his extended family and then driving back. Max's suffering comes primarily from his very normal teenage fear of missing out, also known as FOMO. FOMO, for some children and adults, can feel like the air is being sucked right out of their lungs. That their world is literally going to end. And such as the case for Max when he discovered they were going on this 12 day trip.

Because while they're away on this magical vacation, Sandy at least thinks it's going to be a magical vacation. Max was going to miss a big, and I

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mean capital B space capital I space capital G, big birthday party where all of his friends were going to be together having fun. Max was also going to miss a flag football tournament at the park that he really wanted to play in. Plus he was going to miss out on at least a dozen other things because his parents were making him go with them on their family vacation. Let me tell you something, Max absolutely did not want to go on this vacation.

Enter mom, Sandy. Sandy typically has three of her four children in school all day with at least I'm downtime to herself to gather her thoughts and take care of chores and errands, and even help out a friend in need. As this 12 day vacation nearly approaches, however, she now has all four kids home 24/7 because it's summertime, all with their own needs and opinions about things, a massive to do list that needs to be completed before they can leave for the vacation, and things that need to be packed.

Now, she also has Max completely dysregulated. I mean completely dysregulated and unwilling to help with anything. Max was unwilling to lift a finger with the packing or preparations because, remember, he does not want to go on this trip. His FOMO is working full time. So what happens? Needs collide. Sandy needs to get things done, and she needs help and support. Max needs to storm because he is so upset that he is not going to be home for this epic once in a lifetime birthday party and flag football tournament.

Max's list of demands as a 12 year old born to be an adult pubescent kid includes moving out of the family home right now to live on his own, make his own decisions, and have no rules, which makes me laugh even saying it out loud. In reality, Max is craving autonomy. He's wanting more and more and more of it.

There's something that happens to 12 year old boys literally overnight without even a slow climb. One day they're our young, innocent,

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affectionate, sweet little boys, depending on our care. Literally the next day, they wake up with things that may have simply bothered them before, but now the same exact things seem incredibly intense. Can I get an amen on that one? Have you been there?

As a parent observing this, it makes you wonder if they're pumping steroids into these little boy's bodies while they're sleeping. According to Sandy, it feels like just yesterday Max didn't like missing out on fun with his friends, but he could get over it and move on fairly quickly and be cooperative. But that is no longer the case.

On this particular day, he was angry, defiant, unwilling to help, and purposely trying to push every last one of Sandy's buttons. Or so that's how it felt to Sandy. This is where she jumped onto our weekly call to ask me for help.

My recommendation was for now let go of expecting Max to do anything to get ready for the trip. Now this was a really big deal to Sandy. She was looking for Max to help with the trip preparations as he's always helped in the past and helped with a pretty good attitude. At a bare minimum in the past, he's done a great job of occupying his younger siblings without conflict so at least Sandy could do the packing and get ready for the trip.

Now as we were coaching together, she admitted that she was getting very triggered by Max's unwillingness to help, and worst his desire to poke at his siblings, which was creating storming for everyone. Sandy being a longtime Hive member who has been practicing real world peaceful parenting tools for a couple years said she tried hard to just get him to go to his room.

She told Max it was okay if he didn't want to help, but the least she needed him to do was to stay away from his siblings. It seems lately that anytime he's with his siblings, they're all in conflict. So at the very least, she needed

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him to avoid the conflict and stay away from the space his siblings were in. Again, so she could get some of the packing and the trip preparations done.

She suggested going to a different room to read where no one would bother Max. Max adamantly said no. If they're in the basement then I want to be in the basement. Don't you just love Max? How many times have you heard this? Right there, there was the problem. Max being 12 years old is straddling two worlds. One world where he's autonomous and self-reliant, and one world where he longs for connection with his family. Even if the connection is negative.

He's longing for connection because he's hurting because he's not going to be here for this party and football tournament. He's so incredibly upset about it. The thing about puberty is it's very confusing for these young children, these teenagers. They want it all. Take Max for example. He wants it all, and he wants it all at the same time. Even if he doesn't know what he wants, half the time he's saying he wants one thing when really he wants another. I want to fight with my siblings, but really I'm just in pain.

Now let's be honest here, Max is just itching for a fight. He was really, really, really, really angry that he has to go on this trip. He was angry that he'd be missing out on this fun with his friends, which he was absolutely convinced was going to be the mother of all parties. He was angry that his mom couldn't see things his way. He wanted someone to bother him or power struggle with so that he could have someone to project all of his anger onto. Can you see this? Can you see this with your own kids?

Oftentimes, when we're so upset, we're just looking for someone to project all of our anger onto. It is said that kids sometimes ask for help in the strangest and most maddening of ways. If I had to guess, I would say that Max is in deep pain, and deeply upset that he will be gone when these

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“important social events” are happening. When I say it this way, can you see it?

Remember, I encourage you all the time to scuba dive down to the feelings and needs. Not snorkel at the top on the behavior but to scuba dive down. When Sandy said to Max that he didn't have to help pack, but he had to isolate himself from his siblings, she was just adding fuel to the fire. Which in turn, added fuel to her own fire, which is giving him the recipe to project his upset and spitefulness onto her and his siblings. Hence the power struggle.

Can you see the classic power struggle here? Sandy, in her defense, sincerely did not tell Max to go to his room as a form of punishment. She was trying to give Max the out he said he wanted. In this case, it just wasn't working for Max or Sandy. Are you with me? Can you feel the sense of urgency, desperation, and quit in Sandy's story? I sure can.

Sandy is just trying to get the packing done so they can go on the trip, which she's excited to go on. So in the moment, she's focusing on the behavior instead of slowing down in scuba diving down to the feelings and needs. The result of this is this storming and this projecting of anger and power struggling that's going on between Sandy and Max.

So where can Sandy go from here? I mean come on, Lisa. There could be up to six more years of this. What can Sandy do right now? Right now, as she is still desperately trying to get the family ready, there's six of them, for this vacation, and satisfy Max's need for autonomy and connection with his friends?

So here's what I suggested. I told Sandy this is what I would do. Now I've known Max and Sandy for a while. I know that Max's ultimate pleasure outside of being physically with his friends is spending time on the tablet

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playing games. So my suggestion was instead of threatening to take away the tablet as a punishment each time Max was defiant, combative, or unwilling to help when asked, I suggested she offered the tablet as a reward for managing his anger and participating with the family. So I suggested she consider for each half day that Max is successful, reward him with something like 30 minutes of tablet time.

Now, let me be clear here. I was not suggesting that she asked Max to get over his anger. He is entitled to his own feelings, even the uncomfortable ones. He is sad, mad, upset, dismayed that he is missing the epic party of the century. What I am suggesting is that she worked with Max to ask him to manage his emotions in a way that works for the whole family. Incentive gives Max “skin in the game”.

By giving Max skin in the game, she was inadvertently also giving him the autonomy he was so desperately craving. He got to decide how he was going to show up and whether he was going to earn the reward of screen time that he really wanted and enjoys, and helping him feel connected to his friends through the gaming.

Because although he couldn't be at the party or the flag football tournament, he could stay in contact with his friends through the gaming. This helped meet his need of autonomy and connection and help keep the FOMO at bay. Once he gets in the habit of managing his anger, everything is going to get better.

Yeah? This is a beautiful gift we give to our children. Once we help our kids get in the habit of managing their big emotions, having them but not necessarily acting on them, managing their big emotions, everything gets better. It's a beautiful gift we give our children. Their freedom to feel their feelings, and manage them in ways that are safe and healthy for them and for those around them.



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Let me say that just one more time, when we help and encourage and coach and parent and incentivize our kids to get in the habit of managing their big emotions, everything gets better. The beautiful gift that we give our children is the freedom to feel their big feelings and manage them in ways that are safe and healthy for both our children and all of those around him.

Now, this is not the end of Sandy and Max's story of conflict or power struggles. They've got some more coming on the horizon. But Sandy left for vacation feeling assured that she was not alone. That she was not hopeless as a mom of a teenager, and that Max was not a bad kid that's going to end up living under a bridge with a shopping cart just because he has need, a strong need, for a lot of autonomy. Through it all, there'll be lessons for both of them to learn, and connection to be made.

So what can you do when you find your needs conflicting with the needs of your children at any age? What can you do? Well, the first thing is do everything you can to stay regulated. You can have needs and stay regulated at the same time.

Next, remember that frustration is the gap between expectation and reality. You might have one expectation, your kids might have a different expectation, and the gap between that will lead to frustration. Next, remember that conflict is growth trying to happen. We can work through this. All is not lost. I can figure out a way to help Max manage his big emotions without power struggling with all the kids. In this instance, Sandy needed to let go of her expectation that Max was going to help this year to get ready for the trip.

I also encourage you to be aware of what's going on for you in the moment, and what could be going on for your child. What am I thinking and feeling and needing, and what are they thinking and feeling and needing? It will be most helpful to you if you work on your thoughts and your children's

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naturally changing needs in between storms when you're both regulated. That way when the storm comes you will be much more successful in not taking it personally, and your connection with your kids will grow.

Look for ways to create win-wins rather than taking away, punishing, threatening, or demanding. Look for ways to incentivize your kids for managing their big emotions. Incentive gives our kids skin in the game.

Most, most, most importantly remember, we are not asking our kids to get over their big feelings. We are asking our kids to learn to manage their big feelings in a way that works for them and those around them. That is really, really, really important that that be the family mantra.

I am not asking you to get over your big feelings. I'm not asking you to suck it up. I'm not asking you to be happy or understanding that you're missing this big birthday party Max. I'm not asking that at all. I am asking you to work to manage your big emotions in a way that works for you, Max, and for our entire family as we get in the car to go on a 12 day trip.

Once our kids get in the habit of managing their big emotions, everything is going to get better. Again, this is a beautiful gift we give our children. The freedom to feel their feelings and manage them in a way that is safe and healthy for our kids and those around them.

By the way, as a just wonderful, delightful side note. Once the family got to their destination, Max discovered paddleboarding and had an absolute blast. Sandy reported that he was cooperative and fun. They all had a great time on the vacation and made it home safe and sound. When they got home, she organized a sleepover for Max and the birthday boy as she's working to honor what's important to Max, which is connecting with his friends. Ah, I love it. I love it. Well done, Sandy. Well done.

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I've had a lot of time recently to reflect on my journey as a parent as my son just turned 18. During this reflection, I've been reminded of the tools that I use, the tools that I teach, the tools that I share here each week on the podcast that helps you walk down the real world peaceful parenting path and helps you be connected. Helps you create that connection with your strong willed children. It's so worth it, isn't it?

So having said that, I have a special invitation for you today. If you're ready to take the next step, wherever you're at on the path, wherever. The beginning, the middle, towards the end, wherever you're at. If you're ready to take the next step, I'm here to guide you. I think you know by now I'm committed to being here with you every single step down the path. Because really we're walking the same path. I really want you to know exactly like Sandy, I see you, and you're not alone.

Again, if you feel ready now to make the next step, to do something different, then you're in for a real treat. Because as we head into what can be one of the most stressful times of the year, back to school, at least in North America, I want to help you create even more connection and cooperation in your home. The first step is to calm the chaos that's going on in your home currently, much like I helped Sandy and Max, with my free three day challenge called Keep Calm and Parents On.

As I mentioned, it's 100% F-R-E-E. It's online, and it's 100% designed for you. Yes, you. You can participate from anywhere in the world. So no matter where you're hearing this, no matter where you are right now in the world, you can join the three day Keep Calm and Parents On challenge.

Here's the exciting part. It's a very minimal time commitment. I need one hour a day for three days. That's all I need. Now, think about that. Can you give one hour a day on three different days to move from chaos to connection with your kids? I think so.

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The three day Keep Calm and Parents On challenge is all about understanding where our anger as the parent comes from. It's all about understanding why our kids storm. I'm going to go into great detail about that. The three day challenge is about helping you get a handle on your frustration, which helps you storm less. Through it all I'm going to teach you practical tips, tools, and ideas that are going to move you, yes you, from chaos to cooperation. Sounds amazing, right?

So here's how the challenge works. You're gonna go to [thepeacefulparent.com/challenge](https://thepeacefulparent.com/challenge), and you're going to sign up for the three day challenge. There's a link in the show notes. So you can also go there, and that'll take you directly to the page. Do it right now so you don't forget. So go to [thepeacefulparent.com/challenge](https://thepeacefulparent.com/challenge) and get yourself signed up for the challenge.

Now, once you're signed up, you're going to get daily reminders, and you're gonna get the workbook that we use during the challenge. As I mentioned, during the challenge I'm going to give you tips, tools, and coaching for how to create connection and cooperation in your home. Each day we're going to address a different topic.

Monday, August 15<sup>th</sup> we're going to talk about why do my kids storm? I mean really Lisa. Why do they have to do this to me? Why? I don't understand is that you? Perfect. We're going to cover that in great detail. You are going to end the day on Monday, August 15<sup>th</sup> with a very clear understanding of exactly why your kids storm.

Then day two, Wednesday, August 17<sup>th</sup> we're going to tackle how to create connection. How to move away from the chaos, like started between Sandy and Max, and how to move towards connection even when your kids are having a big storm with big emotions. Yes, it's possible. I promise.

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Then on day three, which is going to be Friday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, we're going to cover how does cooperation happen? This thing you talk about Lisa, this unicorn cooperation, how do I get it? How do I create more of it in my home? Again, you will finish the day of August 19<sup>th</sup> with a deep understanding of how to create cooperation in your household. I promise.

Now I'm going to go live each day of the challenge in the Keep Calm and Parent On pop up Facebook group and over on Zoom. So if you don't on Facebook, I don't want you to worry about it for a minute. I'll meet you over on Zoom. You don't want to get on Zoom? No problem. You can watch the classes inside the pop up Facebook group. Don't worry. If you sign up and can't make the live class, the recording will be available in the group for a limited time. You also can purchase the recordings so you have lifetime access to them.

Now you don't want to miss out on this. You do not want to miss out on this. So either click on the link in the show notes or head over to [thepeacefulparent.com/challenge](https://thepeacefulparent.com/challenge) because I cannot wait to work with you. You. No, I'm serious. I really, honestly cannot wait for you to join the challenge. I am so excited about this. It's one of my favorite things I do. I absolutely bring it. You are not going to want to miss out on this amazing event that is going to be transformative in your parenting and create deep connection and cooperation with your kids.

Now, if you know of another parent, grandparent, teacher, nanny, guardian that you think this would be perfect for, please invite them to join us as well. The more the merrier. All right. So once again, the link to sign up is [thepeacefulparent.com/challenge](https://thepeacefulparent.com/challenge). I'll see you inside the group.

Thanks for listening to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. If you want more info on how you can transform your parenting, visit [thepeacefulparent.com](https://thepeacefulparent.com). See you soon.