

Ep #91: Busting the Myth: You DON'T Need to Parent from a United Front



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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. Today, I want to bust open the myth that parents need to parent their children as a united front. I hear this all the time from my clients and my Hive members. Lisa, we're not a united front. We're not on the same page. Help. Many parents have a limiting belief. Remember, a limiting belief is a thought that doesn't serve us.

So many parents have a limiting belief that in order for their children to learn and practice the family values and to grow up to be responsible, kind, happy, hardworking contributors to society. They the parents have to approach every lesson and every situation linked arm and arm with the same beliefs, goals, and tactics. And that they have to agree on everything regarding raising their kids.

Today, I'm here to bust this myth for you, and hopefully bring you a tremendous amount of relief. In reality, I find this idea of united front to just be a cover for one parent saying to the other parent or the other coparent I need you to do it my way. I need you to agree with me on everything. I have a manual that says we approach it this way, and I need you to go along with it. If you don't, I'm going to tell you we're not a united front. It's going to create stress and spirited discourse and disconnection between us and our children. I think this is a big crock of hooey.

If we looked at Webster's Dictionary, Webster's defines united front as a group of people or organization that joined together to achieve a shared goal. Right? They joined together to achieve a shared goal. As parents, we

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may have a shared broad goal of raising our children to be things like responsible, kind, hardworking, and happy. However, each parent has responsibilities, interests, gifts, and tactics they bring to the parenting table.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about here. In the workforce, if we were all organizing a union together, or we were joining a union, it might be because we want to bring better conditions to ourselves and our coworkers. Right? I think we can all agree upon that. I may choose to join in organizing the union because I think we need better healthcare options. You may choose to join in organizing the union because you believe the wages should be higher.

So think about this. We have a united front. We share an overall goal of getting the union in the workplace, but we have different skills and interests that contribute to the goal. I have a different interest than you do. I want health care. You want better wages. I bring a different skill set to the organization than you do. But it is also true that we are united front, and we share an overall goal in that we'd like to see a union in the workplace. You see how that is.

Parents do not need to be a united front or agree on every thought, situation, task, or opportunity that leads to their ultimate shared goal. Each parent can take on different responsibilities within the so called union based on their credibility and their authority on different subjects and their interest.

For instance, one parent might be very passionate and creditable in holding limits when it comes to schoolwork. The other parent might be very passionate and credible in holding limits on household chores or curfews. One parent might be more triggered in the morning and less triggered a bedtime. One parent might be more of a logical thinker, and the other might be more rooted in their emotions.

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Here's the thing, your children will benefit from all these strengths. If you limit your kids to only your way of thinking and doing things your manual, everything has to be done my way, you are robbing them of their other parent's strengths. If you give your coparent the freedom to handle his or her own relationship and parenting practices with your children, your children will be better for it I promise.

Oftentimes, united front in parenting means one parent takes the authoritative lead in a particular area, and the other parent stays out of the way. This is still united front because both parents are still working towards the same ultimate goal.

This is certainly true in our house. It seems that I specialize and take the lead in certain areas, and my husband stays completely out of the way. While in other areas like homework and grades and turning in assignments, my husband takes the lead based on his authority, skills, and credibility, and I stay completely out of the way. We'll often say talk to your dad. Your dad's handling that.

In our family, we consider that a united front because we are united in who is going to handle it. A united front does not mean that you need to parent together in every little or big situation. Many of my clients get very dysregulated when their coparent does not handle a situation with their kids the same way they would. Most if not all of these parents have a great need to always be in control and in charge. They claim they wish their coparent would step up and take the lead more often. But what they're really saying is only if the coparent does it my way.

If this rings true for you, even in the smallest of ways, please hear me as I tell you this with full love. This is not a parenting approach that is serving you. It's not serving you, your coparent, your child, your family, or your

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relationships within the family. I encourage you to broaden the scope or the definition of a united front. There are two ways you can do this.

First, I encourage you to do some thought work on why it's so important to you that your coparent parents exactly the same way you do in particular situations. 99.9% of the time there is more than one right way, I promise. Especially when it comes to parenting. So what comes up for you when you ask yourself why are you so triggered by the way he or she handles a particular situation?

Search for the thoughts that keep feeding your limiting belief that you both have to agree on everything and respond your child the same way in order to be a united front. Then when you find that thought, find another thought that feel equally true, and practice repeating that new thought to yourself over and over and over again until you believe it.

For instance, if your thought is my coparent does not hold the same limits I do. Our children won't know what is expected of them. They won't ever learn self-discipline or responsibility, and they'll end up living under a bridge with a shopping cart. Maybe that's your thought. Or maybe your thought is all he or she, they are doing is undermining me and teaching our kids not to respect me. Or he or she is only teaching our child to play us against each other in order to always get their way.

If you have these thoughts, then I encourage you to find a new thought. A new thought that better serves you and your family might be I will stay in my lane, or my coparent has to build his or her own relationship with our children in their own way. Or my expertise is not needed in this area. Or my children are learning that every human being is different. They're learning how to build relationships and how to cooperate with different people and styles. Or my way is not the only right way to do things. These thoughts will

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support your overall parenting goals far better than your current limiting thoughts.

The second and as equally an important tool is to have a conversation with your coparent and define together your overarching goal for your children. The big picture. Keeping that goal in mind will help you determine in different situations when it's time for you to step up to the plate and when it's time for you to take a seat on the bench.

If you're wanting parenting to be a team sport, like the sport of baseball with a shared overall goal of winning the game, the team cannot win if you're the only one at bat all the time, or the only one playing in the outfield. Each player needs to bring his or her own gifts, skills, and talents to the game. The other players need to give them space to put their skills to work.

Think about this. The outfielder can't show up and perform like the first baseman. The shortstop has a completely different skill set than the right fielder or the catcher. In order for a baseball team to win, everybody must stay in their own lane. It may also be beneficial to define a few areas in parenting where one of you should take the lead because of your passion or credibility or experience in that area. This is not with the goal of keeping the coparent out of your lane, but for you to stay in your lane.

For those of you who admittedly always need to be in control, this will help you to recognize the opportunities when you don't have to be in control, when you can relinquish control because it's not your lane. With some practice, you may just see how liberating it is to not always have to be the authority in charge, to not always have to have the answer. For those of you who are parenting alone or you're not in a relationship with your coparent that honors open communication and partnership, I encourage you to stick to my first suggestion and work through your thought work.

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If this is an area of big dysregulation for you with regard to your parenting, I encourage you to take a look and join my community of likeminded imperfect parents called the Hive. This is where we come together and work on these exact topics, where we figure out how to be united front while also serving our children without creating dysregulation in our relationship. You can learn more about the Hive at thehivecoaching.com.

Remember, having a shared overall goal still honors each coparent and their different skills, interests, passions, and credibility that contribute to the big picture goal. At the same time, helps you teach model and guide your children to be responsible, kind, happy, hardworking contributors to society.

So my homework lesson for you today is to really ask yourself do I think we need to be united front? What does that mean? How do I define it? Could I open up to a new definition of it where we understand what we're good at, where our strengths and our passion are in each of our parenting areas, and we commit to staying in our lane and letting the other person handle what they're good at. Consider that and united front instead of thinking about how you have to do it exactly my way, or we're not a united front.

This is one of the most important transformations I've had in my parenting with my son and his father. It creates a real sense of community and teamwork with all of us. I want this for every single one of you. If this topic resonates with you and you've heard yourself say we need to be united front, please sit down and really question how am I currently defining it? Could I do a better job?

Feel free to take all of my ideas and adopt them. Because they're an absolute game changer for you, your coparent, and your children. Sound good? Awesome. Okay, until we meet again. I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

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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.