

Ep #96: How Anger Can Improve Your Parenting



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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 talk about how anger can improve your parenting. You're probably thinking what? Lisa, what? Come again? What you say? I know, bear with me here. Hang with me. Anger. What do you think about when I say anger or angry? What is your definition of anger? How do you feel about anger? Do you want to run from it? Do you never want to experience it? Do you feel it a lot? Do you feel like you have a good relationship with anger? What do you think about when I say anger and parenting?

Now growing up, I remember as a little kid and as a teenager and as a young adult, there was a lot of anger in my house. All the adults seemed to be angry all the time. Often it felt like it was directed at me. Although I wasn't always sure why. Many of us deal with anger based on patterns that were set forth for us by our own parents and caregivers. We learn how to process, deal with, handle, confront, work through anger based on our own parents and caregivers.

If we look up in the dictionary, which I did, anger is defined as a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility. Let me say that again. Anger is a strong feeling. Remember, a feeling is the vibration in your body that comes from a thought. So anger is a vibration in your body caused by a thought. The vibration is annoyance, displeasure, or hostility.

When I saw that last word hostility, I was like whoa. I have to do a podcast episode about this. Because we really don't want to be projecting annoyance, displeasure, but most importantly hostility on to our children or

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around our children or with our children or to our children. Right? So good to talk about this.

So a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility is anger. This was certainly true for me when my son was little. It's hard to admit it to you. It's so hard to talk about, my old dominant ways 14 years later. But if I'm honest with you, when my now 18 year old Malcolm hit the age of about three, I noticed I was angry often. I was easily set off in my displeasure or hostility and slow to cool down. Can you relate? Is this you?

To make it worse as I look back on it, I realize that the anger, the hostility, the annoyance, the displeasure, often didn't fit the crime. He just didn't get his shoes on, or didn't get dressed fast enough, or didn't do what I asked the first time.

I remember one day, my husband David said, "Why are you so angry all the time? This parenting thing is supposed to be enjoyable." It hit me like a ton of bricks. I was the angry parent. The parent I never wanted to be. It was me. My anger level was one of the signals early on in my parenting journey, one of the signs that I needed and wanted desperately to parent differently.

So I became a student of anger. I know it sounds weird and crazy and different. You're probably like, what? But I did. I studied anger. I dug into. What is it? Where does it come from? Then I asked myself important questions like why was I angry when parenting? Why? How did I get here? Are there other things going on in the background that I'm just projecting my anger, my frustration, my hostility on to my kid?

The truth was yeah. I was a lot. I also just didn't know anger was my go to emotion when things weren't going my way because that's the marinade that I marinated in as a child. That's what I knew. That's what was modeled for me.

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So I asked questions like what do I do about this? How do I overcome this? I know it's possible. But how? Where does this anger come from? How do I process it and work with it? How do I make anger my guide?

As I began this journey and I dug into the anger, much to my surprise, and maybe this won't surprise you, but to my surprise at the time, I discovered that underneath all the anger was my own unmet needs. What? I know. I know. Let me say it again.

As I began to dig into my anger, I discovered underneath the anger was my own unmet needs. Did you know this before I said it? Because I'll admit I certainly didn't. Underneath anger is unmet needs. So when I find myself getting angry, that's my beacon to take a step back and immediately ask myself what need do I have right now that isn't being met? What need?

I remember a story fondly that I want to share with you to illustrate this. When my son was about 12, I found myself getting angry at the end of the evening each and every night. We, my husband and I, would ask Malcolm to get ready for bed, which included things like go shower, brush your teeth, put your pajamas on, get your backpack ready. He would look at me and just say no, which is just what I wanted to hear after a long day, right?

So he would look at me and say no, or he would beg for 30 more minutes of TV time, or he would drag his feet, or he would lollygag, or he would become easily distracted with any new shiny object in the room. He'd want to kiss the dog or ask me how my day went, and have a long protracted conversation. Or tell me a very intense, fun, wild story right at the time I asked him to get ready for bed.

All the while he was doing this, I was thinking in my mind are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? It's late, and I'm ready to sit down and relax. I want to clock out for the night and be done working and wife-ing and adulting and parenting. I would get really angry over this really angry. I was

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annoyed. I had displeasure. I would build a lot of hostility with these thoughts that I had, that I marinated in every night. You feel me? Can you feel my anxiety raise? Is your anxiety raising as you hear me tell this story because you have a similar one? Yeah, I get it.

Let me ask you, can you see my unmet need here? I needed at least an hour of me time to relax and wind down before I would go to bed. I was ready to punch out of working, wife-in, adulting, and parenting. So after too many rinse and repeats of the same night where I would lose my shiz, and I would find my anger growing and growing and growing and my fuse getting shorter and shorter. It was a cycle that was getting repeated night after night.

Of course, as it goes, I finally reached my limit one night. I felt myself about to explode at my son, like really explode. But I had been doing the work on understanding anger and understanding that underneath anger was an unmet need. So in this particular night, I'll never forget it, I was able to catch myself and ask myself hey, what's going on here? What are your unmet needs? Yes, I had a conversation exactly like this where I asked myself Lisa, what are your unmet needs?

I realized after thinking about it for a little bit that I wanted this part of my day to be smoother. I wanted my son to be more efficient. I wanted him to understand that I was tired and didn't have the tolerance or the bandwidth for lollygagging and getting distracted. If I'm really honest, I expected him to read the room, to figure this out and surmise all of this from my behavior and my tone. Makes me laugh just saying this out loud. Like kids can figure things out from tone. I mean, really.

What I also understood is that he had unmet needs, right? He's tired, and he doesn't want to move fast. He doesn't want to do the things I'm requesting, like shower, brush his teeth, and go to bed. I realized that he was struggling to turn off the TV and instantly comply and do what I was

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asking. I also came to see that I was letting this go on and on and on each night for a while and expecting a different result. Which according to Einstein, is the definition of crazy. Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

So what happened is once my unmet need became clear to me, and I was able to get my arms around it, I was able to proceed from a different place. So I got us through that night and the next day during dinner my husband, my son, and I had a family conversation about our nighttime routine. We have this conversation at a time where we were all calm and regulated and hydrated and fed and not exhausted, and not in the heat of the moment of trying to get our kids to bed.

In this family conversation, I shared how our current game plan wasn't working for me. I'll never forget it. They both looked at me like huh? While completely calm and regulated, I shared my need to have it be easier, calmer, and more efficient. I asked about their feelings and needs, and my son shared that he doesn't want to shower right at bedtime, which is my preferred timing. He doesn't want to have 87 things to do right at bedtime. He'd like to watch TV or read a book right up until it's time to go to bed.

So he had a need to shower at a different time, and I had a need to make the evening calmer, easier, and more efficient. We spent a good amount of time talking through it, a good amount of time in 12 year old world. We talked through it, and we came up with a new game plan that met all of our needs. We wrote it out, and we posted it on the refrigerator. We all committed to the new plan, and we agreed that if any part of the plan isn't working, we'll revisit it again and again until we found a bedtime routine that works for all of us.

But what felt really good in this example is that I knew the source of my own anger, which was my unmet need. I needed the evening to go smoother. Once I identified it, I was able to work through getting my needs

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met by addressing a new bedtime routine. I was also able to discuss my feelings and needs with my son and hear his feelings and needs. So there was deep connection. Because on both ends, the other party felt seen, heard, and valued, which is really one of the secrets to getting our needs met.

In terms of actions, we created a plan that met everyone's needs and dissipated the anger. Finally, we agreed to revisit the plan when we were all calm if it wasn't working. This strategy is so much easier and fun than carrying around the anger and projecting hostility, frustration, disappointment, and aggression onto my kid. That never feels fun or exciting or connected in parent. Yeah?

I really want to encourage you to dig into your anger, to use it as a beacon in your parenting. Maybe you like this idea, but you're not sure what you need, and you're not sure how to do this. No problem. I got you. Now your turn. When do you find yourself getting angry while parenting? Is it when your kids are getting ready in the morning?

Is it when they're sibling fighting? Is it getting your kids to listen when you make a request? Is it bedtime, like it was for me? Is it getting them to school in the morning on time? Is it on the weekends when there's a lot of unstructured time. Is it involves sports or getting into a certain practice, and they don't want to go? Is it when they're practicing piano and they don't want to do it?

Now listen, I know we all love our kids. I know it or you wouldn't be here. What I also know is that no one wants to carry anger, a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, and hostility. It doesn't feel good as a parent. It doesn't feel good to be projecting that onto our kids. So I'm proposing that the solution to moving away from anger is to take time to observe when you are angry what's going on? What is my unmet need here? What am I feeling?

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I'm proposing that we all commit to using anger as our guide, to go deep and uncover what it is that we really need in that moment. Anger can be your detective. Ironically, anger can help you become a more real world peaceful parent. Now, I'm not saying this is easy, but what I will tell you is it's work worth doing. Because again, who wants to spend their kids' childhoods projecting annoyance, displeasure, and hostility onto your kids over and over and over again? If you're like me, and it was happening every night or on the regular bedtime, that really doesn't feel good.

Now, here's the good news. I can help you. I can teach you how to do this differently. I can show you exactly how to use anger as your guide. If you feel like right now, right now is the time for more support, then you can head over to my free three day challenge. Keep Calm and Parent On Challenge Holiday Edition. It's free. It's online, and it's available to you. The three day Keep Calm and Parent On Challenge is really all about helping you understand where your anger comes from as a parent and what to do about it.

Inside the challenge, I'm going to teach you deeper tips, tools, and ideas. How to move from anger into cooperation. But you got to act right now. Because when this podcast episode airs, we're about halfway through the challenge. So I want you to immediately run, don't walk, over to thepeacefulparent.com/challenge and get yourself signed up. There's still plenty of time to catch up and join us going forward in the free three day challenge, but you've got to act right now. Yes, right now.

I go live each day of the challenge in our pop up Facebook group called Keep Calm and Parent On, and I go live over at Zoom. Don't worry if you sign up and you can't make the live calls, the recordings are available in the group for a limited amount of time. So you can jump in and catch up and continue on with us.

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I don't want you to miss out on this because if this episode speaks to you, I know what it's like to be frustrated that you're projecting your anger onto your kids all the time. I know what it's like to feel bad about constantly feeling annoyed, displeased, and hostile towards your children. I don't want that for you. I want you to use anger as your guide. I want you to learn to be a cycle breaker and allow anger to be your detective. You're not broken. Nothing's gone wrong. You just need some new tools.

I'm offering them free to you right now over in our Keep Calm and Parent On three day challenge holiday edition. So I don't want you to miss out on this invitation. Jump over to thepeacefulparent.com/challenge and get yourself signed up right now. I'll see you there, and I cannot wait to work with you. All right. 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.