

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

[Real World Peaceful Parenting](#) with Lisa Smith

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

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 podcast. I am so excited that you're here. Today I want to share with you a remarkable story of a mom whose realization of her own childhood wound became a profound source of connection and healing for her whole family. So good. Listen in.

So we're going to call this mom Kimberly. Kimberly has three boys with a fourth boy on the way in just a matter of days. There's Ryan the seven year old, JT the five year old, and Owen the two year old. Owen has never slept anywhere but in bed with his parents co-sleeping since he was born. Now with the new baby coming, the family's trying to transition the two year old into the bunk bed in the same room as the two older boys so there's room for the baby when it gets here.

They have Ryan the oldest on the top bunk, and the two younger kids, JT, and Owen, in the same bed on the bottom bunk. At bedtime, Kimberly explained to me in one of our recent Hive calls, as part of this transition, she gets onto the bottom bunk with JT and Owen to soothe Owen to sleep because he's new to sleeping away from mom and dad. Dad joins in on the bottom bed to bond with JT and get him to sleep. Can you just picture it?

This means there are four of them in the bottom bunk every night at bedtime. Then there's Ryan on the top bunk feeling left out because the younger brothers are getting all the attention from mom and dad. I'm sure you can picture this too. Because remember, Ryan is seven.

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

When Ryan asks if he can join the rest of the family on the bottom bunk, he's told there's not enough room because really there isn't. There's already two adults and two boys in the bottom bunk. So he understandably gets dysregulated and vies for attention trying to get his needs met, vies for attention of his own. As you can imagine, Ryan starts making noises and banging things around, which of course prolongs the two year old falling asleep. Then before you know it, everyone's dysregulated.

In the past, Kimberly tried to barter with Ryan by telling him that if he could just be quiet until the two year old falls asleep, she'll come up to the top and snuggle with him for a few minutes. But as you can imagine, this doesn't work because the seven year old doesn't really understand what two minutes is, doesn't really understand bargaining because of lack of prefrontal cortex development. It doesn't fix the FOMO, the fear of missing out, that the seven year old is experiencing when the rest of the family is in the below bunk snuggling without him.

So Kimberly asked me for coaching on how to help Ryan feel connected, while still getting the younger boys to sleep given that there's just not enough room for all five of them to be in the bottom bunk. So it's so interesting to me because Kimberly asked for coaching on how to help Ryan. She really came to our weekly Hive called thinking the Ryan needed the help, and Ryan needed ways to feel more connected while the younger kids are going to sleep.

Now, she admitted that she could completely empathize with Ryan that he's feeling left out, but logistically, she just can't see any way of making this bedtime routine any different or any more peaceful. "I'm just stuck, Lisa. I just can't see any other way." She said in the past, they had tried many different tricks, but nothing was working. It only seemed to be getting worse. Time's running out because this baby's coming any week now.

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

So I and other members of the Hive community offered different logistical suggestions to make bedtime more fun and feel more inclusive and more connected for Ryan. But each suggestion had a strong rebuttal from her. That was my first clue that there was more going on here than just Ryan feeling left out.

If you can't see something working in your family, it's highly unlikely that you'll ever get it to work. Every family's different and what works for some may not work for others, but there was definitely a strong clue here with the rebuttals on the logistics. Then it happened. The light bulb, the information came out of what was really going on here, which had to do with Kimberly's own childhood wound.

Finally in our coaching Kimberly admitted how hard it was for her to your own begging for her when they tried forcing him to go to sleep with his brothers without her. Because remember Owens entire life, he had been sleeping with mom and dad. She said, "Lisa, it's just so hard to listen to him."

I said yes, I understand that it's hard to listen to our kids struggle. But why does it feel so impossible, so incredibly hard for you, Kimberly? She revealed her inner childhood wound. This is where the real coaching began.

You see, Kimberly had very, very, very painful memories of going to bed as a child by herself. As we unpacked it all, what really emerged was that Kimberly's inner child felt abandoned when she was little at bedtime every night, and she was scared. She did not know how to soothe herself. Her imagination got away from her when she would lay in the dark by herself, feeling abandoned and scared.

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

Interestingly enough, Kimberly, because of her own childhood memories and wounds, jumped to the conclusion and the assumption that her boys, all three of them, but Owen the youngest in particular, felt exactly that same way now. Exactly the same way. Abandoned, scared, and no idea how to self soothe.

So what I uncovered is that Kimberly was projecting her inner childhood wounds of fear and abandonment onto her children. It was unknowingly complicating the logistics of family bedtime. Can you see this? Ah, so good. So we recognize this. I coached Kimberly through what to do about this, how to work on this inner child, how to separate her projection, and what was going on for her as a child from what was going on for her children.

It may be that they feel this way, but it may well be that they don't. They're just having trouble winding down and going to sleep. That if she was able to separate, she could show up in a neutral place, and work on the logistics of getting these kids to sleep. She wouldn't be triggered.

She'd be able to stay in her higher brain and stay really calm while working through it. Even when her son Owen, the two year old, was having trouble going to sleep in a new bed in a new environment, it wouldn't be so, so, so hard for her because it wouldn't be triggering her own childhood wound. She wouldn't be projecting all this emotion of fear and abandonment and difficulty on to her children.

Yeah. Okay. So on her next Hive community call the following day, there are three opportunities for coaching each week when you're a member of the Hive. Kimberly jumped back on, super excited to share this with us. She said, "Lisa, in our previous coaching call, you challenged me to let go of my attachment to the need of putting Owen to bed myself, instead of supporting my husband or encouraging or letting my husband do it, or even giving him a chance to do it by himself."

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

She said, “Lisa, I've been so attached to the need to be there for Owen that I couldn't see what was really going on. I was able to see that this attachment to Owen was so much more about my own inner child, my feelings from my own childhood. It had so much more to do with that than it was about Owen.”

She said, “Last night we had a bit of a crazy evening because our oldest, Ryan, had baseball, and it ran late. The season's coming to an end. Everyone's tired, and it's getting darker. We got in late, and everyone was spiraling a little.” She said, “I was so tired that I finally broke down. My husband asked me what do you need right now? Recognizing that I'm pregnant with our fourth child while working full time and caring for three other kids.

“So through my tears, I told him can you please just put JT and Owen to bed tonight? Just try it. He knows that in the past I've protested when he wanted to put Owen to bed. So he looked at me a little skeptically and said, okay, and he forged ahead and did it. Guess what, Lisa. It worked. They went to sleep without me without storming. I don't know if they did it because they were so tired, or if they did it because dad was there. Or if I removed that negative energy from the room, but Owen didn't scream and everybody fell asleep pretty quickly, which was a giant win for our family.”

“It's funny,” Kimberly said, “my husband came out of the room all confident. He was really cute. He said hey, it worked. I said why do you think? He said well, I think it worked because I just went in there and told them to go to sleep. They did.” Kimberly then said that the next morning when she woke up she had the thought, why don't I just have some snuggles with the boys in the morning? I realized I can get my snuggles in in the morning instead of grieving that I'm not getting my singles in at bedtime.

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

Now, in the original coaching call with Kimberly, we peeled away all the logistics of bedtime. Kimberly was able to uncover her inner childhood wound of feeling very scared as a little girl at bedtime. She felt scared. She felt abandoned. She felt lonely. She didn't know how to soothe herself to sleep. She was really able to see that she was projecting all of these big feelings from her own childhood on to all three of her sons.

Because of this inner childhood wound, bedtime had become so complicated in her house that she said my goodness, you needed a flowchart to follow it. The suggestion was just to let the husband put the three boys to bed, particularly because there's this newborn coming. That's going to require a lot of her attention.

So she tried my suggestion. That night it worked. But it worked because she had a chance to realize what was really going on here. That it wasn't about the logistics. That it was about her own feelings that were coming up at bedtime from her own childhood that she hadn't recognized and work to heal.

It's really funny because as humans, our brains are trained to manage the logistics. Like moving the beds around and changing routines for different kids at different times. But what's so much more important is our thoughts because what's underneath the logistics is always feelings, and feelings are caused by our thoughts. That's what Kimberly and I were able to dig into in our coaching conversation the day before.

So what I had suggested to her is that she heal her own inner child because then she could show up neutrally for her boys, rather than projecting the wounds of her inner child onto them, which is what she admitted and realize she was doing. Before we had the coaching call, she wasn't even aware of it. She really thought the problem was the logistics.

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

Her inner child presented itself in the circumstances that her two year old wouldn't lay down without her. Her seven year old acts out when he feels excluded from the family. But again, as we dug in, she admitted that what was really going on for her is that when her two year old unpacked his emotional backpack at bedtime by being fussy that it was intolerable for her to be around his fussiness. His whining, his crying as he was soothing himself to sleep.

That, my friends, her big reaction to his storming was the first clue to dig a little deeper and sort of ask what's going on here for you. This is what I want you to ask yourself. The clue or the tell, if you will, is when you're having a big giant reaction within yourself inside your body with feelings and inside your mind with thoughts when you're having a big giant reaction to your kids storming, right. When you are uncomfortable and find it absolutely impossible to get comfortable with their big feelings.

I always say we have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable as parents when our kids are storming. In this instance, Kimberly was really struggling to get comfortable with Owens meltdowns, crying, whining, being really agitated a bedtime. It wasn't just hey, I'm tired and I want to go to bed. She found it literally intolerable. That was the tell that there was something else going on here. So when that happens to you ask yourself what's going on here? What am I projecting onto the other person? Really try to sit with it and examine it.

This is just another beautiful benefit of joining the Hive. Hive members get to come three times a week and talk out circumstances and get coaching. You know, it's so funny because so often we come for the logistics. Instead we find out some healing and inner work that we really need to do. The logistics are less important than the real deep work. Also when you're working on the logistics from a neutral place, they work themselves out so much more easily and more peacefully.

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

Now, of course not every circumstance reveals an inner childhood wound. But those wounds are so closely tied so much more than you may be realizing it. When we're raising our children, we're often raising our wounded inner child right alongside them. What happens is sometimes we're just trying so hard to give our kids what we didn't have that we're getting in the way of the connection instead of building it.

The problem is if our kids are not appreciative or not recognizing or not working with this extra effort we're making to spare them the same pains we had when we were kids then we get very dysregulated. We take it personally. We get triggered by it. Oftentimes we storm alongside them.

Now, let me slow down and say that again because honestly, this might be the most important thing I ever share with you here in this podcast. The problem or the challenge is if our kids are not appreciative of that extra effort we're making to spare them of the pains we had when we were kids. If they're not appreciative, if they don't recognize it, if they don't have gratitude, if they're not polite of that extra effort that we're making to spare them of the pain we experienced, we get very dysregulated. We take it personally. We get triggered by it.

This is the inner child work that we need to do. Let's say that maybe you're a parent who gets hyper focused on homework, on helping your kid or kids with homework. Because when you were little, no one was around to help you. You believe that if someone would have been there to help you, you would have been so much better off. You could have advanced quicker. It would have been easier. You would have "been smarter." You would have done more with your life.

So when your child resist the unsolicited help because they're autonomous, and they like to figure things out on their own, you get really triggered. You get judgmental. Spitefulness and resentment starts to bubble up. Maybe

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

you accuse your child of character flaws because your feelings are hurt because all you want to do is help them. Can you see this? Can you relate to this?

What is your thing that your kids do that hurt your feelings? Think about this for a minute. Be honest with yourself. Observe your parenting. It's so important to recognize and understand that our kids are having a completely different experience. That they don't really care about our old childhood experiences. They weren't there. They don't understand them. They don't have the capacity to appreciate all the effort we're making to give them what we didn't have.

So I'll give you another example. A way this shows up in our family is my husband and the subject of tennis shoes. When he was in high school many years ago, everyone was wearing name brand expensive tennis shoes in his community, or at least that's what it felt like at the time. My husband, David, was wearing generic brand shoes from a discount store. Not even a sporting goods store. This really left a little bit of a wound on David.

So now, when our son Malcolm needs basketball shoes, David has a need to buy him top of the line best most popular, most awesomest basketball shoes David can get his hands on. The thing is that Malcolm has little to no appreciation of this. He has piles of good basketball shoes. Some companies give to him. Somebody gets from his club team. Some he gets from his school. Some he gets from Dave.

He doesn't really value them or cherish them the way David does because Malcolm doesn't really know what it's like to have generic no name brand tennis shoes from a department store. He doesn't know any different because David made sure he never would. But when Malcolm isn't uber appreciative of the top of the line, latest Jordans or Kyries or LeBrons or

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

Durants, David gets triggered by this. He used to get much more triggered than he gets now because now he has deep understanding of what's going on.

When I point out to David that when he buys Malcolm new tennis shoes, he's really buying them for little David that had to wear the no name, discount tennis shoes, David understands it. He did the work to understand this. He found all the evidence of our son's appreciation the next time he bought them. But more importantly, David understands that every time he buys Malcolm a pair of shoes, he's also buying the shoes for little David who had to go to school with generic no name tennis shoes from a discount store.

He finds the joy in being able to buy his son Kyries or LeBrons and give them to him. It brings David a deep sense of satisfaction, and it allows him to drop the expectations of the grand appreciation. It allows him to drop the expectation that Malcolm is going to fall to his knees and be incredibly grateful for these tennis shoes. Can you see this?

When you do this work it removes the expectation of grand appreciation and helps you parent from a neutral place. Ironically, the more Dave drops the expectation, the more appreciative Malcom is. The more Kimberly let go of her fears of abandonment at bedtime, the more her kids could fall asleep on their own.

So to wrap this up, my suggestion is that when you want to give something or do something for your kids that you didn't have, really envision yourself giving it to or doing it for your own little self. See yourself at that age. Kimberly can see herself at her boys age. Dave can see himself in high school, getting the top of the line tennis shoes and enjoying them.

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

Envision yourself giving it or doing that thing to your own inner child, and then appreciate it yourself as your child would have. That way you can give the love and build the connection without needing anything in return from your kids. That, parents, is how you heal your inner child and at the exact same time build connection with your kids.

So just to wrap up on Kimberly, she acknowledged that the evening would have gone very differently had we not had the conversation earlier that day about her inner child. She recognizes that her inner child is not completely healed, but she is becoming aware of her thoughts and her wounds.

So when she starts feeling sad or dysregulated around bedtime, she can acknowledge what was happening for her as a child, what she didn't get, what she wished her parents would have done, how feelings of abandonment and sadness and isolation were about her. That then allows her to parent her own three boys from a neutral place. Yay, Kimberly. I'm so proud of her for the work she's doing. The thought work, the inner child healing work, joining the Hive, getting coaching, asking for help, and peeling back all the layers to find the true source of her troubles.

If you're curious about how you can do this too. If you feel like oh my goodness, Lisa, you've just opened up a whole new world to me that I didn't even know existed. I've got my wounds, and I really want to heal them. Then please, please, please come join us at the Hive. These revelations in this healing for you, for your family, for your relationship with your kids is absolutely transformational. I want to really extend the invitation and encourage you to join the Hive.

The Hive is my likeminded community where you can get coaching from me three times a week, have a parent coach in your back pocket, be with parents that are like minded, where there's no judgment. There's support and accountability and growth and progress and connection with your kids.

[Real World Peaceful Parenting](#) with Lisa Smith

Ep #97: How Healing Your Inner Childhood Wounds Makes You a Better Parent

So if you feel ready to accept the invitation, click on the link in the show notes or go over to thehivecoaching.com. Check out the details and get yourself signed up.

There's no obligation. You can cancel at any time. We'd absolutely love to have you join the community. You will not regret it. I 100% promise. Again, jump over to thehivecoaching.com. I'll see you inside the Hive. If now's not the time to join, that's okay. Look for the clues to do this healing work. You've got this. I absolutely know you do. 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.