

Ep #99: Expectations, Resentment, and 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. I am so excited to give you the gift of today's episode, to talk to you about expectation and resentment and our parenting. So let's dig in. Two things that are working against us in our parenting, our habit brain and our thoughts. That's what I want to talk to you about today.

I want to show you how this shows up for all of us. All of us. Every one of us that is a parent, a foster parent, a co-parent, an adopted parent, parenting our grandkids, spending time with our grandkids. I want to show you how this shows up for all of us.

Now, I really believe that the brain is just so incredibly amazing and so complex. There's so much going on simultaneously in our brains in so many different locations. Many of the neural pathways you create help you avoid danger and help you go after what you want and enjoy life.

However, there are some neural pathways that are doing the opposite of that some parts of your brain are making you suffer needlessly preventing you from achieving your goals, preventing you from peaceful parenting, preventing you from achieving your health goals, or causing problems in your relationships, or even preventing you from making more money. Yes, some neural pathways are doing that because your brain thinks that it's helping you and saving you from danger.

Now, here's the good news. We don't have to just let the brain wire itself unconsciously. Okay. This is what most people in the world are doing. Most muggles in the world allow their brain to wire itself unconsciously. What I

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mean by that is they allow the habit brain to wire itself. Thoughts get served up, random thoughts get served up, the thoughts get noticed, and feelings are created from the thoughts. Then actions are created from the feelings. Then the result is I have a habit brain of screaming at my kid. I have a habit brain of being late to work. I have a habit brain of not going out to the gym.

This unconscious wiring of the brain and ending up with the brain that yells at my kid is what happened to me when Malcolm was little. Fortunately, I saw it, I intervened with the tools that I teach clients now, and I rewired the neural pathways in my brain to not yell at my kid when something goes wrong. That's the parent I am today, and I want that for you too. So today I'm going to touch on how that can happen for you.

The good news is that we can purposely wire our brains to serve us better, and it's not even hard to do. Now, here's the thing I really want you to hear. You do not have to control your thoughts. You just have to stop allowing your thoughts to control you. You have to supervise your brain. You cannot leave your brain unsupervised.

As I've mentioned before, you have 50,000 thoughts today. Our goal is not to control 50,000 thoughts, but our goal is to stop allowing our thoughts to control us and supervise our brain by noticing our thoughts, especially the thoughts that are just randomly rolling around in the back of your head. Stop letting these thoughts control you. They're just random thoughts.

If a thought comes to mind that is not serving you, just let it pass through your mind. Don't allow it to linger. Don't allow it to marinate or hang out in your brain. I want you to recognize it and acknowledge it and see it for what it is. Oh, that's just a thought and then let it go. Move right on to a new, different thought. The new thought doesn't necessarily have to be the opposite or contradicting. It just needs to be a less painful thought.

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Sometimes the harder we try to negate our thoughts, the harder they fight to hang on in our brain, and the more attention they get. So you just want to move on to a new thought. It can be any thought that changes the subject and the conversation you're having with yourself inside your brain. The goal is to stop allowing random thoughts to take up airtime. So just let them go. Delete them, dump them in the trash can.

Sometimes thoughts can be convincing, either because they're in your habit brain, or if you're trying to evoke change, your brain thinks it's going to die. So it tries to convince you that you're better off holding on to the original thought that's not serving you. I'm gonna give you an example in a minute.

But what I want you to know is that your brain wants you to believe stuff because it's a habit. It likes to do the habits because it conserves energy. Your brain's number one job is to keep you alive. One of the ways that it does that is it conserves as much energy throughout the day and night that it can in case a lion comes along to eat you, then it has all the stored energy to save your life. So it likes to put everything on habit and just rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat, including thoughts that are not serving you. Okay?

So if you have a thought, he's lazy, he's lazy, he's lazy, your brain doesn't have the ability to discriminate. Your brain doesn't have the ability to say hey Sally, is that a good thought? Is that a good idea? Should we think that? No. It just thinks oh, let's just keep thinking he's lazy because that's part of the habit, and that conserves energy.

Now, if you allow these thoughts to sit and marinate, you will easily find tons of evidence to support them. Let me say that again. If you allow the thought to marinate, you will find tons of evidence to support the thought. The thing is there's also tons of evidence to prove the contrary. It just takes

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work. It takes energy and commitment to create a new habit of believing new thoughts so that your brain can find evidence for the new thoughts.

Now, if you've been listening to the podcast for a while, this is not new to you. But here's the new wrinkle that I'm bringing into today's episode. Here's the gift that I have to give you. It's busting the myth about expectations. Expectations are just thoughts about something that might happen in the future or that we think should happen in the future. The problem with many expectations are they set us up to storm.

Part of the human experience is having expectations of ourselves, of others, of situations, of experiences, you can't get away from that. Every human being who's conscious has expectations. But I want you to become ridiculously aware of this tool and how our brain uses it against us. Some expectations are great, especially when it comes to parenting. But some expectations create, are you ready for this, premeditated resentment. There's no better place I find this than in parenting.

Premeditated resentment. Ah, just saying it makes me cringe. There is no place I think that this is more true than in parenting. I want us all to gain a clearer understanding of our expectations, of our kids, of us, of our family. Because premeditated resentment is so often the root cause of our storming. Our storming as the parent with the fully developed brain.

Now, what I'd like you to do is think about and write down what are, and be honest please, what are my expectations of my kids day to day? What do I expect? I want to encourage you to go deep beyond just please and thank you and be honest with yourself.

Do you expect your five year old to help around the house without fighting you? Do you expect your kids to manage their time and plan out when they will complete school projects? Do you expect your kids to be aware of other

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people, be aware of their thoughts and needs? Do you expect your kids to always be happy, smiling, content, and appreciative.

Maybe you expect your kids to be patient. Maybe you expect your kids to be engaged in and pay attention to their online classes. Do you expect your kids to get their homework and chores done every night with no pushback? I really want you to take a minute to think about this and be honest with yourself.

I had a mom recently that admitted that she expects her five year old to listen to her the first time, every time, and do exactly what she asks. We were laughing about it because she realized that most adults don't even do what is asked of them the first time, and they have fully developed brains.

So she realized that her expectation of her five year old doing exactly what she asked the first time in every time was completely unrealistic and was causing premeditated resentment because there was also a part of her brain that knew that he wasn't going to be successful, and he wasn't going to do it. So she would immediately start storming because the expectation was that he would do it every single time.

I recently had the realization that I expected my teenager, my 18 year old, to connect the dots and see that when his clean clothes were folded in the laundry room, he'd just grabbed them and put them away neatly where they belong in the closet or drawers without having to be asked or told. I realized I had never communicated this to him.

That for the first 17 years, I would tell him hey, there's clothes in the laundry room. Please go get them and put them away, to which he would say okay, and he would do it. But somehow, in my mind, my brain had created because he crossed the 18 year old threshold, in my mind, he was supposed to notice that the clothes were in there, grab them, and put them away on his own without being asked. I realized how ridiculous this is

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because I wasn't sharing my expectation with him, and I had a premeditated resentment over it.

So instead, I went to him and said hey, I feel like you're at a point in your development where when you go in the laundry room, and you notice your clothes are in there, I'd like you to grab them and put them away. He said, "Oh, I'm glad you told me that. I had no idea you were looking for that from me. I'll work on doing that." My mind was blown. I'm so glad I verbalized the expectation rather than silently carrying it around inside my brain.

Now let me ask you, if you're honest, do you expect your kids to know what you want and when you want it? Probably, if you're being really honest with yourself. I, you know, have no judgment. We all do this. Every one of us. Every human being has expectations, which I call a manual, for other people. This is a judgment free zone here at Real World Peaceful Parenting. So I really want to encourage you to be honest with yourself.

Now, here's the problem. Expectations can create premeditated resentment, and they often do. More times than not, we already know our kids are not going to do what we expect on a subconscious level. We know this. So even sometimes as we're asking it, we get resentful before the kid even has a chance to do it or not do it.

I had been marinating in thoughts of Malcolm should know to put those clothes away. He should. He should just see them and know and do it. So every time he went in the laundry room to get a shirt and came out without his clothes because I wasn't asking him to put his clothes away, I would have resentment. But he had no idea what I was expecting. So not only do we have these expectations, but when our kids don't follow through on them we become resentful, and then we storm.

So it begs the question, what exactly are expectations Lisa? I mean, I'm following you, but what are they? Well, they're thoughts. They're part of the

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50,000 thoughts a day that our brain has. They're not facts. They're not family values. They're not laws. They're not rights. Their thoughts. At this point, you might be saying hey, if I don't have high expectations for my kids, what's going to happen? Are you saying, Lisa, I should get rid of all expectations? No, I'm not saying that at all. I mean in our own family, we set very high standards. I get that. I have them too.

But what I know is when I set high expectations of my son that he is not developmentally ready for, that he doesn't have the capacity to follow through on yet, that he doesn't understand because I haven't communicated them to him, I become resentful, and I'm most likely to storm.

Now, let me say that again. What I know is when you set high expectations of your kids that they're not developmentally ready for, that they don't have the capacity to follow through on yet, that they don't understand because you haven't communicated. It's easy to become resentful, and then storm alongside them.

Remember, our goal, as I said, at the beginning, is not to allow our thoughts to control us. Expectations are one way that our thoughts control us. You have to supervise your brain. What I've realized is that expectations are one of the sneaky ways that our thoughts control us because they sound acceptable. They sound societally good. Well, I mean, come on. What kind of parent doesn't have high expectations of their kid? So your expectations and the justification of your expectations are your brains way of trying to get your thoughts to control you.

Can you see that? Do you have the thought if I don't have high expectations of my kid, Lisa, he's going to end up living under a bridge with a shopping cart. That thought makes you feel like you're supposed to be doing this. You're supposed to be carrying these expectations and premeditated resentments around, but we expect things our kids are not

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capable of. Then we get resentful, and we get triggered, and we judge them, and we consider them to be flawed in character, and we storm, which results in disconnection from our kids.

As I said, this is the sneaky tool our brain uses to get us to let our thoughts control us. I want to call BS on it. I want to snuff it out and bring it into the light. I think there is no time of the year where we have more expectations of our kids than the time that we're approaching right now over the next couple of months.

No matter where you live, no matter what you believe in, you have a holiday coming up, a celebration of some kind. Way, way, way back in our minds, we have expectations of how things are going to go with our kids over the holidays, and so do they. This leads to a whole heaping can of potential storming.

Listen, we're already crazy busy people living in 2022. Now at this time of the year, we have a whole heaping pile of tasks coming along that get added to our already insanely busy to do list. To add all that busyness comes a whole heaping serving of silent expectations. This is the culprit right here. Silent expectations. Most especially over the holidays.

I mean, many of us expect our kids to be quiet, compliant, grateful, tolerant, patient, kind, sweet. We expect our kids to let Aunt Rose hug us. We expect to go to grandma's where there's nothing to do but wait around for the grownups to stop talking.

We expect our kids to not whine and complain that you want to go home before they're ready to leave. We expect our kids to be grateful for everything we give them. Lower the expectations for the presents, raise the expectations. We have all of these silent expectations of our kids. They're just asking for premeditated resentments. these expectations.

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Then on top of it, we have thoughts like do you know how hard I'm working? Do you know what I've sacrificed? Do you know how much effort I'm making for you to be happy? Do you know how hard I'm working to make the family happy and satisfy everyone? Do you know? Well, surprise, they don't know. They do not know. Because they're five or seven or nine, and their brain is underdeveloped, and they're selfish and clueless. They've never been told. So they have no idea of your expectations. Yeah? Oh, I know.

So good when we realize this. I propose we recognize our expectations. I propose we categorize them into three groups: the good, the bad, and the ugly. If we're going to have them, I propose we at least vocalize them to the people around us. Right?

So it might be like hey, page seven of my manual says that we go to grandma's, you're on your best behavior. Or page 14 of my manual says when I say it's time to go home at the end of the evening, you understand that, and you're compliant. At least, if nothing else changes for you, I beg you. If you're going to have expectations of people, kids especially because of underdeveloped brains, if you're going to have expectations of people, communicate them. Because if they don't know your expectation, there's a very, very, very low probability that they're going to meet them, let alone exceed them.

Now I mentioned the good, the bad, and the ugly. Some of our expectations fall into the category of ugly expectations. These are the ones that are preposterously impossible, will never be met even if you were to vocalize them. Even if you want it more than anything, your kids have very little probability of ever meeting them. Now many kids are great at doing the things we ask when we verbalize them. We just cannot expect our kids to read our minds.

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This is one of the biggest causes to us storming alongside our kids. We have an expectation that our kids know what we expect. We have a manual for our kids, and we expect them to understand it. However, we've never given them a copy of the manual. For some reason in our manual, our kids should just intrinsically know what we want and expect.

The reality is most of our expectations are for the things that they've never done before, and we don't verbalize the expectation to them. We've never communicated or taught them what we expect. But we still expect things from them, and sometimes they're things they're not even capable of because they haven't reached that milestone in their development. Yet our manual states that just because they are of a certain age, they should know how to do this.

I'm laughing at myself. Just because my son, on a given day crossed the threshold into his 18th year on Earth, my manual said when he goes in the laundry room, he should just grab his clothes and put them away. I had not communicated this to him. But my manual said because he's 18, he should know that he should do this, even though I had not discussed it, not communicated it, and not stated it to him.

If we out our expectations to our kids, or our spouses, or employees or co-workers, we take control of our thoughts instead of allowing our thoughts to control us. As a result, we relieve our own suffering by getting out in front of this premeditated resentment, and we set our kids up for success, and we create connection with our children. We need to out our expectations to the people around us. It is the key to taking control of our thoughts instead of allowing our thoughts to control us.

Let me say this. If you continue after this episode to have silent expectations, it's on you. If you don't tell your kids what to expect, what you expect, what you want them to do, they don't know. They absolutely do not know because they do not possess mind reading skills. Maybe sometimes

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you say why do I have to tell my kids to do their chores? They've been doing the chores forever. Why Lisa? Why do I have to tell my kid every night to brush his teeth? Why do I have to tell him to get his backpack and get in the car?

Well, it has to do with the development of the brain. In your kid's brain, it's when you tell them it's time to do the chore or get in the car or brush their teeth, then they do it. When you try to transition to not having to tell them when the chore needs to be done, you need to verbalize the expectation. Hey, I'm expecting that you start brushing your teeth every night without me asking you. I feel like developmentally you're ready for that.

If you change the rules from telling them to do something to just expecting them to do it, you're most likely going to be disappointed and storm alongside them. Instead, I want you to verbalize, teach, model, encourage, support, and hold space while they're getting used to the new expectation.

It's really when you think about it ridiculous the amount of energy we're wasting on marinating in thoughts like oh, there he goes again. Why doesn't he remember to brush his teeth? He's so lazy. Why is he trying to push my buttons? Why does he got a power struggle with me? When all the while he has absolutely no idea of my expectation.

I keep going back to the example of the laundry room. I had been telling my son for probably six years when it was time for him to go in the laundry room, get the clothes, and put them away. He's gotten really good at it. When I say hey, put your clothes away, 99.9% of the time he does it. But in my brain, I thought that he should just know that now's the moment for him to go get the clothes and put them away. I changed the rules. I had an expectation.

When he wasn't doing it, I was creating all these crazy thoughts in my head. He's so lazy. Why is he trying to push my buttons? Why can't he just

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figure this out? But the truth is, he had no idea that we had turned the page to a new chapter where you just see the clothes, and you instinctively pick them up and put them away. Once I communicated the expectation to him, everything got easier. My resentment went away.

He started doing it about 20% of the time, which is success. I continued to communicate the expectation to him, and now he's up to doing it about 50% of the time.

So I'm not wasting any more precious energy on thoughts and letting my thoughts control me and serve up crazy thoughts like he's lazy. My kid is not lazy. It's just the thought that my brain is using to control me while I stew in these unspoken expectations.

If you are fondling thoughts of premeditated resentment, i.e. expectations, I guarantee that you're going to storm. Remember frustration is gap between expectation and reality. The bigger the gap, the bigger the frustration. Many of you are experiencing a lot of frustration in your parenting because there's a big gap because you have silent expectations that you're not communicating. The reality is that your kids are not able to meet the expectation because they don't even know what it is.

So here's what I want you to do. I want you to categorize your expectations into three categories. As I mentioned, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Good expectations or expectations we want to keep, like I want my kid to go to college and graduate. I want my kid to not drink and drive. I want him to treat other human beings well. For me, I'm good with those expectations, and I'm going to keep them.

Now in the bad category, this is expecting things your kids don't even comprehend or are not age appropriate. Things they're just not capable of. They're just not ready yet. Right? Like it would be unrealistic to expect a two year old to make their own breakfast. It would be unrealistic to expect a

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five year old to remember to brush their teeth every single night. It's unrealistic to expect a 10 year old to be able to regulate themselves and get off gaming after a certain amount of time.

You have to know your kid and know their development to know where that line is. But if you have expectations that they can't comprehend or not age appropriate, you want to adjust them. You want to figure out what they are capable of change or lower or modify your expectations, and then communicate them to the kids.

Then there's the ugly expectations. The expectations you know you definitely need to get rid of like I expect my kid to be kind all the time. Or I expect my kid to know what I want and do it. Just challenge yourself to think about that. Do you really want your kid to be kind all the time even when someone's being mean to them? Do you really want your kid to grow up being a people pleaser with no boundaries? Ugly expectations are the thoughts of things that are going to happen in the future that are really not what we want our kids to do. We haven't really thought them through.

Now understand this. Your son, daughter, kids are never going to listen all the time. No human does. So let me give you an example. No kid, no human, but your kid is never going to listen all the time the first time. No human does. That's an example of an ugly expectation. One that we should get rid of. That my kid listens to me the first time every time because that creates premeditated resentment.

Another "ugly" expectation is to expect your child, or anyone for that matter, to know what you want when you want it. It's not going to work. Your child doesn't have mind reading skills. They're not going to know what you want. That's an ugly expectation I encourage you to drop.

Then lastly, remember, don't keep your expectations silent. If they're worthy of being an expectation, vocalize them, get them out. Who wins when you

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have a silent expectation that no one knows about? Silent expectations lead to disappointment, and that leads to being triggered. That leads to storming and being disconnected and getting less cooperation from your kids.

In addition to all that, I want to share with you that when our kids fail at meeting our expectations, they get the sense that we don't accept them for the way they are. They feel like they can't do anything right or anything to please us. They feel like they're a bad person because they're flawed for not being able to do what is expected of them. They feel a sense of rejection because we're expecting more than they're capable of or we haven't communicated what we're expecting. Thus, it's hard to meet the expectations if I don't even know what they are.

So on both sides of the expectation are big emotions, big disappointments that lead to storming and suffering, which are completely unnecessary. Just modifying or dropping the expectations can be an absolute game changer within your family, especially over the holidays.

There's so much anticipation, excitement, fear, disappointment during this time of the year, all of which build up to a lot of cortisol in children and adults. If you're expecting excitement, gratitude, joy, appreciation from your kids without letting them know, you're going to be disappointed. Because it's hard for them to understand exactly what we're looking for if we don't communicate it.

The truth is most kids are eager to please their parents. They want to be set up for success. They want to be given the opportunity to please and be successful. When we as the parents verbalize all of our expectations, we're holding ourselves to a certain level of integrity. We're creating connection with our kids.

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I really believe if you keep your expectations in check, categorize them as good, bad or ugly, and drop the ugly ones, your parenting, especially over the coming holidays, is going to be far more joyful, less stressful, and free of resentment. So just to recap, you don't have to control your thoughts. You just have to supervise them, and let your thoughts stop controlling you. One of the ways our thoughts control us is through expectations, especially silent expectations. They can create premeditated resentment.

So your homework is to recognize your expectations. Take a moment to think about it. Observe your parenting, drop in on your thoughts as you're parenting your kids and be honest with yourself. Then take a moment to categorize your expectations into good, I want to keep them, into bad, those are not developmentally correct, and into ugly, oh, I don't know about that one. If I am going to keep it, I least need to communicate it.

Hold on to the ones that are good. The ones that are bad, consider changing them to developmentally appropriate expectations. The ugly, just drop them. Just get rid of them. If you can't drop them or get rid of them, at least communicate them to the other party. Sounds good?

Ah, I love thinking about this and talking about it. I hope that I've given you the gift today. The gift of dropping the expectations. I feel like it's one of the greatest gifts I can give you that will create deep connection and cooperation with your kids. So please do your homework. Okay, 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.

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