

**Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent
Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...**



Full Episode Transcript

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. Happy New Year. I am so excited to be with you here today. I want to begin today's episode with a question. How do you respond when your co-parent if you have one loses his, her, or their shiz while parenting? Or parents in a way that isn't in alignment with how you parent? Or how do you respond when you have the thought this is getting out of control or headed in the wrong direction? What do you do? How do you act? What do you say? How do you say it? The most important question, does it help or hurt the current situation and the relationship?

I know for me before I started peaceful parenting, my thoughts and actions and words definitely didn't help the situation, nor my relationship with my husband or his relationship with our son when he started to lose his shiz while parenting. My words and tone often caused a new storm to spin out between he and I while the current storm between he and my son was still going on. It was a big old bowl of hot mess. Can you relate? Have you been there recently? Ever? Are you there now? Well, great news. Great news. That's what today's episode is about and what to do about it.

Today in our family, I take a completely different approach. 99.9% of the time, it works beautifully to help the current situation at hand, and at the exact same time creates a deeper connection for all of us. Do I have your attention? Are you curious? I thought so. So let's dig in.

So let me set the stage here. The inspiration and the backdrop for today's episode comes from, and I know this probably won't surprise you, but duh,

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

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

duh, dah, my Hive community. In a recent Hive, which is my membership community, my monthly membership community where parents have access to ideas and tools and support and real coaching from me three times a week every single week.

So in a recent coaching call with a member of The Hive community, one of the moms and I talked about this. She said, "Lisa, when they're storming with our son, my husband responds one way, and I respond another way. At the end of the day, he feels that my response and my peaceful parenting mindset and viewpoints is disrupting the way he wants to parent." She told him, "I'm not here to control you. I'm not here to tell you how to parent. You have your own relationship with our son." Which is something we talk about a lot inside The Hive.

She did say to him, "But this journey is something we have to figure out together as we go." She told him, "I'm not 100% perfect, and I don't have it all together. So I really want to release you from thinking you have to follow my lead." She told her husband, "I'm still just figuring things out and learning myself, but I am learning new tips and tools to help us that are helping me think differently, and I'm eager to share them with you."

"Now the problem is," is she said, "that I still hear him do and say things that are threatening and scary. Like we need to punish our son. He will only learn if he gets punished and is forced to change his behavior." She said, "Lisa, when I hear him talk like this, it hurts me. It hurts me for him, and it hurts me for our son. But I really don't know what to do about it in the moment, and I get really dysregulated when he starts talking like this. Help me. Help me figure out how to show up differently that helps him and helps our son and at the same time helps me stay calm and regulated."

Ah, I know this dilemma all too well. I promise you. So, as a side note, let me share with you that I recently posted a podcast episode number 91

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

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

Busting the Myth You Don't Need to Parent from a United Front, which addresses the issue of what to do when you're not on the same page. I encourage anyone who's not on the same page with their co-parent, like really not on the same page, to check out episode 91.

In that episode, I explain what it means to be a united front and what it doesn't mean. If you feel like that's you, I think you'll find that episode really helpful. But I want to go back to today's episode because the mom and dad are working together. They have the same beliefs. They want to get on the same page. The problem is when the son is storming, the husband isn't exactly sure what to do.

So I asked the mom do you think your husband is asking for guidance and empathy from you when he looks at you? When he gets really dominant with his son and looks over at you, do you think he's asking for guidance and empathy, and just asking it in what I call a non-asking way? She was like oh my gosh, Lisa. Yes, yes. Yes, that's it right there. He's asking for it in a non-asking way.

She said, "I realize sometimes he says things. Then he looks at me as if to say am I doing this right? Am I saying it right?" She went on to share with me, "We've gotten on the same page, and so good at co-parenting together on so many things."

She gave me the example that when it comes to eating, we're no longer pressuring our son to clean his plate. We're saying things to him, both of us, like listen to your body. If you're full, stop. If you're not full, keep eating. We've removed a lot of pressure that we used to put on our son thanks to your help, Lisa, to perform while eating, to get it right, to eat what we've put on his plate.

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

In this example, she said, “But then other people get involved and start pressuring him to take one more bite or telling him that you have to clean your plate in order to get dessert. She said my mother-in-law is really famous for this one, and she eats over at our house all the time. She said our son understands from us that he has the power to discern when he's had enough to eat and that he can use his voice to let us know that he's full.

“When I spoke to my husband about how it upsets me when his mother shows up and demands compliance from our son at the dinner table, my husband admitted, I get it, but I honestly don't know what to do. I feel totally stuck when my mother's over and demanding that our kid clean his plate.”

So the mother that I was coaching said, “As I'm walking through this with you, Lisa, I realize that I misunderstood his look. I thought he was looking at me telling me to deal with it or take over. Now I'm working through it with you, I realize he probably wasn't doing that at all.”

So my response to this mom was to share with her one of the tools that I find most effective with my own co-parent, my husband, and I'm hoping that you also find this to be very powerful language. When you're working with a co-parent. I find this works to say literally hey, this is what I'm finding is working right now. When I do this and this, our kid is responding this way, and it's working.

Let me say it again. I might say this is what I'm finding is working right now. When I give our son a choice of whether he wants to brush his teeth now or in five minutes, I'm finding that's working. Or you might say what I'm finding is working right now is if we do a checklist in the morning of exactly what needs to get done before school. Or what I'm finding is working right now when both of our kids are fighting, that we take a timeout and all calm down before we begin to speak about what happened.

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

It's a very powerful way to share with our co-parent what's working. Our brain loves to focus on the positive. What I know for sure is that at the end of the day, we all want to connect with our kids. We all want to parent in a way that is effective. We're trying different things, and we're looking. We're eager to find, we're looking for what's working. We don't want to do things that aren't working.

As I was explaining this, this mom had an epiphany that her husband is uber focused on results and continuous improvement. She said that completely defines my husband. He's always looking for what can be improved.

So we talked about what's around the corner for someone who's a results oriented. How do they show up in the world and ask for help, or not easily ask for help, or not directly ask for help when they really want it? It's important to really look at the asking for help style of your co-parent. Observe in the wild in different situations how your co-parent asks for help in the workplace, with his family, with his friends, from you. Look for how does this person ask for help?

For a lot of us, we're not good at asking for help. What I know is that one of the downsides of someone who's constantly focused on continuous improvement is that they're always looking for the area of improvement. It's how their brain is wired. Think about this. In order to improve something, you first have to see the negative, the flaws, the things that are missing. Unfortunately, that comes across as being negative a lot of the time.

So what I suggest with these kinds of co-parents is what I do in our own family. I help my husband focus on the things that are working rather than constantly looking for the things that aren't working. I help him see where our son is getting it right, where we're getting it right as parents, where the connection is happening. I help them see what's working.

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

So when I say to him hey, this is what's working for our son right now, I find my husband is like a sponge. He's like whoa, okay, let me do that. If it's working for you, it'll work for me. The funny thing is it's like I'm telling him what to do without him realizing it. I'm sort of assuming that he's asked for help without him actually asking for help. I'm telling him what to do without him realizing it.

When I do this, he is never defensive. He never takes it personally when I share this information. Again, it's like he's a thirsty sponge. What I know is that my husband's ultimate goal is to make things work with our son. So when I point out what I see is working for my son and I, or what I see is working for him and our son, he grasps onto it and runs with it.

Let me give you an example. Recently, my husband and I were having a conversation with our son, Malcolm, about a college visit we went on as a family the week before. We were asking our son what are your thoughts about the school? Our son is like yep, that's it. I'm going to that school. I've made my decision. I'm done. Shoo, I don't want to do any more of that work. We were like well, you probably should go look at, at least another school.

On one hand, we're eager for him to make his decision about where he wants to go to college next year sooner rather than later because it will take a lot of pressure off of him and us for that matter. He will simply be able to enjoy his senior year of high school knowing what his exact plans are for what comes next. But on the other hand, it seemed like a really quick decision, and perhaps he should consider some other options and sit with it for a bit. So that's the background.

So we're having this family conversation about slowing down and taking some time and exploring other options. Again, our son is 18 years old. He was trying to make a point about something. He said verbatim, "Well, you

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

know, mom's been jamming all this positive thought work down my throat for five years. So I know exactly how to think about this."

My husband got very triggered by this. He said, "Jamming? She's been jamming it down your throat?" He and my son started arguing about whether or not I've been jamming positive thought work down our son's throat. So I looked over my husband, and I asked him to take a pause, just for a second. I turned to my son and I said, "Well, is it working, this jamming it down your throat? It seems like it's working. I think we've been pretty successful."

My son said yeah. I said, "Well, as long as it's successful, then I'll keep jamming it down your throat." We all had a big chuckle about this. It took the sting out of the word jamming, and it dissipated the storm. We got back to the point of the conversation and moved on from there. Okay, you with me so far?

So later I said to my husband, I find what's working right now is using our son's vocabulary, tone, and semantics back with him, using the exact same words and tone that he's using back to him, and not allowing myself to get triggered by his dramatic words. My husband said, "But you're not jamming it down his throat."

I said who cares? If our son thinks thought work is working, and he's paying attention, and he's using it to sort out his brain and understanding his thoughts come from his feelings, I don't really care what words he uses to express himself. My husband was like, "Oh, so you're saying we should use his same language back to him?" I said yes, I'm finding it's really effective. He said, "Oh, okay."

Now, here's the arc of the story where things get really good. A few days later, our son said something, and my husband said it back to him the exact

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

same way without arguing or being triggered, and it worked. It worked. They figured out what they needed to do, and they both committed to it and did it.

See the rub comes in that my husband has the belief that words matter and tone matters. In the past, he would go down the rabbit hole of paying attention to and questioning and calling out our son's choice of words. Then he would miss the point that our son was trying to express, and they were both end up storming with each other.

So what I was able to share with my husband is what I found was really working in this instance. It was to mirror back the exact words and tone back to our son so that he could feel connected to us and understand that we're hearing what he's saying. All right, so that's my example.

So back to the coaching with this particular mom inside The Hive. I said to the mom I think if your husband looks over you for approval or looks over you at all while he's storming, you could say to him what I see is working with our son right now is blah, blah, blah, whatever the example is. Here's what I figured out. It's really difficult to feel defensive when someone gives you the recipe for success, particularly in parenting. When you say what I think is working, what I see, what I feel, what I've experienced is working right now with our kids is X.

The mom totally got it, and she agreed. She said her husband thrives on positivity. If she spins something into a positive way, he really absorbs it. I said yeah because you're not telling him he's doing anything wrong. You're not correcting him. You're not telling him what to do. You're just saying hey, let me let you in on something I found to be working right now. How can someone not be open to that? Right?

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

Let me say that again. When you take this tool and you use it with your co-parent, what you're telling them is they're not doing anything wrong. You're not correcting or shaming or telling them what to do. You're just saying hey, let me share with you something I found that's working right now. What I find is that this is a beautiful way to lead our co-parent into peaceful parenting without shaming or correcting them.

You're doing the heavy lifting. You're listening to this podcast week in and week out. You're taking note of new tools to try. All you're doing is reporting back what you found is working right now with your kids. The truth of the matter is a lot of times our co-parents and humans in general are looking for guidance, but it's really just hard for them to ask for help.

As humans, most of us are hardwired not to want to ask for help. Many of us don't know how because it wasn't modeled for us in our families. Or because we have a job that needs us to show up and look like we know what we're doing all the time. Many of us have to put on a facade of always being in control in certain aspects of our life, of always being a leader, of knowing what we're doing.

As parents, many of us are under the illusion that we have to always have the answers or know how to parent. So your co-parents brain might not be wired to ask what do you think they should do in this instance? On top of that, sometimes our co-parents are getting a lot of feedback from non-peaceful parenting, from dominant parents, or not getting feedback at all. What they really need is us to ground them in what's working for our kids right now.

This can also be a language you can use with a nanny or babysitter or grandparent or teacher. You don't even have to bring peaceful parenting into the conversation. You can just say hey for what it's worth, this is what

Ep #105: When Your Co-Parent Loses Their Shiz While Parenting...

I'm finding is working right now. So I asked you what is working for your kids right now? Think about it. Make a list. Help your co-parent.

If you can recognize it for yourself, if you can pick up on what's working for your kids and what feels like connection, you can easily share that with your co-parent, even if you don't live in the same home. You can give them examples. You can model what's working in front of your co-parent so they can see for themselves what's working. It's possible your co-parent is just relying on the parenting ways of his or her own parents, of how they were raised. Maybe they're not longing to be dominant. They're not longing to spank or shame or yell. They're just desperate for something to work, and they don't know how to ask for it.

So your homework is to show them another way. Help them see what peaceful parenting tools are working for your kids without calling it a peaceful parenting tool. Just something you found working right now. Yeah? That's so good, isn't it? Hey, here's something I found that's working with our kids right now. You might want to try it. Oh, I love it so much. I'm so excited I got to share this with you today. 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.