

## Ep #113: How We Project Our Childhood Wounds onto Our Kids



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With Your Host  
**Lisa Smith**

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## Ep #113: How We Project Our Childhood Wounds onto Our Kids

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 know I say this a lot, but I am really excited to be with you all here today. I think this could be one of the most important messages I share with you. Yes, you. You. So let's dig in.

Now, if you listen regularly to my podcast, you hear me talk all the time about modeling. I say our kids don't do what we say, they do what we do, or what we model. Modeling is the number one task we should have on our parenting job description. If you pay attention to nothing else in your parenting, be incredibly aware of what you model for your children. Because modeling really is the best way to teach our kids. It's natural. They just are little sponges. They're observing and absorbing everything we do. Our response, how we show up, our reaction to things, our wording.

If you don't believe me, watch two little kids play house or school and listen to how they talk to each other. If you have two little kids in your home, and they want to play house where one's the mommy and one's the daddy, and you listen or watch them play, you will have a feel for how important modeling is.

Kids learn most naturally by doing what is modeled for them. This can be a great tool in teaching our kids, how we want them to do something, how we want them to show up, but it can also sometimes feel like a curse. You may or may not notice when you feel most triggered by your child, he or she is often just doing exactly what we model for them. That may be hard to hear. I get it. They mirror what we do, and we can easily be triggered when we don't like what we see in the mirror.

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Let me say that again. You may or may not have noticed when you feel most triggered by your child, he or she or they are often just doing exactly what you modeled for them. They mirror what we do. We are easily triggered by this, especially when we don't like what we see in the mirror.

Like no one else in the world, our own children imitate our shadow side often. They invite us to see the parts of ourselves that we don't like and that we find shameful or we feel guilty about or we have regrets over. We can see this pattern if we're awake at the wheel. The parent-child relationship often provides with great clarity, through projection, the things we don't like about ourselves, and that we desperately try to hide from the world. Our kids help us shine a bright spotlight on it and broadcast it out to the world.

That, my friends, triggers us almost every time. In desperation for self-preservation, we often, sometimes even knowing it, we project the disappointment or shame or guilt or frustration we feel in ourselves onto our kids. Hopefully, light bulbs are going off right now for you. This was a big aha moment for me.

In the process of this, sometimes we accidentally shame our kids for presenting our own perceived character flaws. We shame our kids for presenting their own perceived character flaws. This is so important to understand. So, so, so important. Because not only are you blocking connection with your children when this is happening, but your voice and your words over time become their inner voice. Our voice and our words become what they believe about themselves. I want you to soak that in for a moment.

If you are triggered by what they do, which we all are at times, and then you shame them for their perceived character flaws, they will grow up not only believing that they are flawed but also believing they are trapped inside those flaws. Much like the way you feel about your own shadow side.

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Let me explain this further. You may have heard me in the past confess, share, that my go to thought about my son often when I am triggered is that he is lazy. He's so lazy. Oh my god, he's lazy. Well, here's the truth. Honestly, this is a deep seated fear of mine that stems from my own childhood, ironically, of people who cared for me who were constantly calling me lazy throughout my childhood, and they language it in a way as though it were the worst crime known to mankind. Can you relate to this?

Think about it for a minute. What is the thing you were told or called as a child over and over and over again that lays deep in your subconscious. So for me as a young girl, every time I didn't do a chore perfectly like the laundry or scrub the baseboards, I was called lazy. Every time I didn't anticipate one of my family member's needs, I didn't get ahead of something, I didn't anticipate something that needed to be cleaned or taken care of, I was called lazy.

I see that I preserve myself and project this fear of my own shadow side of "lazy" onto my son. I see when I do it. I'm better at it now. It took me a while, but I see the connection. On one hand, that fear of laziness is the motivation that makes me work so hard to prove to myself and everyone else that I'm not lazy.

I grew up having to do a lot of manual labor in my father's house. I did not have a healthy or happy relationship with my father for many reasons, and this was one of them. I was treated like a slave, at least in my mind. Often his demands for the things that I do when I don't do them correctly were often laced with criticism of being lazy. Now, I was 10 or 12 and didn't mow the lawn the way he wanted it mowed. I didn't anticipate that the weeds needed to be pulled. I didn't realize that the laundry had piled up because I was 12 or 14.

The criticism always surrounded how I was lazy, and I hated it. Lazy was often thrown around as a major character flaw in all directions. It was, in

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that home, the ultimate crime. So as I grew into an adult, I became desperate to prove that I was not lazy. In the deep recesses of my mind and at the core of my being, I believed that if someone called me lazy or perceived me as lazy, they would see me the way my father saw me. There is no darker shade on my shadow side than this one right here. It's one of the wounds that I have fought against my whole life.

Now, the logical part of my brain knows without a doubt that I, Lisa Smith, am not lazy. I have a ton of evidence to prove it, including this weekly podcast. But you know what? Anytime I take a break or do something for myself or force myself to rest and take care of myself, that thought creeps in the subconscious of my brain. Just like my father said, I'm lazy.

It's hard to admit this to you, but sometimes I project this onto my kid. My kid is not lazy either. We have tons of evidence to prove that he's not. But when he doesn't do something I ask him to do or he forgets something important or I just don't get things to go my way, my go to thought is way in the subconscious of my brain that he's lazy. This is really hard to admit to you right now. I've recognized this pattern.

I also recognize that my relationship with the word lazy will be a lifelong healing process for me. One of the best ways I know to heal this is to really connect how I'm projecting this wound onto my son in times of dysregulation. It allows me this aha moment, this realization. Connecting all these dots allows me to question the way I show up for my son.

It allows me to calmly tell myself he's not lazy. I know he's not. Does he do everything I ask? Hell no. He's not lazy. But that does not mean he's lazy.

I don't ever want on him to have this wound. I don't ever want him to believe that he's lazy or struggle with the concept. I don't want him to feel that he needs to fulfill his destiny for being lazy. I'm sharing this very vulnerable part of myself with you because I really hope that you will see

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that your childhood wounds and self-perceived character flaws could also be road blocking your connection with your kids. Yeah?

So good when we have these realizations. It's so good when we understand how we're projecting our own childhood wounds onto our kids. It's so good when we get a chance to ask, what is my shadow side? How is that road blocking the connection with my kids?

I'll give you another example. I often hear parents tell me when I'm coaching them that their kids are just so overdramatic. They'll tell me, Lisa, they make mountains out of molehills. They flamboyantly draw attention to themselves when they don't get their way. Oftentimes, this drives the parent absolutely crazy. Can you relate? Do you have one of these overdramatic kids who throws themselves down on aisle six of Target?

I can think of one parent that I discussed this with most recently. The parent admitted that he often gets triggered by this, and he starts storming right alongside his kid. Then on top of it, he starts shaming his kid for being overly dramatic. The thing is I recognize this trait in the parents who bring it to me for coaching as well. I recognize that there's some shadow side blocking seeing the irony, seeing the projection, but they can't see it in themselves. I get that too. That's why coaching to see our blind spots is so incredibly powerful, especially in the area of parenting.

So when I was talking to this parent, I said first off, let's identify that being overdramatic is not a character flaw. Some people are just built for attention seeking dramatics. Conversely, being "overdramatic" can actually become the child's superpower that he or she may use someday to change the world.

Second of all, it is often, to come full circle that at the beginning of this episode, it's often the product of what the parent has modeled for the child. Remember, kids don't do what we say, they do what we do. The parent

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herself or himself often easily amplifies the smallest of details when they share their coaching, when they come into The Hive and get coaching. I can see that perhaps, just perhaps, the parent is also overly dramatic, and has modeled that for their children.

Maybe it's something the parent doesn't like in themselves, or grew up being told was a flaw of their own. So they don't even really perceive themselves as dramatic, but they are. They see it as a shadow side, and they're modeling for their children, and then getting mad at the kids when the kid is overly dramatic.

Another way the parent overdramatizes is often with their language to me as I'm coaching them. They use words like always and never. My kid always makes the biggest deal of the simple things. My kid never does what I tell them. I will never be able to trust him because he always proves that he cannot be trusted. A bit dramatic. Yeah?

So imagine if that's your language in the home what you're modeling for your kids. Ah, I love it so much. I would say using this kind of extreme and dramatic language triggers all humans. When we say words like always and never to try to emphasize our feelings like frustration, excitement, disappointment, which simply does not promote connection with our kids.

So when we're saying things like this, we're actually modeling for our kids how to be overly dramatic, right? Can you see that? If you have a strong willed kid, he or she is going to be dramatic in their power struggle with your dramatic storming. It makes me laugh. Then out of desperation and self-defense, you just continue to spiral and storm, further modeling how to show up when you're frustrated, ashamed, and uncomfortable with your shadow side with an overly dramatic style.

Do you see this cycle? Do you see how you might be modeling this for your children? They mirror right back to you what you're teaching them. Then

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you blame them for having this character flaw. Ah, it's such a negative have loop. It's worth paying attention to. I hope you're seeing this. Because this alone in your parenting can be a game changer.

Remember, we designated 2023 to be the year of up leveling our parenting. Where small changes make a big impact in the connection and cooperation with our kids. So if you do nothing else this week but pause and take a little inventory, take these two examples that I've given you have overly dramatic and lazy and ask yourself where is the cycle going on for me with my kid or kids? Where is this happening? Where am I modeling something I consider my shadow side? Then when my kid mirrors it back, where am I getting frustrated and projecting those negative emotions onto them?

I hope you're able to see this. I hope you're able to trace back your negative loop cycle. If you are, then you may be questioning well now what? How am I supposed to fix this, Lisa? How can I show up differently for my kids so they don't grow up over dramatizing and blaming everyone else for reflecting their own shadow side? I don't call my kids lazy, but instead I call them insert whatever word you use, and I want to stop. How do I do that?

Well, the answer is twofold. Number one, understanding your thoughts, thought work. Number two, healing your own inner childhood wounds. I would say identifying and healing your own inner childhood wounds. This is what we work on, on the regular in my membership community, The Hive.

I offer live coaching three times a week, and these are the exact things we work on. I help you see your blind spots, and I give you the tools to help you heal and show up in a completely different way with your children that leads to connection and cooperation. I want that for you by the way. I desperately want that for you, and I hope you do too.



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What I know is that our children do not deserve to be blamed for what we model for them. Let me say that again. Our children do not deserve to be blamed for what we're modeling for them. What you perceive as a character flaw in your children or in yourself may not be a character flaw at all. It may simply be a process problem that needs to be worked out within the family or character trait that your child simply needs you to accept in them, and a character trait you need to accept in yourself.

One of the most important needs your child has is the need to feel accepted by you. We all want to feel accepted. It's part of the human experience. But your kids really want to be accepted as they present in all their hot messiness, in all their storming, in all their dramatics. They want to be accepted by you.

Here's the question we have to ask ourselves. Do you want them to come to you for acceptance, or do you want them to seek it elsewhere? I love the saying parenting is hard because your child is reflecting back at you what you haven't resolved within yourself. Let me say that again so you can hear that. Take a deep breath for me.

One of the many reasons parenting is so hard is because your child is reflecting back at you what you haven't resolved within yourself. I get it. I get it. I do this work on the regular. My son is my greatest teacher. You may be asking yourself how can I accept something that I find so appalling and so unacceptable? How can I accept something that I was raised to believe is a character flaw?

I know it's not easy, but I truly believe that you find that answer when you work on healing your own inner child right alongside parenting your kid or kids. When you give your kids what you always wished you had as a child, like acceptance for how you present, you give it to your own inner child at the same time, and you end up healing and fulfilling the needs of your inner child that you still carry within you.

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If that intrigues you and you want to learn more about healing your own inner child so that you can show up for your kids in a way that helps them feel seen, heard, and valued, I encourage you to go back to podcast episode 61 and 97 where I dig deeper into healing your own inner childhood wounds. I also want you to consider this a personal, personal, heartfelt invitation from me for you to come and join The Hive.

Once you join The Hive, you have instant access to a workshop that I did with a deep dive on healing your own childhood wounds. I will also coach you personally in figuring out what your childhood wounds are and help you with tools, specific tools, that will help you heal so you can create the connection and cooperation you've always wanted with your kids.

I want you to remember that modeling is the greatest tool you have for teaching your kids, whether you know it or not, whether you're modeling what you want them to do, or you're modeling what you don't want them to do. You are teaching your children right now through modeling. When you take the time to acknowledge your own shadow side and your childhood wounds, and you do this work that makes it possible to show up differently in the world, what I know with 100% certainty is that your connection with your kids will grow immensely. Right behind it will be greater cooperation.

So if nothing else, I ask you to be aware of what you're modeling for your kids. Model for them that they have the power to make change happen within themselves. Model for them that even as grownups, we're flawed. We can learn and grow and heal and make a difference. Please, I ask you, for the sake of your kids and your family in the greater world, be aware of what you're modeling for your kids. Model with intention. Model in a way that creates connection and cooperation, not command and compliance.

If you need help with that, The Hive is the answer. We have a seat in The Hive for you. Yes, you. I absolutely cannot wait to work with you. So if you're interested in learning more, go to [www.thehivecoaching.com](http://www.thehivecoaching.com).

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Modeling is the number one task we have in our job description, and the number one way we teach our kids. Remember, our kids don't do what we say, they do what we do. Yeah? Awesome. I'm so proud of you. Okay, 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](http://thepeacefulparent.com). See you soon.