

Ep #114: The Power of the Pause



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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 the power of the pause. The pause is one of the most powerful tools you can use as a parent. Let me explain. The pause allows you to not take your kid's storm personally. It allows you to not judge your kids. It allows you to not judge yourself. It allows you to not call your kids names and make them feel worse. Because you can't make your kids behave by making them feel worse.

The pause allows you to not beat yourself up. The pause you see allows you a moment to get into your higher brain where you're calm, where you're creative, where you're empathetic, and where you're solutions-oriented. The pause might also allow you to be the executive function for your kids. Because remember, their brains are not fully developed until the age of 25.

I say all the time if I could order hundreds of thousands of little rubber bracelets with these sayings on them, I would send one to each of you that says pause, parent, pause. I'd have you wear it on your dominant hand and look at it while you're parenting your kids. Pause, parent, pause. I think it is one of the greatest tools I can teach you.

You see, the pause can be considered a transitional behavior. Transitional behaviors are little things we can do to make things just a little bit better today than they were yesterday and get you a little bit closer to your goal of staying regulated while your kids are storming. Let me give you an example. Let's say that you decided you wanted to start exercising, and

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you've never exercised in your life. Maybe you're a little overweight and a little out of shape. This is the year that you really want to tackle this.

Now there are some people who might say you know what? I'm going to get up five days a week, go to the gym at 5:00 a.m. and exercise for 45 minutes. Okay, you can try that. I think we both know that the odds of success are pretty low, but you could still give it a go.

However, what would be even better and significantly increase your chance of success would be practicing a transitional behavior, transitioning into the habit of exercising where you say to yourself okay, you know what? I am out of shape. I haven't exercised in a while. I'm going to be sore. It's going to be exciting the first day, but by about the second or third time, I'm not going to want to do it because I don't like getting up at 5:00 a.m. and it's dark and cold. I really want to succeed at this.

So what I'm going to do is as I make this transition into being an exerciser, I'm going to start getting up three mornings a week instead of five. I'm going to get up three mornings a week at 5:00 a.m. I'm going to put my shoes on. I'm going to drive to the gym with the expectation of walking for only five minutes at the gym. That's all I'm going to ask myself. I'm going to go to the gym and walk for five minutes. To make this transitional behavior or transition into being a workout person, I'm going to sleep in my workout clothes.

Now, by the way, this is a true story. This is how I became an exerciser. Many, many, many years ago, I wanted to exercise. I had never really committed to exercising before. I really wanted to become an exerciser. So I used transitional behavior of literally I would sleep in my workout clothes so there would be no excuses with my tennis shoes right next to the bed. That's all I did.

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I would ask myself to get up and go to the gym and walk for five minutes. If I wanted to stay and walk longer, I could. But the transitional behavior was sleep in the clothes, put your shoes on, go to the gym, walk for at least five minutes. Now 15 years later, I am a very serious, very intense exerciser.

So I did these little transitional behaviors until my habit brain could settle in to identify and create the habit of I'm a regular exerciser. I don't need to sleep on my clothes anymore. My shoes are not by the bed. I am now a perpetual habitual exerciser. I get up in the morning three mornings a week. I get dressed, I go to the gym, I work out intensely. The power of a transitional behavior can be life changing.

In parenting, you can use the pause as a transitional behavior. If you do nothing else but learn to pause when you're about to lose your shiz with your kids, the amount of connection and cooperation you're going to get with and from your kids is going to blow your mind, blow your mind. I promise.

Here's the good news. You don't need your kids to participate in the pause. You don't need your dominant coparent to participate in the pause. You don't need your mother to participate in the pause. You don't need anybody to participate in this at all but you. This is one of the things that I love so much about the pause because the pause lies within you, and you have the ability to use it without anyone else having to agree with you or go along with it or adopt it themselves.

This is a small thing you can do that will create a ginormous difference in your parenting. Remember, we designated 2023 as the year of up leveling our parenting. Small changes can make a big difference in the connection and cooperation you get with your kids. I guarantee that if you bring the pause into your parenting, you will not get a big difference, a big payoff, a

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big return. You will get a ginormous payoff in your parenting and in your relationship with your kids.

So let me break it down for you and share with you the benefits of the pause. When you pause, here's what happens. First of all, you have a chance to get into your higher brain. Your middle brain is your emotional center, and that is not, capital N, capital O, capital T, not where you want to parent from. When you pause, you're resisting the urge and the immediate gratification of being reactive. You're giving yourself a chance to be responsive.

When you pause, you're not going to judge your kids for giving you a hard time by thinking things like there he goes again. Why does she have to do this? Why is he always so disrespectful? You're avoiding that. You're avoiding these thoughts. Those thoughts dwell in your middle brain. You're just going to leave them there and your middle brain and move up to your higher brain when you utilize the pause.

Now, here's a big benefit. When you pause, you are regulating yourself. When you pause, you are giving yourself a chance to think about what's really going on here. When you pause, you have the best chance of getting curious not furious, of scuba diving down to the feelings and needs, of remembering that every behavior communicates a need. When you pause, you're not going to do things that make your kids feel worse about themselves because you're paused.

Maybe most importantly when you pause, guess what? You're modeling that pause for your children. Yeah? You are modeling taking a moment to move into being responsive rather than reactive. Remember, our kids don't do what we say, they do what we do. The magic of connective parenting is in the pause. If you want cooperation from your kids, pause, parent, pause.

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Let's say you ask them to put their shoes on, and they're not doing it. If you pause before opening your mouth, you have a real chance to realize that maybe they don't want to put their shoes on. Maybe they didn't hear you. Maybe they're having difficulty. Maybe they're not tuned in to your voice. Maybe they don't want to go to school. Maybe they're loving what they were doing, and they don't want to stop.

You have a chance to realize they're not giving me a hard time, they're having a hard time. You have a chance to realize that no human listens the first time all the time. Let me take a moment and ask them again to put their shoes on. I don't need to take it personally. When you use the pause, you have a chance to realize maybe you need to use a pattern interrupter because they're so into the game or the book they're reading or the Legos they're playing with.

When you pause, you have a chance to realize maybe I need to get down on their level. Maybe I need to connect before I make the request. Maybe I need to check in with my tone. Maybe I'm not asking for cooperation but commanding compliance. The pause allows you to assess how am I doing this? What could I do differently? How do I want to do this? Figuring these things out and tweaking just one or two small things will give your brain time and space and permission it needs to take a pause at the most crucial times of the day.

What I know for sure is that the pause is the major step that allows you to move from being a reactive parent to a responsive parent. Let me say that again. The pause is the major step. It is critical. It is the one ingredient, the most important ingredient that will allow you to move from being a reactive parent to a responsive parent. Responding rather than reacting is at the heart of peaceful parenting.

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Because as a responsive parent, you're available to come alongside your kid or kids and co-regulate with them. If you aren't able to co-regulate with them, it will be much, much, much harder, almost impossible, for them to learn to regulate on their own. It's how the system, the brain, the computer up in the head works. We have to come alongside our kids and coregulate, or they will not be able to naturally regulate on their own. The pause is the answer.

So here's your homework. Pause, parent, pause. You got this, you can do this. The good news is that you're probably going to have many, many, many opportunities today, tomorrow, all week to practice, pause, parent, pause. 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.