

Ep 116: When Your Kid Won't Take "No" for an Answer



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

[Real World Peaceful Parenting](#) with 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. It's hard to believe that it's been 116 episodes. And I know I say this a lot but I really love being with you each week. You're doing a great job showing up here listening to the different topics and applying them. And I absolutely love hearing from you all. If you have a suggestion for a future podcast or an area where you find yourself really struggling and you think, gosh, I wish Lisa would do an episode on topic x. Go over to my Instagram, the_peaceful_parent, the_peaceful_parent and slide over into my DMs.

First of all, I'd love to hear from you and connect with you over there. And second of all, I would absolutely love to hear suggestions on topics or get a feel for where you're struggling at right now that you could really use some insight, guidance and support. Sound good? Awesome, I cannot wait to hear from you.

And speaking of hearing, I often hear from parents about how frustrated they get when their kids will simply not take no for an answer or when their kids over-explain to them all the reasons why the parent's rule or limits are unreasonable. When this happens, oftentimes we as parents get very triggered and dysregulated and end up storming right alongside our kids which leaves them and us from feeling far from connected. It leaves us feeling the opposite of connected, disconnected. Can you relate to this? If you can, this episode is especially for you.

And I have a secret insight that will help you relieve your suffering and connect more with your kids even when they will not take no for an answer

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or they want to power struggle over the limit you're trying to set. Are you ready? Awesome. Let's dive in.

The secret to gaining relief from your suffering is for you to stop people pleasing and wanting your child or children to be grateful for all the things that you're working your butt off to give them. And instead consider having an attitude and a response of, "This is what I have to offer. I'm doing this from a place of giving you a gift and it's my joy to give it to you. And you get to decide whether you're going to take it or leave it."

What's frustrating you and really the source of the problem is that you're looking for gratitude from your child for you saying no. You're looking for your child's approval and understanding for all the reasons you're saying no to the limit. And when we do this, what we're doing is we're making it all about us the parent. It's derived in the thought and intention you have. We parents who are people pleasers, I call myself a recovering people pleaser, we want our kids' approval in some weird way when we say no.

I'm going to discipline, I'm going to set a limit. I'm going to tell you yes or no. I'm going to tell you to get off gaming. I'm going to tell you, you can't go out. I'm going to tell you, you need to take a shower. I'm going to set a limit with you. And we want our kids' approval, while at the same time of setting the limit. Take that in for a moment. When we're doing the hard work of parenting we want our kids to approve and understand all the reasons that we have for our decisions, our boundaries or our request.

And newsflash, our children at any age are not going to give us this approval at all for a lot of reasons. That include we're not giving them what they want, they may be strong willed, they want more, they want to live life at full speed. They don't care that you have other kids and other responsibilities. They don't care that you're working your butt off. Kids are by nature self-centered and thinking of themselves.

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So when we try to seek approval from our kids who are self-centered, who have underdeveloped brains, whose job it is to push full throttle, they don't give us that approval we're looking for. And when we don't get that approval, when we can't make them understand, when we can't justify to them why we're saying no, we're setting the limits so they back down, we get really dysregulated. This is what happens 100% of the time when you're seeking your kids' permission or approval or you're trying to justify the limit or the rule or the plan you're putting in place.

And then we marinate in thoughts like how dare they? I've explained it to her, she should understand this. Doesn't he know how hard I'm working? Doesn't he know how good he has it? Can't she understand that I have two other kids, a full-time job and a sick mom? I can't be running her all over the place. Doesn't he get that I'm already bending over backwards, sacrificing, doing x, y and z? I can't believe that's not enough for her. And here's the real honest to goodness truth, it is these thoughts, these thoughts that are dysregulating you.

Let me say that again, it is not your child's behavior, the words out of their mouth or their attitude that is generating your dysregulation. It is your thoughts about setting the limit and their response that is dysregulating you.

I'll give you an example. As I mentioned earlier, I'm a recovering people pleaser. And this is one of the first aha moments I had when I got on the path to Peaceful Parenting. I realized that I was seeking my son's approval. I was working so hard to provide the justification for my setting limits. I don't really like confrontation, I didn't want him to be unhappy. And so when he would ask me for something that I had to say no to, or I had to set a limit around like, hey, it's time to get off gaming, or no, you can't have your phone in your room all night. I would go into great detail to explain all of my reasonings to him, i.e. justify it to him.

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And when he was still mad I would get dysregulated because I'm explaining to him, he should get it by now. I mean, come on. And so it was this pattern or this cycle I was stuck in, of unconsciously trying to gain his permission or approval or justify and explain and get him to understand my no that was dysregulating me. I've worked really hard on this over the years and I have come a long way and I want you to come a long way as well if you're falling into this trap.

Now, sometimes I do think he's going to lose it or I really wish I could say yes to his request but I am no longer seeking his approval when I'm setting a limit around something. So let me give you a recent example that happened.

My 18 year old son was recently invited to join a big group of kids and chaperones for a quick weekend getaway to Mexico. We live about four hours, about a four hour drive across the border to Mexico. And originally Malcolm wanted to go by himself and drive himself down there. And he wanted to skip school for a day to get there at the same time everyone else was getting there. The very first day of the trip, none of the other kids had school but Malcolm did.

So my husband and I jumped through a lot of hoops and rearranged plans and made some sacrifices to make this trip possible for our son. And we agreed that the only way it could work was, number one, if my husband went along and drove. And number two, they left Arizona at 1:30 in the afternoon when Malcolm was done with school, not 9:30am like the rest of the group. My husband had to work in the morning and he had a really important meeting that he couldn't skip.

And my son had already missed a day of school the week before and he needed to go to school that day. So we said, "Dad drives and you guys leave on Thursday at 1:30pm." So my son didn't really like the parameters. He was excited to go on the trip and grateful but he didn't really like the

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parameters that we put forth on his plans for the trip. He said to me, "Mom, you do realize", which is never a good sign, that's always a tell when he winds up with, "You do realize."

So he said, "Mom, you do realize that everyone and I mean everyone, mom, but me is leaving at 9:30 in the morning." My response as a recovering people pleaser, who used to seek his understanding on my decisions and parameters was, "Yes, I heard that all the kids were leaving early that day." And he persisted, "Mom, I just don't understand why I have to go to school." And this is where most of us get tripped up. It would be easy for one to think he's asking for an explanation. And my old brain, my old self would have jumped into the pond of justifying my explanation.

My old self would have been all too eager to help him understand all of my logic, as I justify and rationalize leaving at 1:30. Instead I took a pause, remember a pause, parent pause, I took a pause, I took a deep breath. And instead I kindly and lovingly said, "Yes, I'm sure your main thought right now is how do I go at 9:30 in the morning. However, here are your two options. You can go at 1:30 or we can cancel the trip. Those are your options." And I stopped talking.

Now, I want to be clear, I said this with love and empathy and understanding and a firm boundary. I didn't go into anything like, "Are you kidding me? We just threw all these plans together for you. You should be grateful. We agreed last night that you were going to leave at 1:30. This isn't what we had planned. We already made a bunch of sacrifices. And your dad who would really rather not make this trip right now is agreeing to go to make you happy." I didn't do any of that. I paused and I said, "You can go at 1:30 or we can cancel. Those are your options."

Now, I know as the parent and the fully developed brain, my husband had a very important meeting that he couldn't miss. My son had school and he had already missed, as I mentioned, a day of school the week before. And

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he wasn't going to miss another day this week, certainly to drive down to Mexico. So I just held lovingly and empathetically and patiently to these are your options, take it or leave it. I wasn't mean about it, but I was firm. And I was not seeking his approval or understanding in that moment for my reasons.

And if he wanted to be upset about it I was totally okay with that. I didn't need him to be happy about his choices. He was allowed to be upset, but I also didn't want to get pulled into a power struggle with him by justifying my decision. What I know after having worked with thousands of parents at this point is that those of us that are people pleasers are expecting our child to understand, approve of and validate our reasons for setting limits. And if you hear nothing else today, I want you to hear, that's the problem.

We have to stop expecting our kids to understand and approve of our boundaries and our limits. Now, it doesn't mean we need to be mean or snippy or yelling or dominant about it. But what we do need to realize is that our kids are not going to understand maybe until they're parents themselves, but certainly probably not until they're about 28 or 30 years old. They are not going to understand in the moment your justification, they don't want to, they want what they want.

And they're not going to be grateful and they're not going to validate for you or make it okay that you've got all these reasons for saying no. And they're not going to care about your personal history of experiences to back up those reasons. Yeah, can you see this?

Here's another example. I recently coached a parent in The Hive which is my parent coaching membership community who shared how exasperated she was when her daughter got so upset that she missed out on an event with some friends. Now, the daughter missed the event because she spent the weekend at a soccer tournament. And soccer is this young girl's most

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favorite thing in the whole world to do. And the daughter was giving the mom attitude about missing the party.

The mom got so triggered by her daughter's attitude, so triggered by it. She was taking it personally. The mom was thinking, oh my gosh, Lisa, my daughter is so ungrateful. I sacrificed so much for her to participate in that soccer tournament, that she begged me for weeks to go to. And while we were there she had the absolute best time. How can she possibly be upset for missing something less fabulous than the soccer tournament? I swear, Lisa, I can never do enough for her and she's never satisfied. Does this sound familiar? Can you relate to these thoughts?

Do you sometimes have them or some version of them? Here's the thing. When we expect our child to be understanding and grateful, we make that conversation and that relationship all about us. And this is really interesting. In those moments what we're doing with our thoughts is trying to manipulate our child into agreeing with us, into approving of our actions, our decisions and validating our parenting. These are all the traits of a people pleaser.

In this example with the soccer tournament, it's normal for kids, especially of particular personality types like extroverts to experience FOMO, the fear of missing out. So I go to the soccer tournament in my own little world happy as a clam. And I come home and find out that while I was gone, six of my friends got together for a sleepover and my FOMO, fear of missing out kicks in. And I get dysregulated by it. And I go to my parent and I storm about how upset I am that I missed the sleepover for the soccer tournament.

FOMI is a big fear that very often overpowers even the greatest of experiences or opportunities. And it may take kids' a long time to realize, learn and accept that they cannot be everywhere doing everything all the time. And so FOMO often rears its ugly head and we get dysregulated and

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we storm sometimes around or at our parents. And as parents we start to explain or justify our decision.

Let's say you don't let your child go to a sleepover because maybe you don't know the parents really well or you're going to be out of town that weekend or you're uncomfortable with letting him go to the sleepover. And your child starts storming because their FOMO kicks in. And you start justifying or explaining to them all the reasons they can't go to Cindy Lou's house for the sleepover.

And what you really want is you want your daughter to understand all the reasons you're giving her and go, "Okay mommy, now that you've taken the time to explain it to me I get it and I guess you're right, so thank you for looking out for me. I will calm down and happily accept your answer." It's not going to happen, it's not.

And in those moments what will help you on the path to peaceful parenting is to think thoughts like, this is not a character flaw. My child is not ungrateful. I don't need to take this personally. This is typical for an underdeveloped brain. I can teach her how to overcome FOMO. I can help her recognize when it pops up and how to deal with it. I can show up for her during her storms and help her regulate by coming alongside her and co-regulating with her.

With these thoughts you will be able to show up for your child to support them and listen to relieve the suffering, instead of making the struggle all about you and how hard you're working to get her to understand. When we make things about us as the parent we get offended. We get triggered. We get dysregulated and then we start storming alongside our child and we miss the opportunity to coregulate, to teach our child how to regulate in the face of big emotions and to teach them how to manage disappointment and bounce back with resiliency. Yeah, can you see that? So good.

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In my earlier example about Malcolm and his road trip to Mexico, he even argued this very thing to me. He said, "Mom, they're all going to get there at one o'clock. And I'm not going to get there until like five. And my FOMO is going to totally kick in for those four hours in the car." And my response was, "Yeah, I get that. I totally understand that you're going to have FOMO." I said it calmly with total empathy and understanding. And I languaged it in a way that it's a process problem, not a character problem.

And then the focus of the conversation switched from boundaries and limits to managing his thoughts about his FOMO. And I was able to not take it personally or make it about me and instead give my brain the task of showing up to support him rather than count all the ways he was being ungrateful. So maybe you're saying, "Okay, Lisa, I am picking up what you're putting down, girl, but what do I do? How do I work on this?"

Well, let me tell you. Your 'tell' is when you find yourself impulsively wanting to over-explain your reasons. You can feel it in your body. It's this desire to get them to understand or explain or justify or see it your way. And when you feel this and notice this tell, what you want to say to yourself is, "Oh, here I go, I'm seeking approval and understanding and I'm wanting him, her or them to validate that I am a good parent for having the foresight and reasons for my boundaries, my decision, my limits. And what I'm doing is I'm making this about me."

Now, I still think you can give simple short answers especially when they're asking you for them. But what I want you to do is learn to recognize the edge where it spills over into over-explaining and seeking approval. This is definitely a time in parenting when less is more, less words, less explanation, less need for their understanding and approval. And another benefit of working towards less, working towards not seeking your kids' approval is modeling.

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Let me put it this way, when you seek approval, understanding and validation for your reasons you're modeling this for your child. So when they keep coming back and overexplaining all their reasons why your limits are so upsetting to them, remember, maybe you modeled this for them. And when you get triggered, dysregulated and storm right alongside them and think thoughts like, why are they never satisfied, why do they always want more, why must they go on and on and on when I've already said no. Why can't they just accept my word, my decision? Why? Because you've modeled this for them, the wanting validation, the overexplaining.

When you don't get your way of their approval and you go into justifying and validating with reasons and words and explanations, you're modeling that for your kids. So then when they don't get their way, what do they do? They over-explain, they justify, they want approval. They repeat with dramatic words over and over and over again until they get their way or someone storms so big. Can you see it? I know, sometimes it's hard to look at. But remember, our kids don't do what we say, they do what we do, they do what we model.

Lastly, I want you to hear this about setting limits for your kids. Saying no to our children sometimes is an investment in their future. No, you can't run in the street. No, you can't try heroin. No, you can't drive to Mexico for four days by yourself when you've never driven across the border and you're 18. Think about this. Many times when we say no to our kids and we set a limit or a boundary, we're teaching them resilience and that's an important skill to have as a human. As a parent if we say yes to everything we're not allowing our kids to build their resiliency muscle.

We have to teach our kids how to be resilient. And one of the ways is tolerating no. It's working through their big feelings when they hear no. It's not getting everything they want. Part of our job description as peaceful parents is to teach our kids resiliency. And learning this lesson is a part of their job as a peaceful child who will grow into a resilient adult. What I also

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want you to know is when we set rules and boundaries for our kids, our kids feel safe and loved.

When we struggle and try to justify and seek their approval, when we say no, it cheats them out of the opportunity to learn how to manage disappointment. We rob them of the lesson of sitting with their big feelings and learning how to tolerate hearing no. We do not serve them by allowing them to power struggle over the no. I knew without a doubt that Malcolm was going to have a much more enjoyable trip with the boundaries I put on him than he would have had trying to do this his way.

Yeah, he's 18 and he's old enough to do many things but he has seven more years until his brain is fully developed, including his executive function. And what I knew was that he needed to go to school. There was plenty of the weekend to enjoy after they got down there. And he needed to not go down there by himself but with a parent who is there to set boundaries and limits and supervise and really support him while he had an amazing time. And he got to practice his resiliency muscle when we told him no, he couldn't miss school and go down at 9:00am.

Does this work resonate with you? Are you like, "Wow, I never thought of it this way, Lisa, thank you?" Well, you're welcome. And if you need some further help with people pleasing and how it shows up in your parenting, I want to encourage you to listen or listen again to episode 106. And let me leave you with this. When you learn and practice finding approval and validation within yourself you will be amazed at how quickly and how easily you stop seeking the approval and validation from other people especially your kids while parenting them and setting limits.

We designated 2023 the year of upleveling our parenting, where we make small changes to get a big difference or improvement. So if all you worked on this year, all you worked on was no longer seeking your kids' approval while you are setting limits and boundaries, no longer trying to justify your

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answers for their approval, it would be a complete and total game changer in your parenting.

And what I know for sure is at the end of it your kids will feel safer and more loved. You will feel more connected to them. They will feel more connected to you. And you will find parenting so much easier than you are currently finding it. And let me tell you, I want that for you, yes, you, I want that for you. I have experienced it over the years. I went from one side of the continuum to the other. And I can tell you where I stand over here is much easier. I feel much more calm and confident and I'm not seeking my kid's approval while I'm parenting him. I want that for you.

So give this a shot, do your homework, recognize your tell, work on it. So good. I know. 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 mini course. 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. 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.