

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

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

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

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 be here with you today. I appreciate you tuning in and listening. I think you're gonna be quite pleased with the information that I'm bringing you today.

So I'm gonna start out by asking you to be honest with yourself with this question. Do you rely occasionally or often on punishments or threats of punishments to motivate or get your kids to do what you say? I know. It might be hard to admit, but it's an important question to ask ourselves.

Maybe it sounds like if you don't stop hitting your brother, you're gonna have to sit in timeout. If you don't get off gaming right now, we're removing all devices. If you bring home another bad grade, you're gonna lose your phone for a week. If you're late for curfew, you lose your car for a month. Does any of this sound familiar to you?

If so, I completely understand. I have absolutely no judgment. That's because I've been there. When my soon to be high school graduate was young, really young, I believed that dominating, commanding, and threatening not only work to get my son to comply and behave, but I believed it was the only way to survive the day. I'm here to tell you that I was completely wrong. I'm going to explain why.

I hope that you're here listening today because either, like me, you don't like the way these punishments taste in your mouth when you're threatening your kids, or B, you're realizing that at some point your

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

punishments and threats aren't working, or you're having to escalate every time to get them to work. You see that at some point to potency is going to wear out. Well, in either case, I'm thrilled that you're here. I can't wait to share this episode with you today.

Punishing, threatening, and rewarding our kids, moving away from it is one subject that I am extremely passionate about. I want to dive into today's topic, but I want to start with telling you that I offer up the ideas, the tools, and the concepts in today's episode with absolutely no judgment. No matter where you're at in this continuum, I want you to just commit to listening with an open mind and knowing that I'm bringing this information to you with the most love I possibly can, and absolutely no judgment.

I want to assure you that there are much better ways to create connection and cooperation with your kids than to threaten them into compliance. The threat of punishment only works temporarily anyway, and your child learns absolutely nothing from it, other than to fear you and to fear mistakes. Think about this.

Threats and punishments do not teach our kids to manage their emotions and their needs that drive them to “misbehave” in the first place. So every time those emotions come up for them, the behavior will be the same because they've learned nothing. Eventually, there's a very, very, very high probability that your kids will rebel against the punishment. What happens is humans get used to the ritual of being punished. Over time, the punishment loses its sting and effectiveness. Your kids feel the need to up the ante, which only requires you to escalate the force.

Now, hopefully, when I put it this way, you can see that threatening and punishing doesn't build connection, and it doesn't teach self-discipline. And it doesn't turn on the internal compass to your kids absorbing, learning, and putting into practice right from wrong.

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

What's even more enlightening is that research has shown that the more you resort to punishment, the less likely your child will want to cooperate in the moment or in everyday life. Studies have shown that punishments actually make kids misbehave more.

Now, let me say that again. Research has shown that the more the parent resorts to punishment, the less likely the child has a desire or a motivation to want to cooperate in the moment or in everyday life, and punishments actually lead the underdeveloped kid brain to misbehave more.

Alfie Cohen, someone who I have learned a ton from and look up to says we know that brushing our teeth and not hitting a sibling and not sneaking a cookie are in the child's best interest. But the child, because of the underdeveloped brain, does not know that. In fact, children are strongly driven to avoid brushing teeth, demolishing their rival, and eating as many cookies as they can.

As children, that's how they're hardwired. The only reason a child would desire to go against their natural tendencies of getting needs met and F-U-N is because they trust their parent. They trust that their parent has their best interest in mind. That's the motivation.

Now get this when a parent punishes the child, particularly over and over and over again, and particularly in a demeaning way, punishes the child, that trust is broken. The child feels like the parent is no longer on his or her side, and the child feels wronged, especially if the child is strong willed.

When a child feels that the parent, the adult, the caregiver, the coach, whoever is no longer on his or her side and they feel wronged, the trust is broken, and the child is actually motivated to misbehave more. Do you remember feeling wronged by your parent when you were punished as a kid? I sure do. I can easily recall the broken trust, the feeling like the parent

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

was not on my side, and feeling wronged. I remember it, and it didn't feel good. It didn't feel motivating. I didn't feel connected to the parent.

Punishments lead kids to believe that they are bad people, and that it's less likely that they'll be able to please us. So why bother? Why try? When this cycle, when we enter into this cycle with our children, the biggest crime is the trust diminishes. When there's lack of trust, and I feel like I'm not going to be able to please you, it destroys my desire to behave.

Punishment erodes relationships. Here's why. Because the intention behind the punishment is to harm. It's to harm. It's not to teach. It's not to coach. It's not to fix. When we punish, we set out with the intention to harm, and our kids feel that. They feel that, and the trust diminishes. It destroys a child's desire, the motivation to behave.

Now listen, I get that you want your kid to do what's right and to be obedient and do what you ask. I get that. I want that too. I get that obedience just feels easier in our day to day lives as a parent. In dominant parenting, punishing and threatening often feels like it leads to obedience. But I want to encourage you to challenge what feels easy.

What I encourage you to strive for, instead of easy, is to raise children who want to cooperate, who want to know right from wrong, who want to learn right from wrong, and who want to do the right thing, and know how to regulate themselves or learn how to regulate themselves when big feelings come up. Yeah? Do you want that too? I want that for you. I want that for your kids.

But here's the thing. Kids can't learn any of that, any of that, right from wrong, turning on the internal compass, working towards cooperation, learning how to regulate when big feelings come up. They can't learn any of that when they feel shame, humiliation, embarrassment, or guilt. It blocks

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

the learning of the lessons. They stop listening and cooperating and build up walls to protect themselves.

They become defensive. They become argumentative. They learn to power struggle. Trust is broken, and they're on the defense all the time. They feel like we're against them, and they've been wronged. They build a case in their head around that over time.

You might be able to relate to this. You might have been this kid or teenager growing up in response to the dominant household you grew up in. Parents often test their kids by making them parrot back to them what they did wrong and why they're being punished.

Kids learn to repeat all the words back to them, but that doesn't mean they've learned anything. That doesn't mean they're internalizing the lessons or the values that you're teaching. It doesn't mean that the internal compass is being turned on, or is in the process of getting turned on.

They're just parroting back what they did wrong to get out of the confrontation they're engaged in. To make matters worse, the kid might actually be learning how to not get caught or how to be a better liar than they're learning what to do when they're immersed in a lack of trust, guilt, humiliation, embarrassment and shame. Then the goal becomes how do I never feel this again? How do I not get caught at doing this so I don't have to face this again?

What I also really want you to see is that most kids who are raised by force, by dominance, by punishments, by threats with the intention of to harm are forced into one of three categories. They become adults who either are people pleasers, rebels, or full of despair.

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

In the first category, the people pleasers grew up to be teenagers and adults who transfer their obedience from their dominant parent who may have had good intentions and their best interests at heart. They transfer it from their dominant parent to other people, bosses, romantic partners, a spouse, a coach, a mentor, or even strangers who do not have their best interests in mind.

I can't encourage you enough not to raise an obedient kid, but rather a kid who's not afraid to push back and question. Kids who challenge authority, if met with connection and willingness to teach rather than dominate, will grow up to have a strong internal compass, a strong moral compass. They will grow up to be able to tell right from wrong, and they'll be able to stand up for themselves when it's appropriate, often in a respectful way.

If you model for your children that where there is a dominant person there is an obedient counterpart, they will take that model with them into the world. When they encounter someone who has more power or authority or dominance than they have, a teacher, a coach, a religious leader, a boss, or even a friend, their habit brain will coerce them into assuming the role of obedience, regardless of the dominant person's intentions.

Now you or maybe your dominant co parent might argue well, I had a dominant parent, and I was punished a lot as a kid, and I turned out just fine. Maybe your dominant coparent says, "Heck, you married me. So I can't be all that bad. Or look at me, it worked out for me. So it'll work out for our kid."

Let me tell you something. I'm on to people present this argument. If this is you, I challenge you with this. Really? Did punishment really work for you? Are you able to regulate your big emotions to this day? Or are you easily triggered and filled with anger? Are you able to access all of your

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

emotions? Or maybe I should ask, are you able to access any of your emotions? Are you able to identify your triggers and name your emotions?

I ask you to question that in a moment of true honesty. Maybe you're a people pleaser. Because you were raised by a dominant parent, you don't have the confidence to question authority or pushback when you feel you've been wronged. Maybe you don't regularly speak up for yourself. Maybe you're compliant regardless of why your internal compass tries to tell you. Are you really okay?

Maybe you grew up with the dominant parent, and now you're unable to have vulnerable conversations with the people you feel closest to. Maybe you don't trust anyone to have your best interest, or maybe you don't just trust at all. Maybe you have trouble creating intimacy with your life partner and recognize their needs because you're so shut down from being dominated over as a child.

Most people pleasers struggle to access their feelings because they didn't grow up in a household where anyone cared about their feelings. Nobody cared. Nobody listened. Nobody took time. There was a behavior and then a punishment for that behavior. Feelings and needs, heck, those weren't even in the room. Maybe you grew up in a house where no one modeled caring about your feelings. So now you struggle with caring about your kid's feelings. Maybe you grew up in a house where accessing your feelings wasn't even on the table.

Many adults who are dominantly parented find jobs where feelings are actually forbidden, or not in component of the job. Law, medicine, and accounting. So maybe you're very successful as a financial planner or very successful as an accountant in your career, but you struggle at home to control your anger and access your feelings.

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

So yes, on one hand, you're successful, but it's difficult for you to connect with people, name your feelings, access them, and work through them in a calm, connected, regulated way. That's totally understandable.

Now, listen, my intention is not to attack anyone's character here. I'm not saying that people who are dominantly parented are not good people or okay or didn't turn out "well" or successful. But when you use the argument, I'm okay. I was dominant parented. So why can't I do it? I really want to encourage you to have an honest conversation with yourself about that.

Are you close to your parents? Do you trust people? Did you feel like anybody had your back when you were growing up? Did it feel safe to come home and talk about your mistakes? Are your parents and your home the place you would go when something went wrong and you needed help sorting out solutions? Probably not if you grew up in a dominant home.

One of my goals is to simply point out that punishment does not create emotionally grounded adults who can recognize feelings and needs of themselves and others. This, I argue, is my response to anyone who claims they turned out fine. I think our world is hurting a lot for people who can access and regulate their emotions. If most of us were able to do this, the world would look like a completely different place.

People pleasers are like those robo-vacs, those automatic vacuums that maneuver around your floor, around your house. When they bump into furniture or walls or other obstacles, they just change course without any ability to determine if the obstacle can be gone around, under, or moved.

Gangs seek out people pleasers who attach themselves to authority and dominance. Gangs thrive on obedience and lack of pushback because they know that people will do whatever they're told, take drugs, sell drugs, even

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

kill people. Abusers seek out those who are inferior and obedient, those who will not question or tell or yell or fight back or leave.

Then there are the kids who are raised in a dominant home that fall into the second category of rebellion and defiance. These kids become teenagers and adults who buck up against the system in a way that creates complications, problems, and trouble. They sneak out. They participate in risky behavior. They break rules. They work around things in a non-successful way. Every time a dominant parent punishes or threatens a rebel, they make a deposit, and not in a good way. Then when the kid is old enough, the bank is so full of suppressed pushing back that they unload it in ways that cause harm to themselves or others.

They get sick and tired of taking it all the time, of being in trouble all the time. They get sick and tired of being such a disappointment, and they get sick and tired of being dominated. That can result into the third category of despair.

These kids may turn out to be a teenager or adult who ends up taking their own life, sometimes even at the expense of taking other's lives first. They believe they're a bad person. That they'll never get anything right so why keep trying? I know this is hard to hear, but I just want you to really think about some of the long term negative effects of dominant parenting.

Why would we, as parents, ever want to risk any of these three categories? I mean because it makes parenting easier? Really? Because that's how we grew up? Really? Most dominant parents believe that if they make their kid feel bad enough for misbehaving or making mistakes or not being capable of doing something that they'll snap to. They'll figure it out. They'll stop doing it. That's not what happens.

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

If you don't want to robo-vac people pleasing kid or rebellious kid or a kid who ends up in despair then I beg you. I beg you to stop the dominant parenting. Stop the shame. Move away from the humiliation. Stop punishing to harm them or take away their voice or get them to not push back or question things. Instead, seek healing your own inner child. Stop thinking dominant parenting is okay. Practice questioning your kids feelings and needs. Build connection with your kids that makes them feel seen, heard, and valued.

Listen, I'm not saying it's easy. It's not easy. It takes work. It takes commitment. It takes healing. It takes creating new habits. It takes a new way of showing up, which is why I meet you here each week, each week with this podcast. Because I am here to assist you on this journey. I get that it's not easy.

You can't just read a book and completely snap your fingers and change your parenting. I get it. It's not easy, but it is doable. It's doable with repetition and practice. It's doable. What I will tell you is it's so much easier than suffering the consequences of raising a compliant child who takes on the obedient role, the rebel, or the despair.

One final thought. Children questioning rules and traditions that you expect them to automatically follow is a sign of intelligence, not trouble. Let me say that again. Children who question rules and traditions that you expect them to automatically follow, that is a sign of intelligence, not bad behavior. I want to encourage you to lose the idea that unquestioned obedience is a sign of goodness. Unquestioned obedience is just a person who never thinks for themselves, making it easy to manipulate them, or letting them put deposits in their bank until they can't take it anymore, and they rebel.

Yeah? I know. I know this might be hard to hear. I am a former dominant parent. To this day when I talk about it, it still is hard to talk about. But I'm

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

honest with you about the journey I've been on because I know the transformation that's possible for you. I know the benefit for your kids, for their brain, for the person they're meant to be when we move away from dominant parenting, and not into permissive parenting. No, sir. No, mam.

We're not moving from dominant to permissive parenting. We're moving from dominant to peaceful parenting. We're dropping the idea that obedient kids are good. We're dropping the idea that kids can't have a voice. We're dropping the idea of moving away from punishing, which is to harm, and moving into discipline, which is to teach with a goal of turning on the internal compass, of helping our kids learn right from wrong.

So if this motivates you, if you're thinking I've got some dominance in me. I could stand to clean this up a little bit. I could work on this a little bit. I want you to invite you to go over to thepeacefulparent.com and sign up for my free mini parenting course. I'm going to send you three videos, one each day, where I'm going to talk to you about how to move away from dominant parenting and move into the beginning stages of peaceful parenting.

I've got you. I'm here to support you every single step of the way. I know this is possible for you. Yes, you. How do I know it? Because I've done it myself. I moved from being a former dominant parent into being a peaceful parent. If I can do it, you can do it too.

I've also, at this point in my career, worked with thousands of parents around the world, thousands and thousands of parents all around the world, in many, many, many countries, and I've helped them make the transition of moving away from dominant parenting into peaceful parenting. I can help you too.

So if you're ready, if this feels like the moment, jump over to thepeacefulparent.com, and make sure you're signed up for my free

[Real World Peaceful Parenting](http://RealWorldPeacefulParenting.com) with Lisa Smith

Ep #123: Stop Punishing, Start Connecting

peaceful parenting mini course. All right. I'll see you there. 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. See you soon.