

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2



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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. I am so excited to be with you here today. Last week, on *Real World Peaceful Parenting* episode 130, I shared with you one of the greatest tools and secrets that I know. It's that anger can be a tool instead of a weapon. That when used properly, anger can become one of your greatest assets in life and certainly as a parent.

Now if you had a chance to listen to episode 130, you will remember that last week I introduced you to two ways you can use anger to your advantage. The first was to really get a handle or feel or guidance on what you value the most. The other way to use anger is to uncover the uncomfortable emotions underneath.

I gave you some homework last week, which I hope you did. That was to clearly define two or three things you value most, and introduce some limits to your kids to honor those values. Now remember, limits are not punishments. Limits are guides for our kids to help them know the rules, know what is expected, and help them feel loved. I also hope you're able to define some of the uncomfortable emotions your anger typically whooshes in to cover up.

So today in part two of using anger as a tool, I want to share with you some actionable tools and strategies to help you keep or regain your regulation. When anger strikes. Sound good? All right, let's dive in. Now, if you've been tuning in to *Real World Peaceful Parenting* for a while now, you're probably

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

getting pretty good at soothing yourself back into regulation when your child storms of responding rather than reacting.

Now, side note, remember progress not perfection. Please remember that no one and certainly no parent gets it right all the time, is regulated 100% of the time. We all lose it every now and then. So progress not perfection.

But I do feel I wouldn't be your parent coach if I didn't bring this important difference to your attention. So I feel compelled to point this out. I want you to take a minute to really sort out the difference and try to see the difference in your brain.

Sometimes when we're angry, we're able to pause and soothe ourselves back to our higher brain. Right? You're getting good at that. You're recognizing it. You're seeing the moment when you're triggered, and you're able to soothe yourself back to your legitimate higher brain where you're able to come alongside and coregulate with your kid or kids.

But the other thing that might be going on is occasionally you're trying to soothe yourself when in fact you might actually be suppressing your anger. To make anger your tool, we have to dig into this a little bit so that you really understand the difference and you can identify when you're regulating and when you're suppressing. Okay.

Suppressing feels like you're holding it together maybe even just barely. Suppressing feels like you're white knuckling it. Suppressing feels like you're still wanting to explode, but you don't. Suppressing feels like you're keeping it together just long enough until you can get away or escape from the situation, and then you're really going to let loose.

The thoughts are still there and the body is so reacting, but you're just holding it together. I like to think of this as delayed reacting or refusing to

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

react. Can you think about a time when this is sort of what's going on for you?

Okay, now in contrast, regulating feels like a calm sense of balance. It feels authentic and true. It isn't white knuckling. I wouldn't say it's effortless, but it's sort of like gliding across calm water on water skis. Regulating means you can notice your thoughts better, and you're actually choosing your thoughts and your actions. Regulating feels like a real true pause and respond.

I'll be too totally honest with you. Sometimes I'm suppressing and sometimes I'm regulating. In an effort to teach techniques for working with anger, we must first see anger for what it really, really, really is. There are a few things about reactive anger that can really hold us back from learning and growing from it. Reactive anger that involves suppressing the anger feels good in the moment to give into it. It's like when you lose it. It almost feels like a pressure release.

Reactive anger feels easier in the moment. It's certainly easier in the moment than regulating yourself. Reactive anger is easier than sitting with uncomfortable emotions. It feels urgent and impulsive, and hot, and it just needs to come out. Reactive anger feels easier than unpacking those emotions that may stem from an underlying wound that still needs some work to heal.

Now, here's the deal. Reactive anger feels safe and easier. Because anger makes us momentarily feel that we are in control. It's not true. We're anything but in control, but oftentimes that's how it feels. Anger can provide a surge of energy that makes us feel in charge, rather than feeling vulnerable and helpless. Acting out in that anger creates a sense of control and power in the face of vulnerability and uncertainty.

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

Can you see this? Anger can also be a habit. Our habit brain thrives on rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat. You might be responding in a reactive angry way before you even realize it. That's your habit brain getting involved.

Then once the impulsivity is over, reactive anger opens the floodgates for thoughts that cause us to suffer even more. Why'd you do that? I can't believe you did that again. We get caught up in that, and it distracts us from all the feelings underneath the reactive anger. Anger is always a cover emotion for deeper feelings underneath. First come the negative feelings and then the anger.

One is very, very, very rarely ever, dare I say never, angry when you're happy and joyful and feeling positive emotions. Step one is a negative emotion that makes us feel vulnerable and unsure. Then anger joins the party to cover it up. For many of us, frustration is often experienced when we feel helpless and out of control, when we don't know what to do. So we avoid it by getting angry instead.

Is this you? Am I talking to you right now? Are you like whoa, Lisa? Whoa. Anger covers a feeling we don't want to feel. It could be frustration, disappointment, sadness, feeling unheard. It could be feeling left out, unwanted. It could be unloved, unaccepted. Anger could be covering a feeling of unsafe, confused, ignored, lonely, lost. It could cover up things like feeling judged, blamed, trapped, disconnected, controlled. You may not know how to feel these feelings.

So we avoid it by getting angry instead. Can you see this? This used to be me, particularly when I was parenting my little boy. I felt confused. Unaccepted, lost, disconnected, controlled by his storming. I felt disappointed. I covered it up with a lot of anger that I then projected and stormed right alongside my kid.

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

If you're anything like me, we didn't learn anger as a guide, as a tool to uncover the emotions underneath. No one taught us this. Because growing up, we didn't have a parent or caregiver willing to express these big uncomfortable emotions, frustration, vulnerability, sadness, disappointment, unsafe, confused, lonely, etc.

If you grew up without a parent that couldn't express the big emotions underneath the anger, it's likely because of one of two extremes. I want to look at both. Chances are you fall into one of these two categories. Either your parents only focused on anger, theirs and yours. So when big emotions came up in anger joined the party to cover them up, the focus was on the anger. Whether it was their anger, your anger, or both. So there was never scuba diving down to the feelings and needs underneath the anger. That was not modeled for you at all.

This was certainly true for me. Any attempt to understand underlying feelings were shut down immediately. Because all that mattered was my caregiver's anger. That's all we ever focused on was their anger about what I had done "wrong". How I had failed, how I had not shown up, how I had not done enough, how I had not pleased, how I had not gotten it right. Anger was the only emotion in the room. So modeling diving down to the feelings and needs. No, ma'am, no sir. It just wasn't done. I didn't even know that there were uncomfortable feelings underneath anger.

Now, the second category many of you will relate to is what I call the sunshine category. Growing up, your caregivers might have taught you that to feel better, you should just think sun shinier thoughts. Just think happy things and ignore any of the feelings going on.

For the record, I am never for ignoring our thoughts and feelings. But in the sunshine version of parenting, you learned not to access any of those big emotions underneath anger because you were made to feel they weren't

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

important. They didn't matter. There was something wrong with you if you didn't immediately go to the sunshine thoughts.

Now, maybe it's because your parents didn't know what to do with the pain, the suffering. So they ignored it by pointing out everything to you that you should be grateful for instead of feeling disappointed. Maybe they meant well. Maybe they wanted you to just never be in pain with big emotions. Maybe they just felt like you didn't deserve, or your life was too good to feel unloved, unsafe, disappointed. So they just wanted to skip over everything.

Or maybe they're very solutions oriented. They think every emotion is a problem to be solved. So let's just skip right over the feelings and go straight to the solutions. Can you relate to this? Did you grow up in this sunshiny home?

Whether you're in category one or category two, what this has led to now that we're adults with kids of our own, oftentimes is an inability to sit with and cope with our own uncomfortable feelings let alone our kids. So we react to this discomfort with anger. We invite anger to the party to cover up all the other emotions.

However, however, however, however, please hear this. If you can access the underlying emotion underneath the anger and just have an honest conversation with yourself about what you're feeling, I promise you, you are going to suffer less. You are going to suffer less because you're not white knuckling. You're not holding down the anger. You're not stuffing all the emotions down.

So when you are angry, it's a beacon. It's a tool. What I want you to do is pause. Pause and ask yourself what is the underlying thought? What am I thinking about this? What's the emotion? Anger never shows up at the party alone. So I know there's another emotion here. What is it?

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

Frustration, resentment, fear, uncertainty, shame, disappointment, safety. Am I confused? Do I feel lonely? Do I feel tapped out? Am I disconnected? Do I feel controlled? You don't have to admit it to anybody else. Just ask yourself. What is the other emotion joining the party besides anger? Because I know anger never shows up alone.

Then the third question to ask yourself is what is this telling me? What is the value my anger is pointing to? Am I tapped out? Do I feel unsafe? Do I feel that I'm a slave to my child's big storms? Do I feel my coparent blames me? Do I feel judged by everybody in my life? Do I feel trapped because I have a lot of little kids? Do I feel controlled? Do I feel unloved? Do I feel frustrated? Am I sad? Do I feel unheard? Do I feel left out?

I cannot tell you the value of asking myself what underlying thought and emotion is laying right below the surface. You don't need to admit it to anybody else, and it doesn't mean that you are unloved. It doesn't mean that you feel unsafe. It might just be some feelings you're having in the moment.

Maybe you haven't left the house in few days. Maybe it's summertime, and you're trying to figure out how to work and do your job to the best of your ability while keeping your kids engaged. You feel like you're trapped, or you can't breathe, or someone always wants something from you. It could just be the emotion in the moment. There's so much value in being honest with yourself in that moment.

It also gives you an incredible opportunity to practice communicating with vulnerability to yourself and to others the things that are most important to you. I need 20 minutes of downtime every day. I feel unheard when I'm talking to you and you walk away. I'm feeling trapped because I'm with the kids 24/7 seven days a week.

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

We have to practice communicating the things that are most important to us. This is the sweet spot. This is where the growth and connection happens. A side benefit is then this encourages you to model this for your children. So they can express the things that are important to them. It allows them space and security to feel all their feelings without the threat that someone's always going to try to get rid of the feelings or fix them.

This will build resilience with your kids in them. This will build trust between the two of you. This will build reliance in themselves to recover and learn from their emotions. Most of all, this will build connection because they will feel seen, heard, and valued.

Now, let's be totally honest here for a minute. Watching our children suffer, watching them experience big, negative emotions and feeling their pain is hard. Capital H, capital A, capital R, capital D, a million explanation points hard. Yes, I agree. I know. I acknowledge it. It's hard. For some of us, it's harder than others. Particularly if you were raised in that sunshine household.

Watching our children process big negative emotions may be, honest to goodness, one of the hardest parts of parenting. I agree, especially if it wasn't modeled for you. I find this at times to be incredibly difficult, but it's worth it. I promise you. It's so, so, so, so worth it because they feel safe with their big feelings. They don't feel like someone has to fix them. They don't feel like there's anything wrong. They build resiliency, trust, reliance in themselves. They're comfortable with their big emotions. Most of all, it builds connection.

Listen, we all feel these emotions. Even if you're not willing to admit it. It's part of the human experience. So when your kids learn that A, this is normal. Nothing's gone wrong. There's nothing to fix. This is part of the human experience. Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. They learn so

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

many, so many important skills. My favorite is resiliency. It's so worth it to not feel like you have to suppress or fix the anger that comes up for you or for your kids. Yeah.

Okay, so maybe you're loving this. You're like all right, Lisa, I get what you're saying. But how do I do it? Obviously, I don't know how because I'm not doing it. So tell me how do I do it? Well, I'm so glad you asked. The solution is simple, but it's gonna take some work to implement. You ready?

Okay. All you have to do in these moments, drumroll please, is sit with them. Sit with your own emotions. Ask yourself what's underneath the anger? What am I thinking? What am I feeling? What is this anger pointing you to in my values? Right? Maybe you value being on time. Every time you think that you guys are going to be late somewhere, you get really angry. Okay. Because you're afraid you're going to be judged. You hate being late. You hate letting people down. You're high on responsibility. You value being somewhere on time.

That's a beacon. I need to do more to get us places on time. I value this so I need to put more effort into it. I need to plan better. I need to allow more cushion. I need to make sure my kids are getting their shoes on. I need to make sure I tell my teenager the drop dead time we need to be in the car and ready to go. It's a beacon.

So when you're feeling anger, you have to sit with the anger and the emotions underneath. When your kid is experiencing big anger. You have to sit with the emotions underneath for them. Create a safe place. Say tell me more. You have to empathize by helping them define what they might be feeling. I hear you. I get that you're angry. I see that. Might you also be feeling disappointed or embarrassed or frustrated or hurt?

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

Help them understand that there's more there swimming in the pot of soup than just anger. Got a lot of vegetables in the pot of soup. Let's try to figure out what's in there. It's not just anger. You don't want to rush to fix it, or tell them to just think different thoughts. You don't want to use thought work to constantly manipulate yourself into thinking only good thoughts, or trying to get your kids to only think good thoughts.

This is one area where thought work goes too far. Part of the reasons we want to feel the big negative emotions is so that when we're feeling the big positive emotions, they have an impact. Life does have negative emotions as part of the process. It's part of the human experience. We want our kids to be comfortable feeling negative emotions. It's part of the human experience.

So if you struggle with accessing your big, uncomfortable, negative emotions underneath anger, I encourage you to twice a day access a negative thought or a negative feeling and just sit with it. Just sit with it for 30 seconds. Just get in the habit, develop the process of sitting with the negative emotions underneath the anger for 30 seconds before you think any thought to make yourself feel better or try to solve the problem.

Just sit with it. Let it into the room. Name it. 30 seconds twice a day. That's a minute of your life every day. Why am I suggesting this? Because you have to build the muscle. You have to build the muscle of sitting with negative emotions. You have to say things to your brain like you're not going to die from sitting with the negative emotion for 30 seconds.

We work on this all the time inside my membership community called The Hive. Doing this will actually help you become more well-rounded, more resilient, more compassionate, more considerate, more thoughtful, and ironically, more happy. I know crazy, right? But it's 100% true.

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

The more you lean into your uncomfortable feelings, below the anger, the more you have a roadmap and a beacon for your life. Ironically, the easier they are to dissipate. Because you're not holding them down like a beach ball under the water, or you're not white knuckling to hold it together. They're not swimming below the surface waiting to sneak up on you. They don't have a chance to cripple you because you're willing to look at them and work through them. Suppressing your emotions locks them there. Feeling and naming them releases them.

One of the greatest tools I believe this, I believe this, I believe this. One of the greatest tools, one of the greatest tools we can give our kids during their childhood while they're living with us under our care is for our kids to learn how to process the wounds of everyday life. Disappointment, frustration, fear of being left out, being unsure, the uncertainty, feeling controlled, feeling told what to do, the wounds of everyday life.

Children will learn to weather disappointment and the wounds of everyday life if you create a safe place for your kids to feel all of their feelings, the entire feelings wheel. It's like taking a ride on the feelings wheel. I feel like I need to say this again so you hear this.

One of the greatest tasks of childhood is to learn how to process the wounds of everyday life. Gradually, children will learn to weather disappointment if you create a safe place for them to feel their feelings. Yeah?

Okay, here's the kicker. To create that safe place, you as the parent, you as the caregiver, you must first get comfortable sitting with feeling and defining your own feelings without judgment. Scuba diving underneath the anger to all the other things going on. Taking a ride on the feelings wheel yourself. Because our kids don't do what we say, they do what we model. So if

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

you're not comfortable sitting with feeling and defining your own feelings underneath the anger, your kids won't be either.

Here's the payoff, the reward. When we in our kids learn to access our underlying feelings, we develop resiliency. Who doesn't want to be more resilient and raise kids that are resilient? I think it's one of the greatest skills our kids can have when they go out into the big world on their own.

Anger is the roadmap to get there. It can become one of your greatest assets as long as you use it as a tool to discover what you value most, to communicate with vulnerability those values, to uncover, define, and get comfortable with your uncomfortable, big negative emotions. As you work through this and begin to model this for your children, they too then become resilient. You grow in connection with your kids.

So good, right? Ah, I love it. You're so welcome. This is part two of the gift that I really wanted to give you. A new way to work with and think about your anger. That is a tool, not a weapon. You've got this. I just know it. I'm so proud of you for listening to these two episodes and reframing how you see anger as a tool and committing to feeling the feelings that are dancing with anger. Remember, anger never shows up alone.

So do your homework this week. Really uncover what else is joining the party besides anger. Sit with it, 30 seconds twice a day, and see what happens. In fact, I dare you. How's that? I double dog dare you to take this challenge and sit with your anger. If you want to share with me, I'd absolutely love to hear from you.

You can go to my Instagram page, which is the [_peaceful_parent](#) or The Peaceful Parent. Go over to my DMs and tell me Lisa, I've done the anger challenge. This is what I uncovered. I'd love to know what's coming up for you. I know how transformational this exercise is. You've got this. I know it.

Ep #131: How to Model Anger for Your Kids Part 2

I'm so proud of you. 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.