

## Ep #133: 3 Ways to Suck at Parenting



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**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'm so excited to be with you here today. Because today we're gonna dive into a topic that's all too relatable. Are you ready for it? Okay, say this with me loud and proud. I suck as a parent. Say it again. I suck as a parent. Don't worry, my friend, you're not alone. Today, we're going to put an end to the pressure of being the perfect parent, and instead embrace our imperfections.

So grab a cup of coffee, sit back, and let's have a laugh together as we explore this topic. You see, lately I've been having conversations with clients about the unrealistic expectations we place on ourselves as parents. It's like expecting ourselves to be the very best at every single subject in school, or every single sport out there. Impossible, right?

But some of us are still running ourselves ragged trying to excel in every aspect of parenting. I think some of the questions that we need to pause and ask ourselves are who are we trying to prove this to? Ourselves, our partners, our children, the other parents at school pickup, Instagram.

Another important question, whose approval are we looking for? Whose? Well, let me tell you, my friend, it achieves nothing but stress and burnout trying to be excellent at every single aspect. To make matters worse, even when things go well, there's always the next situation waiting to challenge our notion of perfection.

But here's the truth that I really want you to hear. Few kids can live up to these unrealistic expectations, either because let's face it, kids are experts

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at acting up, at storming, at having their own set of feelings and needs, and it not being completely focused on pleasing you or performing. The cost of all of this striving for perfection.

The cost is we lose our ability to be fully present in the moment and regulated as parents. Let me say that again because I really want you to understand that the cost you're paying for striving for all of this perfection is that you're losing your ability to be fully present, and regulated as parents.

Instead of enjoying this precious time with our kids, we become judges on Dancing with the Stars, constantly critiquing our own performance as parents and usually ranking ourselves at the bottom of the leaderboard. Because perfectionism doesn't like to admit good enough. What I really know is that judging ourselves all the time robs us of the joy of parenting and shortens our fuse with our kids. It prevents us from staying regulated.

Let me say that again. Judging ourselves all the time robs us of the joy of parenting, shortens our fuse, and prevents us from staying regulated with our kids. We become all about getting the task done instead of really enjoying the time with our kids and being present with them. I like to say parenting is a process rather than a checklist of prescribed tasks.

We become so focused on what needs to be done or learned or achieved that we miss out on the opportunity to notice things like what our kids are good at, what they enjoy, what their zone of genius is, where they excel, what they're interested in. Then we're not available when they need us to talk about their feelings after a tough day at school, or friend drama, or their fears or needs.

But guess what? As kids grow and prepare to go out on their own, they're not going to remember a clean house or your top 10 best baked goods. They're going to remember the moments of connection they had with you.

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They won't care much about your perfectly color coded planner, or your Pinterest worthy meals. They simply want you to be there doing the best you can, calm and connected and showing up for them as authentically as possible.

The thing about this is that in the future, your kids will remember whether you had time for them or not. Will they remember so much about you having ticked off all the things in your planner? Or how on top of the laundry you were? Will they want you to have been perfect in every aspect of your parenting? Or would they have just wanted you to have been there doing the best you can, showing up for them as fully as you're capable of? Makes you think, doesn't it?

So to counter this pressure cooker of perfection, I've been asking my clients to come up with three things they're willing to suck at as parents. Yep, you heard me right. Embrace the suckiness. Because when you ask yourself to be perfect in every area as a parent, you are setting yourself up for unnecessary stress, resentment, fatigue, and most importantly, dysregulation.

On top of all of that, you're also modeling that quest for perfection for your kids. Now, it may be hard to admit that you suck at something as a parent. After all, that's all the cultural stuff that we hear about, read about, look at about being the perfect parent, and it's been going on for decades. It started in the 50s with ads of those pretty women in their pretty aprons with freshly baked pies. Dads coming home in well pressed suits with big smiles on their face.

If you want even go further back than that, there's Mrs. March in Little Women being the model of perfect mommyhood, uncomplaining and never taking time for yourself. Then at the opposite end of the spectrum, the

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movie *Bad Moms* was meant to catch the eye is that's not what our culture says moms should do or be or how they should act.

I want to be clear here. I am not asking you to say you're a bad parent. Nope. Not one bit. I'm asking you to consider what aspects are you willing to suck at. Because if you ask yourself to be perfect in every area as a parent, you're putting yourself under a lot, a whole lot, of unnecessary pressure. Eventually, sometimes that pressure leads to resentment. Yeah, you feel that? I so get that.

I speak from experience on this. When I allowed myself not to be the perfect parent, when I allowed myself to suck at some of the things on the list of parenting, you know what happened? I felt more like me? I felt more like me? I felt more regulated. I felt calmer. This is about acknowledging the areas where you're not willing to or you don't have to, where you take the pressure off of yourself to strive for perfection, and really just letting yourself off the hook. Trust me, it's liberating.

So I'm going to go first. Let me share with you a couple of ways that I decided I was willing to suck as a parent. Okay, the first one. I decided years ago that I was willing to suck at feeding my kid homemade, organic, healthy meals loaded with vegetables every night. I said it out loud. I'm gonna stand by this. I am willing to suck at feeding my kid homemade, organic, healthy meals loaded with vegetables every night.

You know how this goes. You know, let's try to make vegetables exciting cookbooks. Let's try to hide the vegetable cookbooks. I bought them all. I tried the I have a fussy eater, and these work for me Pinterest recipes. Well, they didn't work for me either. Then I tried the make the food look like a picture of a whale in the ocean cookbook. It never looked like a whale.

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I even worked through the let's grow the vegetables first when Malcolm was little and have daily visits to the farmers market cookbooks. But you know, I did want to have a life outside of gardening and cooking all the time. So none of them worked. I ended up cooking recipes using every kitchen implement and gadget. The dishwasher was filled. The surfaces were covered with bowls and bits of the food, and I was exhausted.

You know how this goes. Then your kid takes the tiniest amount and says I don't like this. I'm not eating it. Or he pushes the food around the plate. Then I would slump over the table exhausted, defeated with a big mess to clean up.

Fast forward to today, Malcolm's 18 about to become 19. He's at an age where he's busy and often isn't even home for dinner. But here's what happened over the years. I realized he doesn't really love vegetables. So I decided that if he eats a cucumber once or twice a week that I slice up for him and put on the table, we're good. I'm willing to suck at feeding him that stubbles with every single meal.

Here's what I also realized he's going to live to be 80 years old, hopefully, or more. If the first 18 he isn't eating avocado and kale and brussels sprouts like they're going out of style every night, I can live with that. So I'm willing to suck it feeding my kid homemade organic vegetables and forcing him to eat them every single night of the week.

Another thing I'm willing to suck at is teaching my kid how to vacuum. I did a lot of housework when I was a kid. To be honest with you, I felt like a child slave. I felt like my childhood was all about cleaning and taking care of and pleasing the adults in my life. One thing that has always felt really important to me is that I really wanted my kid to enjoy his childhood.

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So I decided that I was willing to suck at things like teaching him how to vacuum. I mean, let's be honest. There's this thing called YouTube. I'm sure you've heard of it. I say this sort of tongue in cheek, but also sort of true. When Malcolm needs to learn how to vacuum, he can go to YouTube and learn how to vacuum. I looked it up the other day. There is a video with over 163,000 views on how to vacuum properly. So if he ever needs to learn, he'll have all the knowledge at his fingertips. In the meantime, he can focus on learning, and growing, and maturing emotionally, and playing basketball, and being a kid.

Now, listen, my friend, if the home cooks organic food is your thing, and you love to teach your child how to keep a home, I love it for you. I love that it's your thing. It's not my thing, but I love that it's your thing. But it's definitely two areas that I'm willing to suck at.

Tell me where I'm wrong, but there's probably some parenting things that don't come naturally to you. Right? Maybe it's arts and crafts, maybe it's in the kitchen, maybe it's sports, maybe it's making sure your kids get their homework done. Maybe it's getting to school on time. I don't know what there are, but there are probably some things that just don't come naturally to you.

So here's an idea, rather than fighting them, you could just decide that these are areas that you're going to suck at as I did the whole vegetable thing. Or like the vacuuming example. It could be something you decide is not going to be a part of your mom job description, teaching your kid how to vacuum, because it's not what you want for your child. When they're ready, they can learn it on their own.

For me, personally, I didn't want my son to spend his childhood doing chores. So I take it off my mom description that I need to teach him how to

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do the chores and then force him to do it and battle over them. If I choose not to, I don't have to.

I'm willing to suck as a parent in these areas so that I can excel in others. Connection, emotional intelligence, modeling, staying regulated, helping them feel his feelings, helping him do his schoolwork, helping him with his friend situations, helping him get to basketball on time. I freed up some energy by being willing to suck in some areas rather than making myself crazy and dysregulated and stressed and resentful by trying to get it all right all the time.

So here's my question for you. What are you willing to suck at as a parent? I want you to name it. I want you to claim it. I want you to wear your badge proudly. When we're upfront willing to suck at things, we clear the space to let our brain rest on the things that are a priority. That's a really important part of my work, helping parents to realize that they do get to choose their priorities as parent. Helping you realize right now having a light bulb moment, you get to choose your priorities as a parent.

Maybe music is really important to your family. Making music together, enjoying music, maybe travel, maybe there's a religion. Maybe there's a hobby like woodworking or paddleboarding. You get to choose your priorities as a parent. You, as a parent, get to decide how this parenting story is going to play out. It's about being intentional. It's also about the courage to say what you're willing to suck at, what you want to give up, what isn't working, where you'd like some help. Yeah?

We all have our parenting journeys. Sometimes it's the challenges we face that lead us to seek guidance and become better parents. I've been on a journey from being that angry mom that yelled to my kid all the time to now being incredibly intentional about how I parent. I now have things I prioritize as a parent.



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I'm not willing to suck at spending time with Malcolm talking about his feelings. No, ma'am. No, sir. No, thank you. I'm not willing to suck at prioritizing homework and helping him with it when I can. We also try not to be late for things. That's a priority as our family. We plan ahead. We try to allow enough time, and we try to get places on time. That's a priority for us.

So to bring it all together, I want you to see this. If I'm not worried and stressing out about how I didn't feed him brussels sprouts last night, I have more time to focus on getting units places on time, which is a high priority for us and a family value. If I'm not worried and stressed out about how he hasn't eaten his serving of avocado this week, I have more time to listen to his feelings when I'm not in the kitchen cooking organic food from scratch meals that uses every kitchen gadget I own.

By being willing to suck in some areas, we can clear the brain space to rest on the things and focus on the things that are a priority for us. You see this? I love it so much. Okay, your turn. What are three things you're willing to suck at as a parent? Name them, claim them, Wear your badge of imperfection proudly.

By being upfront about our suckiness we create space to focus on the things that truly matter to us. Remember, you get to choose your priorities as a parent. You have the power to shape your parenting story. It's about being intentional and having the courage to align your actions with what you genuinely want for your child. I love it. Don't you? Being intentional about what you genuinely want for your child. Oh, so good.

Okay, that wraps up today's episode of *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. I hope you found some encouragement, humor, and inspiration in embracing your parenting imperfections. If you'd like, you can email me [support@thepeacefulparent.com](mailto:support@thepeacefulparent.com) and share with me the three things you're willing to suck at.

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I'm here to support you on this incredible parenting journey. I want you to hear this. You, yes you, are doing an amazing job imperfections and all. Keep being the awesome imperfect parent that you are. 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](http://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](http://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](http://thepeacefulparent.com). See you soon.