

**Ep #134: Why Raising “Successful Kids” Is Not the Point  
with Kiva Schuler**



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**With Your Host  
Lisa Smith**

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## **Ep #134: Why Raising “Successful Kids” Is Not the Point with Kiva Schuler**

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.

Lisa: Welcome, welcome, welcome. Welcome to today's episode. I know. I'm a broken record. I say it every week. But I am so excited to be with you all here today for many, many reasons. I have a very special guest today. Before I introduce her, well, she doesn't need an introduction because she is our most popular recurring guest on the podcast.

Before I get to that, I want to share with you all that today's topic has been simmering with me for quite some time. It reached a boiling point. Recently when I stumbled upon a headline on a morning show's website boasting, we'll call him Dr. Jones, four tips for raising successful kids. Let me tell you, this struck a nerve with me, and I refuse to stay silent any longer.

I'm fed up with the notion that one size fits all formula for Parenting perfect are successful children. Here to talk with me about this important topic today is none other than my mentor, my friend, an amazing woman, an amazing leader within the parenting community. Kiva Schuler from the Jai Institute is with us again today. I know you all love, love, love when Kiva's on the podcast. I get tons of positive feedback, Kiva. So welcome, welcome, welcome.

Kiva: Hi, I love being on the podcast with you. I'm so happy to hear that. That's fantastic.

Lisa: Yes, I always get great comments from people like oh, you had Kiva on again. It's so great. So for those of you that are new to the podcast,

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maybe you're just tuning in, let's give you the 411 on Kiva. Kiva is the founder and CEO of the Jai Institute for Parenting.

She's also the author of a groundbreaking book called *The Peaceful Parenting (R)evolution: Changing the World by Changing How We Parent*, which examines the consequences of traditional parenting methods, and offers a more modern approach grounded in emotional intelligence, values led leadership, and effective communication.

So Kiva is really a pioneer in the parent coaching space, recognized worldwide as one of the leaders. I couldn't think of a better guest to have on today than Kiva to talk about this important topic. Really, which is, for me, we have to stop talking about tips to raising successful kids. Right, right?

Kiva: I mean, what does that even mean?

Lisa: Okay, that's point one. What does successful kid even mean, right? What I really find that really got under my skin, and I feel myself getting emotional even as we start talking about this, is the idea that we are going to read a book, or take parenting classes, or do parent coaching to gain the outcome of successful kids. To me, it feels incredibly manipulative, and it feels like a sense of control shrouded in peaceful parenting.

Kiva: Yeah, I'm with you. I think this idea that there's a prescription for this human being that we brought into the world to fulfill a set of criteria, not of their own volition, passion, or interest, but to project some image out into the world is why so many kids are miserable. They're being put into a box and told if you don't play this game, you're not a good person. You're not successful. You're lazy. You're this. You're that. No wonder they're all feeling so disenfranchised.

Lisa: Yeah, I mean parenting is about so much more than reaching a finish line at the end. To me, when I work with people, I'm helping them create

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genuine connection. I'm helping parents foster self-regulation, and allow our children to discover their own paths, right. So, to me, the essence of this is really getting to the essence of parenting and dismantling the idea that connection is a reward for good behavior. Connection is not the reward for success or perfection or being a good kid. Connection is the underbelly. It's the foundation of the relationship you have with your child.

Kiva: Yeah, you think that there's some much to unpack here. But we have to be careful as parents to not assume that we know who this person is. To not make the mistake of deciding that we know what is best for this human being who has rights and passions and interests and strengths and challenges and weaknesses. Because we set ourselves up to actually create disconnection by not honoring the fundamental human right of the children in our home to forge a path forward that is their version of success.

Lisa: Amen. Now, let's be clear because at this point I know there's a few listeners going whoa, whoa, whoa. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Are you saying, and I want to be clear. I know I speak on behalf of Kiva and myself. We are not espousing permissive parenting. This is not the kid gets to do whatever they want and eat ice cream for breakfast and stay up all night and be on their phone 24/7 and not go to school.

The way I always talk about it is children are their own souls who come to earth to have their own experience. We are fortunate enough to guide them for a period of time. That is our job to guide. To not control, to not gain compliance and control, but to guide and support and connect with them.

So as the fully developed brain as the peaceful leader of the household, it is our responsibility to guide our kids and set some limits, and teach them right from wrong. But what I really think about is working through or working with our children as process problems, not character problems. Which is

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why the label of good or perfect or successful, if you don't meet that criteria, whatever that is, that implies you then have a character problem. Childhood is a series of process problems that need to be guided and coached and worked on.

Kiva: I think there's a really important distinction in what you just said, which is the difference between values and outcomes. If we're parenting for that outcome, we are essentially saying to our child and ourselves that that trumps everything else.

Whereas as we teach our coaches to help parents define values and really feel is that my value, or is that a prescription from my family, from society, from culture then the value becomes the underpin the limits and the rules and the teaching and the guidance. The example I love to use, I know you have a super athletic kid, Lisa. I do not have athletic kids. I have like mathy ready kids.

When they were little, I bought into the whole they have to be on soccer teams, and they have to do gymnastics and cheer. They were just super not into it. When I looked at the value that I had, well the value was it's important to me that my children learn to love to move their bodies. Physical movement, exercise, strength matter to me. Whether they did that in a place where they were never gonna get seen or rewarded or have trophies or were didn't actually matter.

So the value became the decision matrix for how we decided that Myles and Charlotte were going to move their bodies. I could let go of everyone else's kid, as you know on club sports and traveling all over the country. Like we're just not doing that because they're not into it.

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Lisa: Amen. I can so relate to that. Because then the other end of the spectrum, if you will, I do have an athletic kid who has ADHD and dyslexia. So, similarly, reading books is a real challenge for my kid. I mean, he really struggles. He consumes content in a non-traditional way.

So for us, the value was learning to learn rather than reading 4 million words at school or consuming the Percy Jackson series traditionally rather than listening to it or watching a movie instead of reading a book because that's how he takes the information and better. Again giving up those norms that were indoctrinated with and figuring out what's important to our family. Yeah.

Lisa: Another really great question to ask is okay, so what does success mean? Because culture will say well, it's making a lot of money or having a fancy car or being able to travel the world. I don't know about you, Lisa, but I know lots of people with a lot of money that are miserable, that have terrible relationships, that are not like healthy emotionally, physically relationally. That's not success. So what is success?

Well, for me, when I think about it, it's life fulfillment. It's the quality of the relationships that we have in our life. It's having creative capacity, right? Being someone who creates things, who is being an addition to the world for having been alive. So that can help reorient us to okay, then what are the experiences that I get to create for my children so that they can embody what I define as success? Because it's not like go be an investment banker like we did and be miserable and hate ourselves and drink too much and have bad relationships. Like that, ain't it?

Lisa: I agree, I agree. Kiva and I both have 18 year old-ish young men. I was going to call them boys, but we can no longer use that descriptor,

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young men who are about to go off to college. Who knows what the future holds.

But as I watched my son and his friends graduate, it became clear to me the path to success, if I even want to use that word, the path forward let's say, it looks different for many different kids. Some are going off to school. Some are going to trade school. Some are going to get a job. Some are going to travel. Some are working on their mental health and feeling good about themselves before they can take that next step. To me, all of that is the path forward. What I really want parents to do is support the path forward.

Alfie Cohen has this great sentence or phrase children don't just need to be loved. They need to know that nothing they do will change the fact that they're loved. Really, I think about the parent coaching and what I do and what you train other coaches to do. I really think about it in this way, and I want to get your take on this Kiva.

To me, when I work with parents, the real job, the real goal is to help you sort out your stuff so that when your child melts down or messes up or has a bad day or makes a little mistake or makes a big mistake or makes no mistakes, you're aware of how you're showing up for them. You're regulated. You're in your higher brain. You're calm. You're supportive. You're able to model all the qualities that you believe in for your kids on their worst days. It's not about raising successful kids.

Kiva: You made me think of it another aspect of it, which is all this pressure that we feel to have our kids be successful is also causing us to over parent and over compensate and do things for them so that it's all done perfectly. I don't know about you, Lisa, but this going into college experience has been illuminating. In witnessing in the school that my kid is going to, the parents



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Facebook group and kind of the perseverating and hyper parenting and doing everything for them.

I just want to kind of like scream into the void let them do it. Let them not succeed. Let them miss the email. Let them buy their own things for their room. Give them a budget. Let them sign up for their own classes. I really think it's all tied up in this same conversation, which is if I take my hands off the wheel that my child will not be successful. But how else are they going to learn to navigate life if we don't let them?

Lisa: Completely it's almost like let's encourage parents to embrace the idea that parenting is a continuous learning process rather than a checklist of prescribed tips or strategies, right. I mean I think it's just a great way to say it. You're not getting a grade at the end of this. Surprise, if you don't know this, you're not getting an award, and you're not getting a grade. So it's a continuous learning process of a relationship rather than a prescribed checklist that is going to result in a performance review or a grade.

Kiva: I mean, the grade is the quality of the relationship that we end up with at the end of the day with our child.

Lisa: Maybe. Because even that you can't control.

Kiva: You can't get the pot of gold.

Lisa: Yeah, I mean you can't control the, I mean, you can just show up and do your best, right. I mean I do believe that connection leads to cooperation and connection leads to a solid foundation of a relationship. I do. But I just think that you do the best you can. I mean think about this. Your kid is going to live with you for 18 years, let's say give or take, right?



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Let's say your kid or kids live to be 80. Think about this Kiva. They are going to live longer without you than they live with you. We are a moment in time in raising them. What I always think about, and this is really paramount to my core values, because I never really had a great relationship with either of my parents as an adult.

So I've always thought about what is this going to look like past childhood into adulthood? Because I had some pretty good examples of what I didn't want to happen. This is really a moment in time, the 18 years together. I saw this post the other day that said success is when your children want to be with you when they're an adult.

Kiva: That's what I think.

Lisa: Yeah.

Kiva: That's what I think.

Lisa: Yeah.

Kiva: I saw a post about that, that made me kind of teary given where I am on my parenting journey that 90% of the time that you spend with your kids will happen between zero and 18. That is, right? We want them to fly off into the world. I started to think of myself as the mothership, like the mothership. When they want to come home and dock and refuel and gas up, they can, and they're off. They're gonna fly the galaxy. It's awesome.

Lisa: I agree. I find myself genuinely curious, just so curious, as to what the next six months are going to look like, the next year, the next four years, the next 10 years. Just genuinely I find myself thinking what is his life going to look like? I just hope I'm here for a front row seat to it.

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Kiva: That's awesome.

Lisa: Yeah. Let's talk about this. Tell us from your chair, why is it important for parents to focus on serving their children in a way that creates connection and helps the kids learn self-regulation rather than aiming for specific outcomes and behaviors?

Kiva: Because when they do reach this point in their life, when they are going out into the world and experiencing more independence, and they're going to go get their first jobs, if they have not had experience with challenging life situations, right? Just breakups and layoffs and people who don't like them. It's all about the goal. We are sending them off into the world ill-equipped to deal with how the world actually works. Right?

Like the world doesn't work based on grades and trophies and captains of the football team. The world works on relationships, and the ability to deal with challenges, process them, be resilient, resourceful, create solutions, and move forward. That's how the real world works.

Lisa: Amen. Yeah. Yeah.

Kiva: Then these kids get out in the world. They're like what the heck? What do you mean you're breaking up with me? What do you mean I didn't get the job? What do you mean there's a layoff? They are crushed because they were fed a story, but life didn't work like that for them.

Lisa: Yeah, or buffered from it.

Kiva: Yeah. I just wrote a blog post. It should be up. I'll send it to you to post with this or go to our website about an experience that I had with Myles. He made a big mistake. Really broke a big rule and how we handled that, and

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what came of my parenting of him in that moment. Those are the moments. Those are our opportunities to teach, to take this wisdom that we have from a life with experiences in the past and our life lessons and translate that to our children so that they can learn important things.

Lisa: I couldn't agree more. As you're sharing all this with us, I think that blog post, we'll definitely post it in the show notes because it sounds germane to this conversation. I do think about it in my son as he gets ready. We're a month away from the launch to the next chapter. We talk a lot about mistakes because they're coming.

One of the things I say to him is I really hope that I have built with you the foundation that when the mistake come, you run to me not away from me. Again, this is part of the dominant parenting paradigm I grew up in his mistakes were hidden, minimized. You avoided admitting them at all costs because there was the consequence of the mistake. Then there was the physical consequence, and then there was the mental consequence of feeling like a horrible person because you made the mistake.

That was a lot to get overcome as a 16/17/18/22 year old. So Malcolm and I talk a lot about let's try to minimize the mistakes if we can, the severity of them, the magnitude. But when they're there, I really hope that you will come to me and let me help you problem solve through them. Right? I'm not going to do them for you, but if you need to reach out to a professor, explain something, go have a talk with a coach, go talk to a friend, I can be a resource for you.

I think that's also one of the foundations or the benefits of connection, right? If you feel seen, heard, and valued then I'm a resource for you. Don't we all want that for our kids at the end of the day?

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Kiva: I mean that would be another put in the success pile, right? Does my child trust me enough to come to me in their most vulnerable moments?

Lisa: Yeah. Again, that doesn't mean that we have to be permissive parents and say oh, don't worry about it Kiva. It'll be fine, right? That's not what we're saying here. We're saying I want to be the safe place you can come and work through what happened? What went wrong? How do I make this right? What do I need to do from here? How do I prevent making the mistake next time? Where could I have made a better choice? Right?

I want to be that sounding board for my child as much as possible without them fearing judgment from me. I've said to my kid before I'm not happy about this. This does not make me proud. I'm disappointed. I'm sad to hear you made this choice. But I'm not doing it to attack his character. I'm doing it to infuse our values and recalibrate the internal compass that I hope I've turned on.

Kiva: Yep. Yes, amen.

Lisa: Good stuff. Good stuff. So one of my crusades, I feel like. I'm not a big crusader. So I'm a little shocked at myself that I was so worked up by this, but I really would love for the parent coaching influencer space to move away from this idea, this notion that one size fits all formula for perfect or successful children.

I really just feel like I saw this quote from Mr. Rogers, knowing that we can be loved exactly as we are gives us all the best opportunity growing into the healthiest of people, right? So I would love to see us talk about raising emotionally intelligent, well-adjusted, healthy children in the world rather than good and perfect and successful.

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I guess this is my rally cry to the parent coaching industry to move away from dangling the carrot of perfection and move towards the idea of let's work on ourselves. Let's raise our emotional intelligence so we can stay regulated when our kids are having a tough day or they've made a mistake, or they're not sure. Or they're struggling with their mental health, or trying to find where they fit in. Or they're asking the big question of will I be okay so that we can model emotional intelligence and self-regulation for our children. I'd much rather the headline say that. Wouldn't you?

Kiva: Oh, yes please. Yes, please. I don't know. I have visions of like moving back to a future where we have woodworkers and artists and musicians, and I don't know. I think it was a simpler, happier time back then, but maybe that's the story I'm telling myself.

Lisa: Well, just freedom to be accepted as I am.

Kiva: Yeah. Right.

Lisa: As I am. I'm perfect as I am. I might be a work in progress. But at the moment, I'm perfect as I am.

Kiva: There's a great book, *Drive* by Daniel Pink. It talks about how to create intrinsic motivation, right. The impulse to do the right thing, even when no one is watching, when it's not attached to a prescribed outcome. It's a great book, so read it, but it's one that stuck with me. I read it probably 15 years ago now.

It really helped me redefine this idea of what success is and how, as a leader and a parent, right because I play both roles to inspire people to have that quest for excellence but to have it come from their own internal

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compass and guidance system versus needing to be excellent for my approval and validation.

Lisa: Yes. Which makes me think of along those same lines. It's parenting the child in front of you that you have not the child you wished you had, right. It also falls in line with one of my favorite books, which is Gay Hendricks *The Big Leap*. Just figuring out your son Myles's zone of genius is completely different than my son Malcolm's zone of genius. We both figured out what our kid's zone of genius is, and we appreciate it and we respect it.

Sometimes, you don't get the zone of genius that you thought you were going to get right? A dad is a former baseball player who wants a kid that's baseball player who happens to love playing the guitar. It's how it goes sometimes. So, I'm always helping people parent the kid they have in front of them, not the kid they wish they had. Just really love the kid they have in front of them. Accept and love and appreciate the kid standing right in front of them.

Kiva: Paradoxically, that is how they will become successful.

Lisa: There's the irony, right? There's the irony. All right. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to you Kiva of the Jai Institute for Parenting for joining us today and sharing such valuable insights. Tell us where, if people want to know more about the Jai. What's this Jai Institute for Parenting? Tell us where they can find out more all about the amazing Jai Institute, which is where I trained. Changed my life, changed my relationship with my son. To be honest with you, it changed every relationship in my life. I am a completely different person post-Jai than I was pre-Jai, and I have some old school friends that will attest that.

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Kiva: Well, people can go to our website. There's just a plethora of information there. JailnstituteforParenting.com. Whether you're looking for resources on yelling, spanking, power over dynamics, they're there. If you're curious about becoming a parenting coach, tons of information, books, you name it. Have fun.

Lisa: Wonderful. Yes. I think it's the best parent coach training institute in the world, in the galaxy.

Kiva: There's no I think.

Lisa: No, exactly. Best in the galaxy. Speaking of awards, I'm going to give you that award. Best in the galaxy.

Kiva: Thank you. As bestowed by Lisa Smith.

Lisa: There we go. There we go. So thank you, Kiva, again, for being here today. You're a regular guest, and again, people love hearing from you and our conversation. Clearly there's a lot of love between Kiva and I, a lot of respect. I'm a huge fan of Jai in everything they do and offer and how you and your team changed the world. So thank you for being here.

Kiva: I love being on your show, Lisa. Anytime.

Lisa: Well, perfect. Well, thank you for listening today. Hopefully you all enjoyed our discussion as we delved into the true essence of parenting, and the importance of creating genuine connection with our children. Today we explored the notion that parenting goes beyond striving for perfect or successful children, and instead focuses on nurturing self-regulation and supporting our children discovering their own paths.



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Kiva and I together dismantled the idea that connection should be a reward for good behavior. It's really the underbelly or the essence of the parent-child relationship. So I want to encourage you to continue on this journey of real world peaceful parenting where you get the chance to prioritize connection, self-discovery, and the well-being of our children. Thank you for listening today. 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](https://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](https://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](https://thepeacefulparent.com). See you soon.