

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra



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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 know I say this every week, but every week it's 100% true. I am so excited to be with you here today. I am especially excited today because I am joined by two really amazing humans, women, mamas, Hive members to have a special conversation.

So I am joined today by Lyra and Kate, both have been The Hive for quite a while. Lyra is the mother of four boys, eight, five, two, and eight months. At the other extreme, Kate is the mama of an only child, Mr. Six. Both parents have strong willed kids. Both Kate and Lyra have been on the podcast before. So they're returning guests.

Today we're going to have a robust conversation about showing up as a parent. This conversation started last week in The Hive, in which Lyra was getting some coaching on how to do it all, how to be a super parent with her cape, flying through the air multitasking, getting multiple things done at the same time. We had this really interesting conversation.

It resonated with Kate who also chimed in to say, "I'm guilty of this as well and find myself living in a state of constant overwhelm, overproduction of cortisol, hypervigilance, busyness, overwhelm, and I feel like I'm in survival mode all the time."

So I asked Kate and Lyra to join me here today to bring this conversation over to the podcast because I know you, as the listener, might be like girl

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

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

preach. I'm right there with you, sisters, brother. I wanted to have this really important conversation today. So we're going to try to recreate what we discussed and take it even a step further. So let me welcome Kate and Lyra. Thank you both for being here. I'm so honored. Lyra, thank you for being here.

Lyra: Hi. I'm very honored and excited to be here with you both amazing, amazing women. Yes, that conversation, I've been thinking about it on the regular. I'm excited to see where we take it here.

Lisa: Yes, I'm excited too, Lyra. So thank you from the bottom of my heart. Kate, thank you as well. I want to welcome you, give you a chance to say hello, and say thank you from the bottom of my heart as well.

Kate: Hey everyone, and thank you so much, Lisa, for having me. I'm super excited to be here. I think that this is a very important topic for any parent, mom, dad, or grandparents, or maybe an aunt and uncle who are raising kiddos. It's something that we need to deal with.

Lisa: Yes, so let's ground ourselves in this. This is fact. Research shows, I want to get both of your reactions. As the listener, take this in for a minute. Research shows this 75% of the time you'll ever get to spend with your kids is over by the time they turned 12, and 90% of the time you spend with them is gone by the time they're 18.

So here I am, two weeks away from getting on an airplane and dropping my kid off at college. 90% of the time, of the face to face time I'm going to spend with him is done. Every time I'm reminded of this research, it's like the best bucket of water on my head I could possibly have as a parent. The reminder or the goal is to really ground in this, right?

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

This I'm sure is where the saying the days are long and the years are short comes from. Because when you're stuck in the middle of cooking dinner and putting the towels in the dryer and kids tugging at you, the phone is ringing, and the kettle was going off. It's hard to remember this because overwhelm, busy, hypervigilance takes over. It literally feels like survival is the game, right?

But then we pull the lens back and we are reminded that by the time they're 18, you've done 90% of the work, of the face to face work that you're going to-do with these kids. So really the goal, and I wish that when Malcolm was really little I would have known this right? The goal is to slow down and be fully present with these kids. That is the job. I want to say this to get the conversation started.

The more years of parent coaching I get under my belt, 15 now in total, here's what I realize. The job isn't, the to-do list isn't all the things and then fit the children in between. The children are the job. Somehow, we have to blend the busyness of life in 2023 with showing up and being fully present. I think the challenge in parenting is so often the to-do is like sit on the floor and play Legos with my kids or go outside and run around for a few minutes or read a book to them or listen compassionately to their worries.

These are invisible to-dos that we don't put on the to-do list like we do the job tasks, pay the taxes, make the meals, do the laundry. Oh yeah, I've got to call the air conditioning repairman. I've got to get this scheduled. The light came on in the car. I've got to get it in, right. Those end up on the to-do list literally.

But what doesn't get on the to-do list are all the invisible to-dos like show up and be fully present for 10 minutes, put the phone down. Because Instagram is calling scroll, scroll, scroll, scroll, get back to people, see

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

what's going on, check in on whose birthday it is. Then the invisible to-dos sort of gets squished in between, which then creates overwhelm, busyness, stress. We get triggered. We feel hypervigilant. We're in survival mode. So Lyra, tell me what passes through your brain when I say all that.

Lyra: Yes, when I learned this recently and we were having our initial conversation that the majority of this time is over when they're teenagers basically, when they become preteens. It really shook me and reframed in my mind what it is that I'm doing. I know Kate and I both are at a similar point in our life where my job, what I defined as my primary responsibility up until a few months ago before Walter was born, looked very different.

I worked in that corporate job the majority of my time. Then my kids and parenting fit into that. I homeschooled them. I was still trying to start a homestead. I was still somewhere in between meeting with my husband periodically to say hello. It was very structured and scheduled.

When Walter was born, we really came to a shift in our lives. Kate, I know you'll speak to this too, that we kind of shifted in what we were doing to where I am now staying at home with the kids and have left the corporate world for an indefinite amount of time.

Now my primary job, Lisa, that I've been trying to sort out with you and in The Hive and with this wonderful community is parenting and raising these four amazing human beings. That template of what worked in corporate America, the to-do list and the agendas and the meeting and we're going to tick this off. I have tried unconsciously, now somewhat consciously, to fit that paradigm into raising them.

They are not having it. Thankfully, thankfully. They're not having it in that way. They're teaching me what my job means and how to do it well. Like

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

you said, it is. I might have a list of five things to-do to accomplish that day. What might come up is the older two are having an argument, and I need to stop and sit with them and guide them through how to learn negotiation skills and conflict resolution skills. That is way more important than folding the laundry and calling the tax guy back in that moment.

I'm trying to learn how to feel successful in accomplishing that and not feeling like it's an interruption in what I was going to accomplish that day. That is what I need to accomplish today. That is an amazing and magical, spiritual, wonderful gift to be able to do this with my sons and teach them how to be good humans, fully present. So that has completely shifted. These conversations we're having has completely shifted my focus and approach to what is my job and what does it mean to be successful in my job with these children?

Lisa: Yes, what is my job. I heard show up, connect, slow down, be patient with the humans in front of me, help them resolve whatever's going on, look underneath the behavior to the needs, and really work on single tasking, fully present connection rather than the multitasking, check off the things on the to-do list. It sounds like you're in this shift from the old way to the new way.

Lyra: Yes, exactly. Kate, I know you're going to second me on this, and can I get a hallelujah, but we are very much a type A personality. Well, I'm a recovering type A, but that's part of who I am. So I expect a lot of myself because it came from a world of high achievement with success metrics, performance reviews, projects with milestones.

So I expect a lot of myself and now my family in this new role. That is where the coaching and where the conversations we've been having is to help me redefine that, to fit that into this new model to where I still feel

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

successful. I can still have my milestones, but it looks a lot different. Kate I know you're going through a similar shift in your life if you want to speak to that as well.

Kate: Yeah, we too are trying to start a homestead. We moved here about five months ago. We're now in the state of Montana. We moved from Oregon, and I am trying to do it all. I'm trying to be supermom, super wife, and also be hyper active in our community. I am dialing it back, and I'm slowing down. I have an amazing child.

At 18, I do not want to look back and say I should have done ABC. I should have spent more time. I should have been more involved in his activities. What a beautiful gift that I get to give my son by just slowing down and being the role model of not being perfect 100% of the time.

One thing that I have done is to go through my kitchen, and I gave my kitchen a makeover. I took out all of the plates and all of the silverware. I replaced it with paper plates and plastic silverware for right now because that is what we need. We need to slow down. I don't have time to sit down in front of the sink washing a mountain of dishes. I want to be outside playing with my kiddo. I want to be going on adventures. We have the most beautiful part of the country here. We're going to go experience it.

Lisa: I totally want to come visit.

Kate: Oh, please do. My spare room is ready for you. It is ready.

Lisa: Plane ticket bought.

Kate: Yes.

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

Lisa: I love that. I love what both of you said. I've been taking notes. Kate, you're prioritizing showing up and being fully present with your son rather than doing dishes, folding laundry. It's so beautiful this journey that you're on, both of you, rewiring your brains on what success is. I mean this is what we're talking about.

We're redefining parenting success. We're moving away from it being, in Lyra's words, a corporate job of let's praise you for how many tasks you can check off today, which the habit brain said oh, that feels good and successful. For Kate, it was let's see how much home tasks we can run through in a day. How many loads of dishes we can do.

We're rewriting that into the primary expectation, the primary job is to just show up and connect, to slow down, to make. In Kate's house, there's now paper plates. So the 10 minutes she would have spent doing the dishes can now be spent playing a game outside, connecting with her son, rather than fitting him in between the dishes.

This is what I see happening a lot. We are so busy in 2023 as parents. We are busy. I know some of you listening right now are going to be like okay, that's great for Kate and Lyra, but listen, I'm a single parent. I got five kids. I got a mother living with me. I've worked two jobs. I hear you. I do hear you. I know. I respect that in 2023 life is busy.

The point of this podcast is to share with you two parents who've had an epiphany and have given themselves permission to slow down and to connect, and honestly, to cut corners. To do a C minus level work at some things so that an A plus work can be done in showing up and having patients and connecting and spending regulated time with your kid rather than being impatient, annoyed, short with them because you're so busy

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

fitting them in between the tasks like perfectly folding clothes and washing dishes four times a day. Yeah?

Lyra: Definitely.

Lyra: Yeah, one of the, to add to that I would say, part of that is taking off the cape, and popping the bubble, releasing the illusion of the supermom or the super dad or the super parent. The idea that I should be able to do it all and do it all with a smile on my face, rested and fresh and looking my best and not have a breaking point is not a reasonable or achievable or desirable goal even.

That I can take that cape off, and I can have those pauses in my day that I can focus on also achieving a balance within myself. So learning how to regulate myself better so that I show up, and how that is absolutely important. That's one of my new success metrics, just to give some tangible examples for everyone.

One of my success metrics that you've helped me with, Lisa, is to take a pause every day, even if it's just 10 minutes to meditate, to rest, to reflect, to just be still myself for 10 minutes. When I do that, I am more present for my children and able to navigate those Lego wars, those battles, those hurt feelings.

Lisa: Totally. Yeah, yeah, I think you hit the nail on the head. Taking the cape off, it takes courage. It takes walking away from the habit brain because what a lot of us parents want to do in 2023 is while the kid is finally resting or napping, or on a play date, or engaged in watching Cocomelon for half an hour, we then think the job is to run around and do the 87 things. I would argue, I know, Kate, you're going to speak to this. I know you've got some real world experience with this.

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

I would argue that in those moments, the job is to rest, rest. Again, another invisible to-do that many of us are conditioned not to think we're allowed or okay. I'm going to make the argument as to why parents need to rest. All right, here's how this goes. Then we're going to hear Kate's real world input on this.

Oftentimes inside The Hive, we talk about how as parents, we want to be the calmest person in the room, right. Which is code for regulated. The calmest person in the room is the most powerful leader in the room. When our nervous system is regulated and grounded, we think clearer. We feel deeper. We're able to serve, connect, come up with solutions, have empathetic listening, all the tools that we talk about.

So what does it take to be the calmest person in the room while parenting? Rest. It takes rest. It is the antithesis of hypervigilance, overwhelm, and busyness. Rest gets you out of survival mode. It gets you out of fight or flight. It downregulates the nervous system. It works the cortisol out of the body so that you can show up and connect. Kate, I think you've had some real world experience with that in the last few days. So take us through that.

Kate: Yeah, I have had a couple of epiphanies over the last couple days. I have started meditating. I'd say the last four or five days. I am still very lucky my kiddo naps. So when he's napping, I rest. Sometimes I nap. Sometimes I just have my half hour of meditation. Then I get up.

If there are present tasks that I do need to accomplish and it's easier to-do when the house is quiet, I will do one or two of them. I don't do the 10 million that I have on my invisible checklist. I pick one or two. Then I go and I rest again.

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

I am finding that when my husband drags in at 7:30 in the evening that I am more regulated. I'm able to show up for both him and our son where previously it is Daddy comes home. Great. Love you. Hi, here's your son. Yes, you've worked a hard, hard job all day, but he's yours. I'm out. Things have really, slowly they are becoming more calm.

Last night Mr. Six had a storm. He had many storms last night, but this one particular I had mentioned to daddy what time it was because daddy likes to-do bedtime. Mr. Six stormed to his room, and in classic fashion, slammed the door. I just sat there. I didn't get up. I didn't go after him. I just sat there.

I took some deep breaths while my husband was having his feelings about the whole thing. I didn't respond. I just sat there and breathed my way through it. When I felt like I could go in and have a conversation without exacerbating the storm further, I found out that my son is not necessarily angry when he storms. He let me know last night in his six year old way that he is trying to get daddy's attention. That was just such a huge lightbulb moment for me of oh, maybe he isn't this angry little kiddo that I'm seeing. There is a deeper need here.

Lisa: So what I hear is last night because you rested, you were able to be the calmest person in the room. Son and husband were able to borrow that calm energy from you, or said another way, you came in the room regulated because of the rest, and then they were able to coregulate beside you.

Kate: Absolutely. That is correct.

Lisa: Yes. Prior to trying this whole resting thing, you probably wouldn't have been regulated.

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

Kate: That is correct. For the last year, I realized that I have been living in such a high state of fight or flight just due to some things that have happened in our life that are not favorable. Let's put it that way. With resting, my body is very slowly starting to come out of that. I'm so excited to see how things are going to shift as I keep resting and letting my body heal.

Lisa: Totally, totally. Now, let's talk about the most important part of this podcast for our listeners. Let me just be honest with y'all. No one is going to ring your doorbell and give you permission to rest. Your co parent, your kids, your boss, your mother-in-law, the nanny, the sister, no one is going to give you permission to rest. You're going to need to carve it out. You're going to need to be brave.

Because I know a lot of you right now listening to this are like, again, great for Lyra and Kate and you, Lisa, but you don't understand. Here's the thing I do. I understand, believe me. I do. I grew up in a home where busy was revered. Your worth was tied to your productivity. I bought into that. So I spent years waking up on Saturday morning thinking that I had to instantly be productive. Because if you're productive, you're worth more.

I have since given myself permission to rest as preventative medicine, as an investment in being the calmest person in the room, which I personally desire to be and love to be. But here's the thing, no one's going to come and give you permission. You have to take it.

Sometimes it's five minutes. It's sitting in the car in the driveway listening to a meditation for five minutes before going in the house. It's taking five minutes to lay down on the bed after you've changed your clothes. It's telling yourself that when your kid is napping, you rest. Resting might be meditating. It might be binge watching something. It's probably not scrolling on Instagram, let's be honest.

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

But figure out what rest is to you and isn't. Whatever it is, do it. It might be listening to music. It might be dancing in the kitchen. It might be watching a comedian on YouTube. It might be walking out to the mailbox and reading your mail. It might be walking your dog. For me, it's sometimes laying on the couch and petting the cutest dog ever, Sir Bentley. It's just looking in his eyes and seeing the love he has for me and cutting his soft fur for like three minutes.

But what I want you to hear is the example that Lyra and Kate offered today, the example of what's possible. They were both people who didn't believe in rest and didn't think it was possible because they were part of the high achieving club. Let's get things done. Let's be successful. Let's check things off. I'm worth more when I'm busy. I have to be in constant motion.

I think one of them said to me, Lisa, if I ever sat down and took a rest, I'd fall asleep for a month. That is a lie. That is not true. You are allowed to rest. In fact, it is the tool that will help you be the calmest person in the room. You have to grant yourself permission to rest. Sometimes it starts in small little increments, and you have to build the rest muscle, but you have to grant yourself permission. Yes.

Kate: Absolutely. Right now, I find myself highly uncomfortable when I am resting, but I do remind myself actively that this is allowed. I am a better parent, when I am fully rested. I show up differently.

Lisa: Yeah. I liked that you said that. I want to reinforce that. It is uncomfortable in the beginning. It's not uncomfortable because you don't know how to do it or it's wrong. It's uncomfortable because your habit brain isn't in the habit of resting. Sometimes, depending on what your past has been like, rest brings up a lot of big negative emotions.

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

Lyra: I agree with that. For me, I have this imaginary little voice in the back of my head. It sounds just like certain people from my past. You're lazy. You're spoiled. I actively tell that voice to hush up and go take a seat. Then I get back to my relaxing.

Lisa: Yes, and that's exactly what you have to do. In the beginning, you have to calm that voice, right. You have to say, I hear you. I'm not lazy. This is how I'm going to be the calmest person in the room. If you desire to be the calmest person in the room, rest is required. It is the formula that equals being the calmest person in the room. Five minute increments here and there. A little rest before stepping into a room.

Kate, your example of resting yesterday was an investment in being able to show up last night when Mr. Six was storming and husband was getting triggered by it and about to storm alongside him.

You were able to come in the room, and not only help everybody regulate, but then scuba dive down to the feelings and needs and realize that it wasn't that your son was being difficult or disrespectful or selfish or a problem that he's craving something from dad that he's not getting. That allowed you to see that. Today, you can have a calm regulated conversation with your husband about that. The rest lead to that.

Kate: Completely agree with that. Yes.

Lisa: Yes.

Lyra: Yes. That's kind of a cool thing that I can also have a similar story, Kate, with my oldest and most strong willed also last night where he was storming. Because I had taken the day. So we had a very busy Monday and Tuesday. What I've also started to do is to think forward and build into

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

my not just day, but my week. Okay, if I have a very busy two days here, I need to make sure I do not schedule anything on Wednesday.

That is a new thing for me, in taking that template of I like to schedule a structure, I need to structure that in to have a rest day. I need to ignore that voice, Kate, that is also in my head. We have similar voice paradigms in our head to tell them to take a backseat and take that day off.

Because I did, and I had two periods of rest yesterday because it had been so strenuous at the beginning of the week. My son was also exhausted. I was able to check in with him when he was completely storming at the end of the day. Instead of getting mad at him for not getting in the shower right away, for flailing around and spazzing out, or screaming for not eating his dinner his, the whole evening. I was able to communicate that also with my husband.

Like, hey yeah, he's really exhausted and wiped out too. He was able to articulate to me because he trusted me enough because I had been regulated through resting for the day to say, "Mommy, I'm really tired. I'm just not feeling right today." It was so amazing that he's never really even done that before. That he had that self-awareness and that he felt comfortable with me while he was in the middle of his storm to say that.

I'm like okay, I will help you, buddy. I have enough in my tank because I took that time to help you get through the rest of this evening and to peacefully get to bed. I did.

Lisa: So great. Both of your stories are a real testament to the investment of resting that leads to the goal of being the calmest person in the room. So well done. Well done. All right. So there you have it. There's the argument for slowing down, for putting the invisible to-dos on the to-do list, or

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

connecting with our kids as the primary job, or shifting our expectation from doing mean to just showing up. Which leads to connection the other person feels seen, heard and valued.

It increases patience. It allows you to be the calmest person in the room. I think the big takeaway from this episode, if Kate and Lyra's words really hit home with you, the homework assignment is to give yourself you, yes, you. I'm talking to you permission to rest. Because that leads to being the calmest person in the room, being the regulated person.

As the parent, you have to get regulated yourself before you come alongside your kid so that you can coregulate with them. So thank you, Lyra. Thank you, Kate, for being here today. Thank you for sharing your insight, your transformation, and your success stories. I know everyone listening is very grateful that you're paying it forward and sharing.

Again, as the listener, your homework assignment is to rest and show up. Put your kids at the top of the to-do list, right? 75% of the time you're going to spend with them is over by the time they're 12. 90% of the time you're going to spend with them is gone by the time they're 18. The towels and the cooking and the dishes and the mowing the lawn and the weeds will be there, but 90% of the time will be gone.

I will just share with you listener, I am feeling this to the brim with my son that we're about to get on an airplane and drop him off in his first year of college. I can say that I feel really good about the way I showed up and the job I did as a parent. Isn't say there are mistakes and storms around here because we're human, but I invested the time. I want that for you too, listener. I don't want your kid to reach the 18th year and there be regrets. So slow down, prioritize, connect, and rest. All right, until we meet again, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

Ep #137: Want to Connect with Your Kids? Do Less: A Real World Coaching Conversation with Kate and Lyra

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.

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