

Ep #146: How to Find Common Ground in Different Parenting Styles



Full Episode Transcript

**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 Real World Peaceful Parenting where we explore the challenges and triumphs of navigating parenthood in today's world. I am super excited to be with you here today.

In today's episode, we're going to delve into the complexities of co-parenting dynamics as we follow the journey of a couple struggling to find common ground in their parenting styles. I know this happens a lot for all of us, myself included. My husband and I after being married over 30 years and co-parenting for 19 still struggle to find that common ground in our different parenting styles.

So today, I want to uncover the underlying beliefs and childhood wounds that can sometimes shape our approach. I want to give you a peek into what that might look like for one family and ask you to think about how it looks in your family. Where the similarities or differences might be.

Today, we're going to discover and try to work on practical strategies for fostering understanding differences and harmony in our different parenting styles. Yeah, I know it's going to be good. I'm excited to bring this to you today. So let's dig in.

I recently had a private coaching call with a married couple who live in Texas, and co-parent four kids age eight to newborn, two boys and two girls. As we dug into this coaching call, the wife told me, "Lisa, I just want my husband to care about our kids' feelings." Can you relate to this?

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Let's say your child asks for something and your co-parent is quick to tell him no. Your child doesn't accept the answer. He or she keeps begging for what it is they want. Now, maybe this triggers your co-parent into dysregulation, and he or she storms or gets very short and abrupt with your kid. Then this triggers you.

This is this scenario that plays on repeat in this home of parents that I was coaching and maybe in yours too. As the mom was telling me her thoughts about the situation, she kept going back to the need for her husband to be kind when he speaks to their kids and to quote care about their kids' feelings.

Now, maybe you're listening to this, and you can relate to this. You're like yeah, me too. I want everybody, but especially my co-parent, to care about my kid's feelings. Or maybe you can relate to the dad. Maybe you recognize you have little tolerance for a child that doesn't do what you ask or doesn't take a no the first time. Then their constant asking, begging, requesting, whining, storming triggers you.

You might be saying well, I tried to tell my daughter a nice way to put her shoes on, but she doesn't do it. Then I have to raise my voice and repeat myself until it gets done. It's like hey Lisa, listen. The goal is to get the shoes on. I told her to get her shoes on. When that doesn't happen, I get easily triggered.

Now, no matter which parent you relate to in this scenario, this episode is for you. We're going to dig into what's going on and dissect both parent's point of view. So let's start with the dad.

From the dad's perspective, his way of telling his kids to do something in a nice way sounds like this. Get your shoes on. Now he's not yelling, and he's not dysregulated. He's not putting his kids down for not having their

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shoes on. He just wants the kids to get the shoes on. He's very matter of fact in his approach and his dialogue with his children, and really with everybody in his life. His nice way of telling his kids to get their shoes on is simply pointing out that something needs to get done, and it needs to get done right now.

From the moms perspective, simply stating a command or even completely regulated being very matter of fact about something does not sound kind to her because his tone is not gentle like hers. He doesn't preempt his command with a pet name, like sweetie or honey. He doesn't present it as a question like sweetie, come on now. Would you mind getting your shoes on so we can get to school on time?

When we dove deeper into this, the mom revealed to me that her deep seated belief, based on her own childhood ones, are that their kids deserve to have their feelings prioritized over everything else all of the time. Yes, this mom believes, or did believe during this coaching call, she realized that if she were totally honest with herself, her kids' feelings take prioritization over everything else. This has a lot to do with no one caring about her feelings when she was a little kid.

She said she feels like she can never tap out because of this. Because when her husband is incredibly matter of fact about things, she gets dysregulated because she feels like she has to be the sergeant of arms of her kids' feelings at all times. It's very upsetting to her when her co-parent is matter of fact and abrupt about his commands.

Now, if you can relate to this mom, if you can relate to feeling like you have to be on high alert all the time because your kids feelings are the most important thing ever. I am here to tell you that this is a lie you're telling yourself. That this is not true. You can tap out. In fact, you might consider

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whether or not you're making yourself a martyr, which doesn't serve anybody.

If you and your spouse or co-parent parted ways tomorrow and they spent 50% of the custody time with their kids away from you, they would co-parent in their own way. You would have no say in the way he or she parents your children 50% of the time. So the reality is you can tap out from time to time. You can.

It's possible that when you tap out, your co-parent may not respond to the circumstances the same way you do. He may or she may be matter of fact about their request, but your children will survive if your feelings are not the number one priority in every moment of every day.

So here's the real question that I asked this couple, the mom in particular, who we're going to call Sophie. I asked Sophie this question, and I want to ask it to you. What do you make it mean, when your co-parent tells your kids to do something, and your co-parent says it differently and in a different tone of voice than you would? What do you make that mean?

Let me tell you it is a question worth asking. I ask myself this all the time. What am I making it mean? So I asked this of Sophie. She said, after thinking about it for a few seconds, "Honestly, Lisa, I make it mean that he doesn't care about his kids."

When she heard her own response, she quickly clarified that she really does know that her husband loves his kids. He wants the best for him. He really does care about them. But her brain tells herself that when he speaks to them in an abrupt, curt, demanding way, her belief is that he doesn't care about them. Interesting, yeah?

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So let me tell you what I told Sophie. If you're making every parental instruction that comes out of your co-parent's mouth mean they don't care about your kids' feelings because they don't use a certain tone of voice, you're going to have a really hard time staying regulated when this is going on. You will be triggered by it into dysregulation and suffer from it. So will your family.

Let me say that again. If you're making every parental instruction that comes out of your co-parent's mouth mean, they don't care about your kids feelings, or insert whatever you're making mean, because they have a certain tone of voice, you're going to have a hard time staying regulated around that. You will storm.

Now if this is resonating with you, more than likely you are a people pleaser or recovering people pleaser like Sophie who married or entered into a relationship with a non-people pleaser like Sophie's husband who we'll call Dan. Sophie and Dan have different perspectives. Now they have four kids, and they're parenting in different approaches.

One parent likes to please her children as part of that parent's people pleasing persona, and the other parent simply is not interested in getting on the people pleasing train, particularly in people pleasing their children. Dan is more interested in taking care of business and getting things done for the family.

The problem here or the challenge is that the people pleaser equates love with pleasing. So when the non-people pleaser says things like I don't care about their feelings, which is code for I'm not willing to sign up to be a people pleaser. I'm not going to use pet names and gentle tones. It dysregulates the people pleasers, and it puts the people pleasing parent into fight or flight. Can you recognize this?

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If you find yourself in this battle with your own co-parent, I encourage you to just stop saying anything out loud about caring about feelings. The problem with the statement like I don't care or you don't care about their feelings is one parent means one thing, and the other parent hears another, and then the child hears a third. It's a very nebulous statement, also known as a thought, that everyone interprets in their own way based on how they're feeling in that moment.

Things come into play like the amount of sleep you've had, the time of day, your own childhood wounds, your perspective, whether you're hungry or not, how hard you've worked that day. It's a very non-fact based thought. So if I'm a little girl in this family, if I'm the daughter of Sophia and Dan, and I'm hearing this statement I don't care about their feelings.

Not only am I hearing it through my own lens, but I'm also hearing it or interpreting it or watching the reaction of my people pleasing parent's lens and reaction and the non-people pleasing parent's reaction. If your child is an empath and reading all the feelings in the room, that complicates the situation even more.

So the way to fix something like this is to recognize, and this is what I encouraged Sophie to do, is to recognize that you don't know what your co-parent means when he or she says this. Sophie is making it mean one thing. For all we know, Dan means something completely different.

When someone makes the statement to us out loud, we have our own thoughts about it. We interpret it through our own lens. It is this interpretation of what they say. That is actually what we make it mean. So in this coaching call, I pointed out that this is an opportunity for Dan to stop saying out loud I don't care about their feelings because Sophie is hearing something completely different.

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We talked about how it would be a really good idea for this couple to stop having this conversation over and over and over again. Dan came to appreciate that this statement is not productive. Oftentimes, it's a statement out of his own frustration at trying to get his kids to get their shoes on. He was able to see that when he says it, he means one thing but his wife Sophie hears something completely different.

When we grow up in homes where nobody cares about our feelings then we grow up with this wound where we really want to care about our kids' feelings. So both Sophia and Dan admit that they grew up in a home where nobody cared about their feelings. Dan admits that he's having to learn how to show his kids that he cares about their feelings. Dan admits he does care. But he also said in the midst of trying to complete a task, like getting their shoes on, he doesn't know how yet to be sensitive and care about the feelings in the midst of trying to complete a task.

Now hear me, Dan loves his kids more than anything, but he's in an evolution where he isn't sure how to care about their feelings out loud, how to show it, how to demonstrate it, and he doesn't know how to show it, especially when it's time to get shoes on, leave for school, or pick up toys.

This was a big aha moment for Sophie. She had no idea that he feels like he isn't able to care about their feelings or demonstrate it in the heat of the moment. She couldn't know this because they weren't able to talk about this calmly.

His telling the kids to get their shoes on in a very matter of fact tone with no pet names would dysregulate Sophie because her thought was Dan isn't prioritizing their feelings, and he's talking to them in an unkind way. So she would confront him while in the heat of the moment and while being dysregulated, and that would trigger Dan to say out loud well, I don't care

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about their feelings. I just want them to put their shoes on or pick up their toys or brush their teeth.

Then Sophie would make it mean that Dan doesn't care about his feelings at all. Then her action from a fight or flight would be to jump in and rescue them from Dan, the unloving dad. This was their pattern that was on repeat over and over and over again for a couple of years.

Now, if you relate to this, hear me. It's not likely your co-parent is sociopath, completely heartless and uncaring. So stop in the heat of the moment telling yourself that he or she is. Stop continuing to have a conversation about a topic that is unproductive in the heat of the moment and hurts everybody.

When we have these conversations while we're both triggered, it damages the family dynamic, and it damages the intimacy between the two parents. It doesn't net anything useful. So just stop. During our coaching call, Dan said out loud over and over and over again that he does, in fact, care about his kids' feelings very much. He just shows it in different ways.

He shows it by making sure his kids have what they need and are prepared for events and at places on time. That's his way of caring about their feelings. He was able to calmly help Sophie understand that he's not going to show that he cares about his kids feelings by using pet names or cooing voice while making his request to get their shoes on.

Sophie was able to express to Dan that it hurts her deeply when in the heat of the moment he says, I don't care about their feelings, especially when he says it out loud in front of the kids. Dan was able to see this because we were having this conversation while both parties were regulated and calm and in their higher brain.

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Dan was able to help Sophie understand because she was calm and regulated that he's really focused on getting the shoes on and doing it in his own style. She was able to hear this and really be able to understand that Dan was never going to have her style because he doesn't look through her lens. He doesn't come from her family. He doesn't carry around her childhood wounds.

Sophie was able to see through our coaching call that she's projecting her own childhood wounds of having a mother that didn't care about her feelings onto her husband and the situation with her kids because he's not using pet names and cooing sounds while asking them to put their shoes on. I know it's funny, but we do this.

We sometimes make the lack of pet names and cooing sounds or insert whatever it is for you means something like my co-parent doesn't care about our kids. Then we get dysregulated, and we rush in to rescue them from a place of fight or flight, which dysregulates the co-parent and causes them to say things like I don't care about their feelings, even when he does.

So then on our coaching call Sophie was able, while she was regulated, she was able to see the Dan isn't in any way like her mother, and that her kids don't need to be rescued from Dan. That maybe it's not her job or Dan's to prioritize her kids' feelings every moment of every day of every hour of every minute. That sometimes kids do just need to get their shoes on so we can get to the next thing on time.

This is the beauty of having these conversations as co-parents while we're regulated and on top of it with the assistance of the parent coach. Sophie was able to see, while regulated during our call, that she's really projecting her fears of no one caring about her kids feelings onto Dan from her own childhood wound. Then she was able to see that there really is plenty of care and concern by her and Dan for the kids' feelings by both parents.

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That oftentimes, this is really just her childhood wound, rearing its ugly head.

During our hour together, she stated over and over again that Dan and her mother are very different people, and they parent very differently. Dan is on the path to be peaceful parenting. He just has a different style and a different approach and a different tone when it comes to doing tasks like getting shoes on, brushing teeth, and getting in the car.

When we clear out our childhood wounds, when we recognize them and clear them out, we can ask ourselves questions like what am I making it mean when this sentence comes out of my co-parent's mouth? This is virtually impossible to do while we're dysregulated. So what I really encourage you to do is talk about this later what the experience was like when you're both calm and regulated. Ask yourself or ask your co-parent what are you making it mean when I say and insert the sentence?

This is some of the most powerful work we can do in staying regulated while parenting our kids. A couple weeks later, I had the opportunity to check in with Sophie. She reported that all things are not perfect. Let's face it, they never are. They were dramatically better.

She told me that Dan is doing his part and not lashing out with the statement I don't care about our kids feelings when he gets overly frustrated that the kids aren't getting their shoes on and Sophie is interfering. Sophie is doing a much better job in understanding that Dan is peaceful parenting, just in his own style.

Although she does wish he would use pet names and cooing sounds when making the request, she understands that it isn't going to happen. All kidding aside, she said, "Lisa, I have really come to see and understand that Dan cares about our kids feelings. It just comes out in his own way. He

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loves our kids deeply and cares about their feelings, and just wants them to put their shoes on.”

It made me laugh. Sophie said she's also working on cleaning up her own childhood wounds so she isn't constantly bringing them into her parenting, which is work worth all of us doing and looking at from time to time.

So if you listen to today's episode, I want to challenge you to think about where are your childhood wounds colliding with your co-parent or where they colliding in your own parenting? What are your thoughts about the words coming out of your co-parents mouth? What are you making them mean? What are you projecting onto the situation based on your own wounds, thoughts, perceptions and fears about how things are going or should be going?

I promise you this is work worth doing. Hard to do on your own without support and guidance. I get that. I totally get that. That's why Dan and Sophie are members of The Hive. If now feels like the time to get support around childhood wounds, digging down and asking yourself what am I making this mean? How can I show up in a calm, regulated way? Then I want to personally invite you to come and join The Hive.

The Hive is one of its kind community that serves parents all around the world who want that ongoing support down the path of peaceful parenting. The Hive enables you to have a parent coach, that's me, in your back pocket at all times and get the assistance and the support just like Sophie and Dan did and continue to do.

The Hive is not an online group of parents showcasing their social media perfect parenting. It's not a feat of inspirational quotes and empty cliches. What The Hive is, is it's a place to help you make small steps in your parenting journey that will bring you exponentially closer to the deep

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connection you're seeking with your kids. You get maximum cooperation from your kids at the same time. Let that soak in for a minute.

Imagine never being more than a few days away from having a tried and true parenting expert, me, give you tailored guidance on your most recent situation, just like Sophie and Dan. Imagine feeling any anxiety, guilt, or frustration you feel right now about your parenting or your co-parent simply melt away, just like Sophie and Dan. Imagine feeling the love and connection with your child growing stronger each day and your co-parent, just like Sophie, Dan, and their four kids.

Imagine knowing that no parenting challenge is too big for you because of the vast experience and support you can draw upon from within The Hive to work on things like childhood wounds. You can make it a reality right now by joining The Hive. So if this speaks to you in any way, and you're ready to do this work with or without your co-parent, I want to personally invite you to check out The Hive. Come join us.

To learn more about The Hive, you can click on the link in the show notes or go to thehivecoaching.com. I cannot wait to work with you just like Sophie and Dan. Okay, 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 mini-course. 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.

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