

Ep #155: Stop Using Respect as a Weapon



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

Ep #155: Stop Using Respect as a Weapon

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.

Angela: Hi, this is Angela, one of Lisa's podcast producers. Lisa asked us to choose an oldie but a goodie two re-air this week that we thought would be helpful for parents during this sometimes stressful week. We chose Respect and Parenting: Busting the Illusion.

In this episode, Lisa shares how high stress moments are not the time to focus on the lack of respect you might be getting from your child and what to do if you find your kiddo acting disrespectful to you. Happy Holidays from all of us on Lisa's podcast team, and please enjoy this episode.

Lisa: Welcome, welcome, welcome. Welcome to today's episode. I feel like this episode has been a long time in the making. Today we're going to talk about respect and parenting. It's not about the respect. Oh I have been marinating and thinking and talking about this episode for it feels like a really, really, really long time. I am really excited to share today's episode with you and bust up the illusion of respect and parenting. Are you with me? You open? All right, let's dig in.

So often my clients say to me, "Lisa, my child doesn't respect me." Or what I really hear is, "My child is so disrespectful." Really? Okay. Have you said this? Have you thought this? I'm sure we all have. I confess. I used to think it on the regular. I used to think he's so disrespectful. Oh it's so hard to even say it out loud now. It may be hard for you to when you're done listening to this episode.

When someone says to me, "My child is so disrespectful," my first question always is okay, how do you define respect? Give me the definition of respect. Then I usually get a bunch of examples of the kid's behavior and

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exactly what they're doing “wrong”. Then I say respect is a very nebulous, hazy, cloudy word.

There is not one specific definition that we can all point to to define respect. I looked it up. You'd be surprised. I looked up on the Google what is respect. Not two articles or definitions or examples were the exact same. Respect is defined differently probably by every human being walking the earth. Let me give you some examples.

In some cultures, taking your shoes off when you enter the house is a sign of respect. In other cultures, it isn't. In some cultures, if you do not take your shoes off when you step across the threshold, you are being utterly disrespectful to those homeowners. In other cultures when you took your shoes off when you stepped through the threshold, they would see that as disrespectful.

Here's another one. In some cultures, this makes me laugh but it's 100% true. I've witnessed it firsthand. In some cultures slurping your food while eating it is an absolute complement and a sign of respect to the chef. So if you're slurping while eating your food, you are saying to the chef, I respect your cooking. In other cultures, chewing with your mouth closed and not slurping your food is a sign of respect.

Do you see where I'm going with this? Respect is this nebulous, hazy, cloudy word. When we talk about R-E-S-P-E-C-T, one of the very first things we have to realize is there's not one objective definition of respect. As I said, it's subjective. It's nebulous.

Most of us parents, if we're honest, we're using respect when we're angry at our children. When they're giving us attitude or behavior we don't like or they're not doing what we ask. Then we pull out the accusation, “You must respect me.” Or, “you're so disrespectful.” Like it's a weapon, and it hurts the relationship.

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If we dig into what is respect, I think we can all agree upon respect is an exchange between two people, and it's mutual. It's give and take. I looked up the definition of respect in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, and it's defined as a feeling of admiring someone or something that is good, valuable, and important.

What I know for sure is that if you want respect from your kids, you've got to model it first by respecting them. It's a two way street. It's mutual. It's give and take. It's a feeling of admiring someone. It grows. It cultivates. It's not a one instance thing. It's not a short term thing. It's not.

What does respect look like for you? You get to decide. I don't have a specific answer or suggestion. I don't have a three step guide on what respect looks like in your family or how to get maximum respect from your kids because I really believe it looks different in every family. It looks different based on your family makeup, your culture, your own upbringing as the parents. Your values, yours and if you're co-parenting with someone else, theirs.

Your definition is based on what you want for your kids, your hope for them. Your temperament, their temperament. You get to decide what respect looks like in your home. It looks different inside every home in the world. What I do know is that if you want respect from anybody, you've got to give it. It's a two way street. Your kids are no exception.

So how do we get that two way street going? We model it. Yep. That's right. We model respect for our kids. So think about this for a minute. Think about what do you model for your kids in the respect department.

Let's talk about parenting during the storm. Parenting during the storm is not about your kids respecting you, especially in the heat of the moment. Respect it not a case by case one off single incident. All the respect someone feels for someone else is not demonstrated in one incident or one

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interaction or one moment, especially when conflict's involved. Respect is something that is often felt or awarded at the end of a journey, right.

So a sports team might come to the end of their season. One of the players might realize that he respects the other players. Maybe even one that he didn't know at the beginning or didn't like. Or an athlete might realize he respects his coaches at the end of a season, but in the middle of a season he probably doesn't realize it because he's in the middle of a situation. In this case a season.

A student might have a really tough professor. The work is hard and demanding and intense. At the end of the term, the student might realize, "Wow, I really respect Professor Smith," after the work is done.

After there's a chance to step back and catch your breath and realize, "Wow, now I understand what the professor was going for, what the professor was trying to accomplish. How I'm, fill in the blank, smarter, better, more prepared as a result of going through the trenches, going on that journey. Now I realize how much I learned as a result of the rigorous work or the demand." In the middle of it, I'm not going to be able to see it because I'm in the thick of it.

Another example is a soldier might respect his platoon leader after graduating from boot camp and getting to his very first assignment and realizing how well prepared he or she is for that first assignment. "Wow, now I get it. Man, I respect my platoon leader." But in the middle of the boot camp, no way.

It's way too hard often to see what's happening in the middle. Admiration and respect need time to grow and cultivate. Can you see this? Our kids are no different.

I like to think of respect as a body of work. A body of work of an author or a coach or a team or a childhood. It often takes some space and some

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distance and some marinating and some time and some oxygen in order for the admiration and respect to set in. It very, very, very rarely happens in the heat of the moment, in the middle when the hard work is being done. Can you see this?

If yes, then you might be able to see that it's kind of ridiculous to even demand respect because it's earned, not demanded. It's not worth demanding it from someone with an underdeveloped brain, i.e., our kids, because they're in the middle of it. You might be able to see that it's ridiculous to demand respect in the middle of the project, i.e., the childhood, before the admiration has had time to unfold and while we're in the middle of the trenches. It's just not possible.

Respect is long term admiration that comes as the prefrontal cortex develops. It's about what happens over the course of a relationship. Heck, most of us aren't even able to articulate that we respect our parents until much older. Until we're in our 20s, 30s, or 40s, after there's been some time and some distance and some maturity and some reflection. Yeah? As we get older and wiser, we can reflect back and look back on the relationship and offer admiration to our parents. Very, very, very rarely does it happen in the middle, in the thick of it, in the trenches.

A two year old, a five year old, a seven year old does not understand respect. The relationship has not had time to cultivate. They're in the thick or middle of it, and they haven't had any time to get space and distance and perspective, to allow the admiration to come along and marinate and cultivate.

So if it's not about respect, then what is it really about when we're parenting our kids? So get this. When most of us say we demand respect or we want respect or our kids are disrespectful, what we're really saying is, "I have a manual for you, my child, and you are not following it." I like to call this rules of engagement.

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“You are not following my rules of engagement. You are not doing what I tell you to do. You are not doing what I want you to do. I don’t want you to yell at me even when I’m yelling at you. I don’t want you to roll your eyes at me when I’m parenting you. I don’t want you to talk back to me or push back when I’m parenting you. I want you to be grateful when I do something for you. I want you to never sneak around. I want you to be nice. I want you to do what I tell you, and I want you to do it with a good attitude.”

These are our unconscious rules of engagement. “I want you to eat all your food. I want you to not throw food on the ground. I want you to keep your room clean.” We all have them. All of us. Our unconscious rules of engagement are part of the human experience. Some of us have done the work and we have conscious rules of engagement, but many of us have unconscious rules of engagement. We’re not aware of what they are, and we haven’t communicated them to our kids.

When they don’t follow them, we make it mean they’re being disrespectful. Oh I beg you to change this. Shift from calling them respect to rules of engagement. Some of us have rules that are too strict, too stringent, and they’re not getting us what we want. Our rules of engagement are not taking us closer to mutual respect, rather are driving us away from respect and damaging the relationship.

I just want you to know you have them, every one of you. All of us. Myself included. I’m conscious of many of my rules of engagement, but every now and then an unconscious rule will slip in. When I storm alongside my kid, it’s a good beacon to ask me to dig deep and identify what my rules of engagement are.

So know you have them, identify them, be honest. Then ask yourself how’s that working for you, to quote Dr. Phil. How’s that working? Is my rule working? Is it creating connection? Am I getting cooperation? Is it not working? Could I soften it? Could I change it? Could I drop it? My daughter rolls her eyes when I ask her to do something. Can I drop caring about

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that? Do I need to care if she rolls her eyes? It's not a sign of respect or disrespect. So if I drop that, do I care?

If you're going to keep your rules of engagement, at least give your kids a copy of the manual so they know what to expect. So they can sing from the same hymnal. I beg you. I beg you. At least give your kids a copy of the manual.

So it might look something like, "I don't like when you roll your eyes at me. I want you to work on not doing that. It doesn't feel good to me. In this family, when a person of authority speaks to you or coaches you, the expectation is that you will not roll your eyes."

Now maybe you realize okay, it's not a sign of respect. It's not a sign of disrespect. I can just let it go. If she wants to roll her eyes, she can. That's up to you. Just understand one is being upfront about the rules of engagement and the other is dropping the rules of engagement. They all come back to the manual or rules of engagement you have for your kids.

If you're feeling brave and ready, question your rules. Like I said, some questions you can ask yourself are do I need them? Do I need this rule? My rule is X. Do I need it? Am I expecting something impossible or outrageous or something my kid is not capable of? I'm expecting every time I bark orders at my kid, I'm expecting they're going to say yes sir and follow through. Is that impossible? Is it outrageous? Let me think about that.

Here's another good question to ask yourself if you're feeling brave and ready. This is a doozy. You can ask yourself am I modeling behavior A, like yelling, being late, being reactive, name calling, or attacking character when I'm mad, while expecting my child to exhibit a completely different behavior?

So, for example, do I yell at my kid and expect him not to yell at me? This was big in my household before I found peaceful parenting. I grew up in a

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household where there was a lot, and I mean a L-O-T, a lot of yelling. There was also a lot of other things going on in the background like intimidating and hitting and punishing and threatening. So the message I got was that the parent was allowed to yell. If they kid yelled back, there would be something painful happening as a response.

So I now became a parent, fast forward many, many, many years. My unconscious rule of engagement was that I would yell at my kid, and I expected him to exhibit a completely different behavior which was not yell back at me. What I realized is that has nothing to do with respect and everything to do with modeling and everything to do with the fact that I birthed a strong willed kid and feels comfortable pushing back.

It was not about respect. I created an environment at home where he felt comfortable pushing back. Once I dropped the respect, once I stopped making it about how disrespectful he was, I was able to look at it and think yeah. I personally like that he pushes back. I also realized that I needed to clean up my yelling. I needed to model a different response to stress. I needed to drop my yelling at him. Guess what happened? When I dropped it, so did he.

So if you don't like what you see, develop a new set of rules. A new rules of engagement. Share them with your kids and model them. "What does that look like Lisa? Tell me." All right. Let me give you some examples.

New rules of engagement that, by the way, also model respect might include I don't call you names when I'm upset. I don't yell at you when you make a mistake. I ask questions before jumping to conclusions. I give you space or hit pause if you ask for it. I don't bring up the word respect or disrespect during conflict.

If I'm yelling, I don't expect you not to yell. I don't attack your character when I'm upset. I think these would be excellent rules of engagement for all

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of us. These are the epicenter for cultivating two way respect and admiration in a family.

So another definition of respect is treating others the way you want to be treated no matter what. Are you treating your kid the way you want to be treated when things go wrong? Like really, really, really wrong. Like you're late or there's a missed homework assignment or your kid got a bad grade on a test or there's fighting, bickering, sibling fighting or eye rolling or there's talking back.

Do you treat your kids out of the gate the way you want to be treated? That's two way respect. That's cultivating the admiration in the middle, in the trenches during the childhood.

I don't have all the answers about respect because I truly believe it looks different in every single family. What I do know is ironically when we drop the thoughts and lectures and demands for respect and instead shift to focusing on two way rules of engagement, ironically the level of respect in the home goes up dramatically both ways. Because the admiration begins to cultivate.

I love this. Do you love it? I love it. I hope you do. It's so good, and it's work worth doing. As you work on the rules of engagement and treat your kids the way you want to be treated, you'll be modeling respect. Respect and admiration will develop over time, and it will cultivate. I invite you to let the admiration develop as the relationship between you and your kids evolves and grows and as their brain develops. As they work through their childhood, which for them is the season or the class or the trenches.

Yeah? The goal of today's podcast is to really help you drop the demand for respect in the heat of the moment, during the unwanted behavior, during the times of conflict. It's to help you understand that respect is not earned or created by focusing on a lack of respect during the high stress moments.

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The point of today's episode is to challenge you and encourage you to ask yourself, "Am I showing my kids respect at all times? If so, how? If not, where can I clean things up? Where can I work on my rules of engagement? Do I get angry and turn on them when they're not doing as I instructed? Do I insult or call them names or get ugly when things aren't going my way or when real storming appears? Do I freeze them out or ignore them when I'm really angry?"

These are the kinds of questions I want you to ask yourself. What I absolutely know is that respect is a two way street. What I want you to ask yourself is am I the model or the example of how to respect someone even when they're not doing what I want or what I ask or when they're storming?

Can I do a better job at this? Can I model respect no matter what? Can I cultivate that admiration and how I show up for them during the entire season, during the entire class, or during the entire boot camp in the trenches?

Ah, I know, right. Big topic. R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Big. But you've got this, I know you do. We're developing our own respect here, you and I each week. We're developing our own admiration as we grow episode to episode. As we move through the tools. The admiration is growing. I see you. I see you showing up here. I respect you. I know you've got this. So keep working on it. Ask yourself the important hard questions. Be brave. Be brave. 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 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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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.