

Ep #158: The Secret to Self-Regulation and Connection with Your Kids



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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 today's episode. I am so excited to bring you today's episode. In our exploration of 2024, the year of self-regulation, I want to delve deep into a fundamental aspect that triggers parental dysregulation, our reaction when our kids make mistakes or encounter failures.

Have you ever pondered why you react the way you do when your kids make a mistake, slip up, mess up? Our responses might be tied to how we perceive these situations and judge both our children and ourselves? Yeah? Let me ask you, how do you react when your kids slip up, make errors, or encounter failure? Have you thought about why you react the way you do in those moments? Maybe not. Maybe this is the first time this concept has come up for you.

But I want you to take a minute. I want you to think about this. No matter how I react. Why do I react that particular way when my kids slips up, makes an error, or encounters failure? I want you to consider this. Your response might be intertwined with how you perceive your child's missteps. More importantly, how you judge your child and yourself during these moments.

Huh, huh, huh, right? Oh, Lisa, you're going deep on me today, girl, and I'm here for it. I know. I got you. Now here's what I know. After working with clients all around the world for the past 15 years, one truth stands out. The thoughts we harbor wield tremendous power. Our thoughts have tremendous power. They dictate our emotions and our actions.

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That's a fact by the way. That's not just something I made up. That's a fact. Our thoughts dictate our emotions and our actions, particularly when it comes to parenting. Managing our thoughts lays the foundation for maintaining composure, regulation, composure, regulation, while navigating the challenges of raising a child or children.

Let me say that, again. Maintaining our thoughts lays the foundation for staying composed, i.e. staying regulated, while navigating the challenges of raising our kids. This is the whole theme that we're exploring this year, the year of self-regulation.

Now, I want you to revisit your perspective on your kids mistakes, mishaps, and failures. I want you to ask yourself, in a moment of true honesty, what do you believe about your kids and yourself in these critical moments?

This was groundbreaking work for me when I got onto the path of peaceful parenting because I had beliefs about my kid and myself-many, many, many years ago that were not helpful. They were causing me to be more dysregulated when he made a mistake, a failure, a slip. It was not helping our connection nor was it helping me stay emotionally intelligent in those moments.

Here's the crazy thing. I had judgments, which are thoughts, about myself and my son in those critical moments, and I didn't even know I was having them until I did this exercise. Until I watched what I was thinking while I was thinking it crazy, right? I know, I get it. It's mind blowing the first time you hear this, but it is a total gamechanger.

In today's episode, I want to offer you a new and real world peaceful parenting way to think about our mistakes, our screw ups, our failures, our kid's mistakes, our kids screw ups, and our kids failures. You ready? I know it's going to be so good.

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Recently I encountered therapist, Terry Real's remarkable definition of self-worth, and I want to share it with you. It's going to blow your socks across the room. Terry Real defined self-worth as the ability to recognize our flaws and still hold ourselves in high regard. Let me say that again. Self-worth is the ability to recognize our flaws and still hold ourselves in high regard. Boom shakalaka, right? I was so blown out of the water when I read this.

Self-worth is the ability to see yourself as flawed and see your flaws and still hold yourself in high regard. This concept has deeply resonated with me. I've pondered the transformative impact it could have had on my life if I could have been exposed to this as a young person. I literally cannot stop thinking about what if someone would have told me this when I was 12 or 15 or 17 or 21 or 28. The suffering I could have avoided.

Oh, my goodness. I believed back then that I could not hold myself-in high regard because I was flawed. I did not understand that all humans are flawed. I thought I was one of the very few people roaming the earth that was flawed. I imagine that most kids think this unless they're taught the opposite by their family, unless it's part of your family values and culture. Unless you're communicating this to your children regularly that you can and you are flawed, and you still can hold yourself in high regard. So good, isn't it? I have goosebumps all over my body just recording this.

Now, here's something else. Do you know that your value as a person, you, yes, you. Not just your kids, but you. Your value as a person isn't earned. It isn't conditional. It can't be added to or subtracted from. Your essential worth is neither greater or lesser than any other human being. Did you know that your kid's value isn't earned. It shouldn't be conditional. It shouldn't be added to or taken away from based on their behavior.

Imagine growing up in an environment where acknowledging flaws is embraced as a core belief. This notion, I believe, is the linchpin of self-regulation. Remember, 2024 is the year of self-regulation. Our self-

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regulation as the parent. I want every human in the world, but more importantly, every child to know this. That self-worth is the ability to know that you're flawed and still hold yourself in high regard.

You, yes you, are the most qualified person to teach this to your kids. Now, sometimes our kids learn this from coaches or teachers or mentors. But I want you to teach this to your children. I want you to know this. I want you to know the importance of it. I want you to teach it by modeling it, by making it part of your core beliefs, by making it part of your family culture.

What I believe is when we integrate this into our knowingness, we integrate it. Listen to that word. We integrate it. We brainwash ourselves that this is true. When we integrate this, when we brainwash ourselves with the concept that I am flawed, and I still hold myself-in high regard, this makes self-regulation a thousand times easier.

When we model this for our children, when we know that they're flawed, they're going to make mistakes, slip ups, not turn things in, not get things right. When we believe that they're flawed and still hold them in high regard even while we're holding limits and setting consequences and talking to them about their missteps, they will be able to stay regulated and raise their self-esteem.

Imagine for a second how much easier it is to coach and guide and stay regulated when our kids screw up or make a mistake. Because when we accept they're flawed, we're not surprised or triggered by their mistake, by their refusal to put their shoes on, by getting a note from the school, by the school calling you, by them saying a bad word at the dinner table, by them hitting their sibling. Because we're not surprised or triggered by the mistake.

When we accept the flawed is humaneness and still hold our kids in high regard as a parent, parenting is so much easier because we see the flaws

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in ourselves and our children. We're connecting through the flaws rather than trying to get rid of them or avoid them or judge them or make them go away or shove them down. Bring it. Show me your flaws. I get that you have them. I have them too. Everybody has them.

I define unconditional parental love as the child can show the parent their shadow side, flaws, mistakes, and all, and parent communicates to the child I love you the exact same as when you show me your light side. If you want to be more regulated as a human, as a parent, as a coparent, as a partner, and be more regulated around your children. You have to integrate this concept into your being that my kids are flawed, and I can still hold them in high regard. Their flaws mean nothing about them or me.

If I could give you a gift, and make this part of your being by just snapping my fingers, your life would be so much different than it is right now. Your self-worth would go up. If your self-worth is low because you think you're flawed, boom, I've just turbocharged your self-worth with this concept, right?

Imagine how this could significantly impact your kids self-worth, boom. It's like Terry Real just gave me a new language, and I can't stop thinking about this. Imagine parenting your kids with this philosophy that hey, you're flawed, and I still hold you in high regard. You're flawed, and you still get to hold yourself in high regard.

You don't have to listen to other people's voices telling you that you shouldn't hold yourself in high regard. Because I know you're flawed, and I love you unconditionally. I want you to know you're flawed, as is every other human, and you get to love yourself unconditionally. I mean, my goodness. Is there anything better in the world than growing up in a home where this is the core belief?

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I see this as the backbone of self-regulation. Because if you're fighting with the flaws within yourself as a parent, oh my goodness. You're thinking things like I screwed up again. I can't trust myself. I don't know what to do. I handled that wrong. I handled it, and she reacted badly. I said that, and he stormed. My coparenting did this. I'm a horrible parent.

If you fight with your flaws by judging yourself, it's going to be virtually impossible to stay regulated when those flaws show up in your kids behavior and yours. It is going to be impossible to stay regulated. If you think that your kids flaws are your fault, you're also not going to be able to stay regulated when you're parenting them. Right?

I mean, think about this. If you believe that the only reason your kid is making mistakes or slip ups or showing their flaws is your fault or you cause this or something is wrong with him or her and you believe this to the core of who you are. This is my fault. I caused this. There is a problem here. How does one stay regulated while ruminating on those thoughts? You can't. You really can't.

But if instead you say the human experience is flaws. Whatever your kid's flaws are. They're too loud. They're too quiet. They're too big. They're too little. They eat too much. They don't eat enough. They don't eat the right foods. They scream, they yell, they storm, they don't storm, they fight. They hold everything in. I ask them what's wrong, and they say I don't know. They fight all the time. They don't want to do homework. My daughter is constantly resentful and jealous. My kid self-deprecates. My kid has no friends. My kid's never satisfied and on and on and on.

If you see these flaws as a problem that you cause, you think something is wrong with them that needs to be fixed or you think something is wrong with you. I promise you it is impossible to stay regulated with these thoughts. Then every time the flaw comes up, we're like oh, there it is. It's so painful. I don't want to look at it. I caused it. She's broken. She needs to

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be fixed stat. I need to label for this brokenness. I need to figure it out. I need to fix it. I need to make it stop right now.

How does one stay regulated? One doesn't. But if instead you say oh no, here's the human experience of flaws showing up. How can I guide? How can I teach? How can I parent? How can I set limits around the flaw with no judgement of it? You do that, and everything becomes easier, more joyful. Your kids feel more connected to you. They cooperate easier.

And an extra bonus. They have more self-worth in spite of their flaws, mistakes, and screw ups. The mistakes don't take away or subtract from their self-worth. They grow up knowing I'm flawed. When the flaws show up, my parents parent around it. My parents teach. My parents help set limits. My parents hold consequences, but it doesn't take away from my worth or their love. That's connection and regulation. Guess what happens when you connect? You get cooperation. So good, right?

Okay, let me give you an example. Let's say that you have nine year old boy. Every time you try to talk to him about something, fighting with his sibling, cleaning his room, making friends at school, putting his shoes on, listening better, helping out, he self-deprecates. Okay, this is one of his flaws.

In the moment, I don't know if it'll last forever, but this is one of his coping mechanisms right now. He's self-deprecates. In the past when he would self-deprecate, it would trigger you. It would bring up a memory of when used to yell at him before you started doing peaceful parenting. You would say unkind things to him. Now that you know better, you don't do that anymore. But his self-deprecating reminds you that you did do it for a period of time.

So when he self-deprecates, it's like nails on a chalkboard. You feel so bad because a quiet voice in your head says you. You caused this. This is a

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problem. This is on you. Now he has a problem. So it's incredibly painful every time he says I'm so stupid. No one likes me. I can't do anything right. You get incredibly triggered by his words, and your thoughts about his words. That dysregulates you, and you go into fight or flight mode while trying to parent. Sound familiar? Can you relate to this?

Maybe it's so painful that you can't bear it. So you try to make it go away by any means possible. You tell him it's not true. You try to pump him up. You tell him to stop it. You send him to his room. It's so painful that you're literally trying to make it go away by any means possible. That's the problem with the judgment, and the judgmental thoughts in your head.

We go into fight or flight. We want it to go away by any means possible, which causes us to show up as dysregulated parents. You with me? But what if, what if instead, you create a new soundtrack in your head, i.e. new thoughts about the situation, which you're perfectly allowed and entitled and in fact, I encourage you to do immediately.

What if instead you said all right, now what? There's no problem here. I didn't cause this. It's his flaw showing up. Let's work through this. Let me see how I can help him. This is going to help you stay regulated as he is showing you his flaw out loud. This is also going to help you look at this self-deprecation as a process problem, not a character problem.

When you aren't triggered by it any longer, you can look at it as a process problem, not a character problem. That is a character flaw in him or a problem that you caused. Rather, this is just a flaw. You can even say I don't like it. I want to help him work on this so he doesn't hurt himself-by saying awful things to himself, but I don't have to take it personally and make it about me as something I did wrong. Or make it a character problem for him.

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I promise you, this will help you stay regulated when he does this. Your brain will be able to see this as his current flaw of the moment. Maybe it's a phase. Maybe it will go away. Maybe it will last forever. Who knows, but it's just a flaw.

When you see it as just a flaw, you can set about to listen, guide, correct, model, and support him without impacting his self-worth. In fact, you can actually raise his self-worth, which is kind of ironic, while you're helping him through the flaw. Because you're calm and regulated. You understand that every human has flaws. Right now in this moment, he's showing you his flaw out loud. Your job is to stay regulated while listening, guiding, correcting, and supporting him. You might think let's figure out a game plan to minimize the impact this flaw has on himself and others.

Let's say you have kids that fight all the time, and one always ends up hitting the other. Okay, that's a flaw in the moment, some unmet needs. Let's figure out a game plan to minimize the impact of that flaw on himself by not getting to that flip the lid moment, and on others by setting some limits around not letting one of my kids hit the other. Let's minimize the impact of the flaw on himself and on others.

So here's my two-step process to address process problems. This process doesn't seek to erase the flaws, but aims for understanding and improving the flaws, understanding and improving them, fostering personal accountability, increased cooperation without reducing self-worth. So let me say that again.

This process doesn't seek to erase the flaw, but it does seek understanding and improvement. It seeks to foster personal accountability, increased cooperation, and without reducing self-worth. So step one is identify the flaw. Not the character problem, not the judgment, not the attack. Identify the flaw.

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The initial step involves identifying the specific flaw, what is it? You're too loud. You're too clumsy. You're too big. You're too much. You can't read. You like fart jokes. You fight with your siblings. As the parent it's about recognizing and acknowledging the particular behavior, action, or response that might be causing the mistake, the screw up, or the problem.

In your head, identify it. My kid likes fart jokes. My kid fights with his siblings all the time. My kid is slow in the morning. My kid struggles in school. My kid is dysregulated a lot. My kids storms a lot. Identify the flaw. I think it's really important that you call it the flaw.

Step two, figure out either through setting limits or conversations or acceptance or using discipline to teach the brain. The goal is to figure out how to minimize the impact of that flaw on the child and others. Others around him, the family, friends, teammates, society. The goal is to figure out how to minimize the impact of the flaw on the child and on others around him. So step two is to develop strategies to minimize the impact on oneself and others.

Once the flaw has been identified, the next phase is to devise strategies aimed at reducing the negative effects of the flaw on oneself and others. See, we're not trying to get rid of the flaw. We're trying to reduce the negative effects of the flaw on the child his or herself, themselves, and on others.

There are various approaches that can be employed. We can set limits, which is establishing boundaries or guidelines around the behavior associated with the flaw. For instance, setting limits on loudness, or setting limits and establishing rules for conflicts with siblings.

Another approach could be conversations, engaging in open and constructive discussions to address the flaw. This might involve

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communicating feelings, discussing consequences, and exploring alternative actions.

Another approach is acceptance, embracing the flaw as part of oneself and understanding it without judgment. This doesn't mean condoning negative behaviors, but acknowledging them without harsh criticism. Finally, using discipline to teach. Employing discipline, not punishments which is to harm, discipline to teach. Employing discipline or structured methods to educate oneself and others about the impact of the flaw. This might involve implementing learning techniques, behavioral modifications, or seeking guidance to better manage the flaw.

The ultimate goal of this process is to find effective ways to mitigate the negative consequences of the identified flaw on the child and others. It's not about erasing or changing oneself fundamentally, but rather finding strategies that can help navigate and minimize the impact of the flaw on the personal wellbeing and on the relationship with others.

The emphasis lies on fostering understanding, growth, and improvement rather than aiming for perfection or reducing self-worth, the self-worth of the kid and/or the self-worth of the parent or caregiver. So good, right? I think this might be some of my best work yet. I want this for you, and I want this for your kids.

So to wrap up in today's episode, we explored the powerful concept of self-worth, as described by Terry Real. The idea that self-worth involves acknowledging one's flaws while still valuing oneself. Understanding this is a critical tool in self-regulation. Self-worth isn't earned or conditional. It's about accepting flaws and still valuing oneself.

Integrating this mindset makes self-regulation a thousand times easier. When we accept our flaws and those of our children, parenting becomes a smoother journey. As we step into this year, I'm going to continue to invite

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you to embrace self-regulation wholeheartedly. It is the key to fostering healthier relationships, managing emotions effectively, and creating a more peaceful environment for yourself and those around you. I want that for you, and I want that for your family.

If you really love today's episode, I'd love to hear from you. Send us an email to support@thepeacefulparent.com or drop me a DM on my Instagram account [the_peaceful_parent](https://www.instagram.com/the_peaceful_parent). I'd really love to hear from you and how this resonated with you. I'm on a mission this year to help you increase self-regulation because I know the role plays in peaceful parenting. 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://www.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](https://www.thepeacefulparent.com). See you soon.