

**Ep #176: Want Calm Kids?
Co-Regulation is the Answer**



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 today's episode. I am so excited to be with you here today because today we're diving into the importance of maintaining calmness as a parent and how it contributes to effective communication and emotional regulation within your family.

So let me ask you have you ever noticed how calm you feel simply being near a calm person? Have you ever noticed how one person's panic can quickly become your panic too? Yeah? Well, today, I want to look at strategies that are going to foster harmony and connection within your family by maintaining a sense of calm.

As you know, we've deemed 2024 to be the year of self-regulation. So as we hit the middle of May here in the year of self-regulation, I thought it was high time that we spent a little energy, focus, and attention because where you focus, life flows. So I wanted to focus on regulation from the standpoint of calmness as a tool of self-regulation. Sounds good?

All right. Here's what happens. Science says that when we're dysregulated as human beings, you, your kids, your boss, the person on the airplane. As human beings, when we're dysregulated, the thinking part of our brain switches off so our fight or flight can take over. Make sense, right? So sometimes we're dysregulated, and the thinking part of our brain is turned off, especially as kids in the challenges we face as children with an underdeveloped brain, particularly an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex.

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So one of our most important jobs as a parent, in my opinion, is to really understand co-regulation and the value it brings to your children in raising their emotional intelligence. Co-regulation is the process where our nervous system becomes calmer simply by another person's trusted presence. I need to say that again. Co-regulation is the process of our nervous system becoming calmer simply by being in the presence of another person's calmness.

When you help your child, your teenager, your young adult, helping a child calm will help them think clearly again because it will switch the thinking part of the brain back on and turn off the fight or flight. So they will think clearly again so that you can teach them how to deal with whatever came up for them in the first place.

Hopefully, a light bulb just went off for you. Because what I will share with you is when the light bulb went off for me when Malcolm was little, and I got this, it was a complete and total game changer in my parenting, in my relationship with Malcolm, and in what I saw as my goal as his parent. So let me review this again.

When we get dysregulated, the thinking part of our brain turns off. That is humans. It turns off so the fight or flight can take over. Okay, so now I'm in my emotional center. I'm dysregulated. I'm storming, whatever that looks like for your kid. I'm storming, and I can't hear anything you're telling me. The thinking part of my brain is off. It is on vacation. It is offline.

Think about it this way. We want to reboot the thinking part of our kids brain so that we can teach them how to deal with whatever dysregulated it in the first place. In order to do that, you need one tool and only one tool, and it's called co-regulation.

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So what is co-regulation? It is the process of our central nervous system becoming calmer simply by another person's trusted presence. If you're coming alongside to loan your regulation to your kid, all you need to do is be regulated. You don't need to have the answers. You don't need insight. You don't need to know what to do. You don't need to solve their problem. You just come alongside them with your regulation, and they co-regulate. They become calmer in your presence. When they calm, we reboot the thinking part of the brain back online. So then we can parent them. Then and only then can we parent them, can we advise, can we guide, can we teach.

If the system is offline, the thinking part of the brain, because they're not calm, there's no teaching that can go on. It is the wrong time to parent. Calm first through co-regulation, which allows a rebooting, then we parent, teach, guide, coach.

So I want you to think about it like this. Calmness isn't just an attitude. It's a mindset that emanates confidence and allows for co-regulation. Now, here's the truth. Self-regulation can be hard. Yes, it is hard, even for adults. Even for the most evolved, wise, studied, aware of adults, it can be hard. So we need to be practicing it regularly. It's like lifting weights. We got to keep the muscles in the habit of lifting the heavy weights.

Recognizing emotions and managing them well shouldn't just be the expectation we have for our children. We should take responsibility for managing our own emotions, recognizing, and managing them so that we are in the habit of regulating so that we are available and can offer this co-regulation.

Said another way, if we're all taking responsibility for our own emotions and openly using strategies to calm, we will create a home where the brain is online. There is calmness, teaching, coaching, and parenting can happen.

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Emotions are acknowledged, managed, therefore creating a regulated family.

Here's what I want you to do. I want you as the parent, grandparent, caregiver, guardian, co-parent, I want you to picture being the calmest person in the room. We talk about this all the time inside the Hive, all the time. I'm encouraging people, parents, Hive members, to be the calmest person in the room. Be the redwood tree, exude a sense of serenity and control and calmness.

Now, for some of us, the truth is when we get faced with challenging behavior from our children, our temptation is to react, which leads to dysregulation and that temptation is strong and impulsive. However, what I know at this point, having worked with thousands of families around the world, is that giving into that impulsivity and becoming dysregulated is counterproductive.

In the journey towards peaceful parenting, one fundamental concept is regulation and co-regulation. It's pause and respond. Again, co-regulation is when the interaction between the child and another person, when the adult shares their calmness, even when or while or in spite of or alongside a dysregulated child.

Let me say this again, in the journey towards peaceful parenting, a really important skill for you to have as the parent is co-regulation. Uber, uber, uber critical important. So this is when there's an interaction between a child and another person, an adult, and the adult shares their calmness when, while the child is dysregulated.

Co-regulation involves offering empathy, understanding, patience, warmth, calm responses that provides support, coaching, and modeling after we reboot the thinking brain back online. As a result of practicing co-

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regulation over and over again, we create a safe place for our children to express their emotions. We empower them to recognize, understand, and manage their feelings, which ultimately leads to less dysregulation.

So the parent regulating and then coming alongside and offering the co-regulation to the child eventually leads to the child learning to pause and respond and regulate rather than dysregulate on their own. So beautiful, isn't it? Let me tell you, sincerely, I mean this with every fiber of my being. I want this for you. I want this for your kids. I want this for the world. If we knew how to do this as human beings roaming the planet, I think we'd live in a much different place than we live in.

Now, a part of this process of co-regulation is recognizing when we are not calm. That is one of our important responsibilities as a parent is to recognize when we are feeling like we are no longer calm and figuring out how to pause and respond, how to get back to regulation. When we are dysregulated, we do not have permission. It does not grant us authority to keep going in dysregulated state. We don't need to give into that impulsivity.

What I want you to do is recognize, oh, I'm not calm. I'm not regulated. I need to work to get back in control. I need to pause and respond. The more you understand this, practice it, and model it for your kids, the better they will become at it. I've seen this over and over and over again.

You cannot command or demand or beg or cajole or reward your kids into being calm if you're dysregulated all the time. You want calm kids, co-regulation is the answer. You're not going to stay regulated 100% of the time. No one does. No one. So when you discover you're dysregulated, it is also your responsibility to get regulated to offer the co-regulation.

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So how can we do this? How can you create and cultivate calmness in the midst of chaos? Well, here's the simple strategy to regain your composure and get back to self-regulation so you can offer co-regulation. It's a five step process. You ready?

All right, step one. Pause, pause, and acknowledge the moment. Just stop, close your mouth, pause. Don't keep going. Once you give in to that dysregulation, you're indulging in it, it wants you to keep going. Don't. Just stop. It sounds so easy. It kind of is. You just pause and stop. Step two, breathe. Take some deep breaths. If it helps, place your hand on your chest, lift your arms above your head, get some air in your body, breathe.

Step three is a doozy. Reassure. Remind yourself that you are safe in this moment. Because when you're dysregulated, if we go back up to what I said at the beginning, okay? When a human is dysregulated, the thinking part of our brain switches off so fight or flight can take over. Fight or flight feels very agitating. Fight or flight wants you to believe you're not safe.

So what we're doing here with this five step process is you're recognizing you're dysregulated. We're trying to reboot the thinking part of the brain. We want to turn fight or flight off and switch on the thinking part of your brain. We want to reboot the computer in the prefrontal cortex of your brain.

So in order to do this, we need to stop indulging in fight or flight. Right, that's number one, step one. Step two is breathe, take some oxygen. Then step three, to really get fight or flight turned off, I want you to remind yourself I am safe in this moment. You can stop now amygdala. You can stop fight or flight. We can bring the thinking brain back online because I'm safe in this moment.

Number four, I want you to reflect by asking yourself what do I need right now? Or what is needed in this situation? What's needed? My kid is melting

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down in aisle six of Target, what do I need to do? I need to just stand here with him.

Then step five is to respond, respond to what's needed. Not the judgments in your head, not the triggers, not the fight or flight. We booted the thinking brain back on. So in step five, we want to respond with compassion and understanding to both yourself and your child about what you need, not your judgments or your triggers. So good, right? So good.

By allowing space for reflection and self-awareness, here's the kicker, we're not only going to become better parents who offer co-regulation, but we're going to deepen our relationship with ourselves. I've experienced this over and over and over again, both within myself and within my clients.

Even now when I get dysregulated with Malcolm I do these five steps. Sometimes I stop mid-sentence, and I say hey, I need a minute. You've surprised me. I'm feeling a little dysregulated. Let me just pause for a minute here and breathe. I just put my hand on my chest, and I just breathe. I say Lisa, you are safe. Okay, what do I need? I need to listen. I need to better understand what's going on. So I listen with compassion. I drop the judgments and the triggers, and I dial in to what's really going on.

He's dysregulated. That responding with compassion, understanding, the breathing, the feeling safe, allows me to bring my thinking brain back online and come alongside him and offer co-regulation. In the journey of parenting, I want you, I beg you, I implore you to remember that one of the most important things happening is that your child is borrowing your nervous system. If you're dysregulated, they're borrowing your dysregulated nervous system. If you're regulated, they're borrowing your regulated nervous system.

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Said another way, your kid or kids or teens or young adults are drafting off of you. Even if you have adult children that have children. They're borrowing, at times, your nervous system. They're drafting off of you. So let's make sure we're loaning out co-regulation not dysregulation. Yeah?

I know. It's so good, isn't it? I just love talking with you about this. I love sharing. I love hearing myself talk about it. Like I'm totally regulated right now just talking about it and going through the five steps of stop, breathe, reassure, reflect, and respond. So good, right? Tell me you love this.

Send me a message, support@thepeacefulparent.com. Go to my Instagram, The Peaceful Parent, please tell me you love this. That this meant that you get it, and a light bulb went on and you see it and you're going to do it. You're going to imperfectly practice it. You're going to start right now because you get it. You get the importance of co-regulation. Please tell me this. I need it. Share it with me. Tell me. Okay.

So here's today's important question. Can you, yes you, I'm talking to you. Can you be the calm amidst the storm? Can you offer the co-regulation? Can your kid count on you when they're dysregulated? When the thinking part of the brain has gone offline because the fight or flight is in full gear, can they count on you more than not? You're not going to be perfect. But can they count on you that you're going to come alongside them and offer that co-regulation?

You're going to exude serenity, calmness. You're going to offer a calm central nervous system that they can borrow and work with and draft off of. Now I know what I'm asking is no small task. I get it, I get it. I work with people every day on this multiple times a day. Now, I realize this is no small task than I am asking. I get it. But it's work worth doing. It is the greatest gift you can give your children.

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So I thank you from the bottom of my heart for working on this. It's important for you and your growth. It's important for your kids. It is the underbelly of peaceful parenting. It can make a gigantic difference in your relationship with your kids. By making the commitment to be calm, to be the calmest person in the room, to be the redwood tree, to be calm amidst the storm, you are changing the world for the better. I believe this to the core of who I am. I want this for you and your kids.

The future generations will be a better place if parents can offer co-regulation to their children on the regular. So let's start right now. Join me in the challenge. Thank you for listening to this today. I cannot tell you how important this is. I feel so strongly about the tool of co-regulation. Okay, I'll see you next week where we're going to continue to explore strategies for fostering connection and harmony. Until then, I'm wishing you co-regulation and 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.

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.