

Ep #177: The Self-Regulation Tool All Parents Need: Connect Then Redirect



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. Today's episode is the perfect follow-up to last week's episode. As you know, 2024 is dedicated to the theme that's critical for every parent, self-regulation, right? I mean we're working on this all this year.

Self-regulation is important because as you and I both know, parenting is a journey filled with both joys and challenges. Our ability to remain calm, composed, and in control of our own emotions can significantly impact our children's development and our family dynamics.

In today's episode, I want to explore the essential aspects of self-regulation, offering practical tips, expert insights, and real help so that you can navigate the ups and downs of parenting with greater ease and resilience. By making 2024 the year of self-regulation, we are empowering ourselves to become the best versions of parents that we can be.

I want to be with you every step of the way as you really bring out the best in you so that you can allow your children to come alongside your teens, your young adults, and co-regulate alongside you and learn how to regulate themselves.

Now one of the foundational elements of self-regulation is our ability to connect with our children, especially during moments of emotional distress. I like to call it storming. You see, connection is crucial because it validates their feelings, and it builds trust. Trust between you and them. Trust that

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you're the safe place. Trust that their feelings are acceptable and okay. Trust that they're okay. Then they learn to trust themselves.

This brings us to an effective strategy known as connect and then redirect, rather than just go straight into redirecting. When kids are upset at any age, two, five, seven, nine, 22. When kids are upset, the first step should always be to connect with them emotionally. Your right brain to their right brain. This is really, really, really important.

When we connect with them emotionally, right brain to right brain, we acknowledge and validate their feelings. It doesn't mean you have to agree, doesn't mean they're right, doesn't mean they're justified. You're just connecting with them emotionally, right brain to right brain. When we do this, we're acknowledging and validating their feelings.

Only after making this emotional connection are we able to then move on redirecting them with logic and reasoning, engaging their left brain with our left brain. This approach not only calms the child, but also helps their brain to integrate emotional and logical responses, which fosters better self-regulation for both the parent and the child. If you go in left brain to right brain, you go in with your logic and try to connect with them when they're emotional, it just reactivates the storm, often to a higher level.

So one of the tools that I really want you to remember, practice, and use is connect and then redirect. Connect right brain to right brain with empathy, with compassion, with understanding that they're upset. Again, it doesn't mean they're right, or it's valid, or they should be, or you agree with them. You're just saying I see that you're upset. Let me hold space for you. Let me help you calm. Let me witness your storming. Then, and only then, can I redirect you with logic, reasoning, and engage your left brain.

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The payoff of this is the storm will last longer. Your kid will trust you more. You'll feel more connected. Also, long-term, it will foster better self-regulation for both you and your kid or kids.

Now, let's dive deeper into the concept of emotional maturity, which is integral to self-regulation. Emotional maturity has nothing to do with age or smarts or years on the planet or what you do for a living or how old of a soul you are. Rather, emotional maturity is the ability to self-regulate, self-reflect, and hold space for other people's emotions.

I love Nicole LePera's definition, and I've adopted it. Let me say it again. Emotional maturity has nothing to do with age. Rather, emotional maturity is your ability to self-regulate, self-reflect, and hold space for other people's emotions.

In contrast, emotional immaturity is the tendency to blame, deflect, and project emotions onto other people. Emotionally immature individuals often externalize their uncomfortable emotions instead of processing them internally. Understanding these differences is critical to our emotional development, as it helps us recognize our own emotional patterns and strive towards greater emotional maturity, which ultimately benefits our kids and our overall family dynamic.

Developing this emotional maturity and self-regulation isn't just about your own well-being. It profoundly impacts our kids too, at any and all ages. Because your child is essentially moment-to-moment, hour-to-hour, day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month, year-to-year, borrowing your nervous system.

Let me say that again because it's far too important to just gloss over. So, if you've zoned out for a moment, come back to me, and let me say it again. Your child, your kids, at any age, essentially borrow or draft off of your central nervous system. This means that when you're calm and rooted in

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your being, even during stressful times, you provide a model of stability, security, and trust for your kid or kids at any age. You become their safe place and their anchor, and that fosters their emotional maturity.

When you're calm and rooted in your being, when you're emotionally mature, even during stressful times, which I know is hard. You may need a lot of practice, and sometimes you get off track and have to come back to center. But when you work to be calm and rooted like a redwood tree, you provide a model of stability and security for your child. You become their safe place and their anchor, and that, my friends, fosters their emotional maturity.

So, here's some questions you can ask yourself. How can I stay calm and rooted when things get stressful? What tools can I use? Commit to becoming the safe harbor when your child has big emotions. Work to stay present and engaged when chaos and triggers are present.

Not easy, I know. I know. I've worked on this now for 15 years, and I still have my slip-ups from time to time, but this really is my goal. I'm here picking my son up at the end of his freshman year from college, and we had dinner last night. I was working to make sure I'm the safe harbor when he has big emotions, which happens from time to time, and sometimes out of the blue.

I reminded myself to stay present and engaged when there's chaos and when triggers are present. But what I know with 100% certainty is by cultivating your own self-regulation, you become the safe harbor for your child, and you increase trust and connection in the relationship.

Your ability to remain composed and empathetic helps your child feel secure and understood, and it teaches them to manage their own emotions effectively. It teaches them to sit with them and process them and not be ashamed of them or think something's wrong or want to run away from

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them. Your ability to remain composed and empathetic helps your child feel secure and understood and teaches them how to manage their own emotions effectively. What I know is this supportive presence is vital for their emotional development and resiliency.

Now, maybe you're thinking, but Lisa, I hear what you're saying, but I wasn't born with the ability to remain composed and empathetic. I hear you. I hear you. Believe me. I bet you weren't born with the ability to remain composed and empathetic. I know I wasn't, and most of us really weren't. These are learned skills, not innate traits we're born with.

Remaining composed and empathetic is a skill that can be developed over time. I personally am proof of it. At this point, I work with thousands of parents all around the world who've been able to work on the skill of remaining composed and empathetic, and I know you can do it. I know it.

I also recognize that this is no small ask. Being calm in the midst of a storm that your kid is having, especially over something you don't like or agree with or maybe you're slightly embarrassed about, requires emotional and nervous system awareness. I would even say huge emotional and nervous system awareness. It demands a level of self-control and mindfulness that many of us were not taught growing up, and it certainly wasn't modeled for us in the homes we were raised in.

If you're anything like me, and many of us here are, we were taught that our big emotions are not okay. We got the message that big negative storming was not going to be tolerated, and as a result, you may struggle to navigate and accept big feelings in yourself and your children, and I get it. I was once there myself.

But here's the thing. Understanding this, understanding the cycle, understanding that you're uncomfortable with big negative feelings is the first step towards breaking the cycle and fostering a healthier emotional

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environment for your family. It's important to recognize that it's not your fault if you don't know how to regulate your emotions. Many of us were not given the tools or the guidance, and no one modeled how to develop these skills.

However, and I need you to hear this, while it's not your fault, it is your responsibility right now to learn and practice self-regulation for yourself and your kids. Let me say that again. It's not your fault, but it is your responsibility from here to learn and practice self-regulation so you can model this and provide it and offer it to your kids.

By taking on this responsibility, you create a more peaceful and supportive environment for your family. You break old patterns, and you pave the way for healthier emotional interactions. You become a cycle breaker, and you point your family in a new trajectory when you take responsibility to learn and practice self-regulation. And then you model it for your children, and they draft off of you with co-regulation, and then they learn how to regulate themselves.

Can you imagine the next generation of kids growing up in the world knowing how to self-regulate? I mean, honest to goodness, it's my greatest wish for this universe. It's why I get up every morning and do what I do because I really truly believe one generation of young adults who know how to self-regulate, they're not going to get it right all the time, and they're not going to be perfect. But an awareness and ability to self-regulate as young adults, I believe would completely change the world for the better.

So how can we cultivate this emotional maturity and become better at self-regulation? Well, here are six ideas to bring emotional maturity into your parenting, and these are six ideas that I'm going to share with you that I hope will enlighten you, allow you to have some aha-moments, and maybe be key ideas that you can set as your intention, or understand, or work towards, and maybe even set goals. So here are the six.

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Emotionally mature parents allow their children to have their own feelings, needs, wants, and desires. They allow it. They just decide my kid is allowed to have their feelings and their needs and their wants, and I will guide them, and at the same time totally allow space for them to feel their feelings. Recognizing and respecting your child's individuality is critical for their development.

Next, I talk about this all the time, and it's super important. Don't take it personally when your kids disagree with you. Push back. Storm. Understand that differing opinions are a normal part of growing up, and just that realization is going to help you stay calm and maintain self-regulation.

Emotionally mature parents love their children unconditionally, providing a stable foundation of support and security, regardless of the child's behavior or choices. They value the relationship over the behavior in that moment. Emotionally mature parents view mistakes and failures as an integral part of life. Embracing these moments as opportunities for growth helps our kids learn, build resiliency and adaptability.

Emotionally mature parents have their own individual lives outside of their kids. Maintaining personal interests and relationships ensure parents remain balanced and fulfilled, which in turn benefits their parenting. Emotionally mature parents guide and educate their children while understanding that the child has his, her, or their own path. Supporting your child's unique journey fosters independence and self-confidence.

By integrating these principles into your parenting approach, you can enhance your own emotional maturity, improve your self-regulation, increase trust with your kids, and teach them how to regulate themselves. So good, right?

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As we wrap up today, I hope it's been helpful. I hope every episode I bring you on self-regulation deepens your understanding, motivates you to work on it, and provides tools to put you on the path to learning to regulate yourself.

Remember, self-regulation isn't just about controlling our emotions. It's about creating a nurturing, supportive environment in which our kids can thrive. I've experienced this myself, and I know how utterly critical self-regulation is to create connection and cooperation with our kids, but also creates that environment for our kids to thrive.

I also know that by prioritizing our own emotional well-being and modeling healthy coping strategies, we empower our children to navigate life's challenges with resilience and grace. As we continue on this journey of self-regulation in 2024, together, let's commit to self-regulate, self-reflect, and holding space for other people's emotions and experiences. Let's embrace the challenges as opportunities for growth and strive to self-regulate as much as possible, even during the chaotic, stressful times.

Yes? Yes. Yes. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for making the commitment. Thank you for joining me today. I want to encourage you to reflect on what we've talked about here today and really consider how you can integrate these principles into your own parenting right now.

Together, we can make 2024 the year of self-regulation, the year you really understood what it was about, brought it into your home, modeled it for your children, and really got your entire family on the path to co-regulation. Yes? Wonderful. Okay. Until next time, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting and self-regulation.

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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.