

Ep #181: Stop the Cycle: How to Disrupt Unhealthy Patterns in Your Family



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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. Today's a doozy, as they say, because we're going to dive deep into the concept of cycle breaking in families. Now a cycle breaker is someone who sees unhealthy behavioral patterns in their family of origin and intentionally works to break the cycles. Pretty simple, right?

So the goal of the cycle breaker is to recognize the origin of their family's behaviors and root out unhealthy patterns. Now this involves both introspective work and intentional behavioral change. Our traits, behaviors, and beliefs are influenced by the generations that come before us, and they reinforce a certain way of being, a culture if you will.

Cycle breaking acknowledges the roles of the context, culture, history, trauma, and resilience in families. Instead of seeing growth as an individual process, it highlights these broader influences. Cycle breaking can be summed up as saying growing up we did X, but instead I want to do Y now in my immediate family.

This can include a variety of behaviors and patterns such as physical, emotional, or psychological abuse, addiction and substance use, struggle to handle big feelings like anger or sadness, passive or overt aggression, disordered eating or body issues, overemphasis on achievement, physical punishment for children.

Enmeshment or disengagement, prioritizing perfection over connection, not discussing feelings, neglecting children's feelings, valuing good behavior over the person, name-calling when angry, solving conflicts with drama and threats, avoiding apologizing and taking responsibility for

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mistakes, harsh criticism and put-downs, making children responsible for adults feelings, and overthinking and chronic stress, just to name a few.

So let me ask you. As you hear this list, which if any of these patterns resonate with you? Oh yeah, we did that in my family, and now I want to do it differently. Maybe there are others that you would add. I have no doubt that I've left a few off the list.

One of my goals in today's episode is to encourage you to take a moment and just reflect on patterns that you grew up with that you no longer wish to continue in your home. Maybe you grew up in a family of non-exercisers and bad eating habits and now nutrition and fitness are very important to you, and you want to instill that in your immediate family. Maybe you grew up with a worrier who constantly externalized their worries, and now you want to not repeat that same pattern with your children.

Taking a moment to reflect on this and recognize the patterns is transformative and life-changing, I will tell you. I feel like I say this next statement in almost every episode, but it's totally true. When we know better, we do better, as Maya Angelou says. What I know for sure is that recognizing the patterns you don't want to repeat, even just recognizing them, can transform your parenting and your connection with your kids. Understanding that you might be getting triggered by patterns from your childhood is half the battle in cycle-breaking.

Here's the thing. When you are conscious of the cycles and work to break them, you disrupt genetic imprints. You start the healing in your family. You recognize and change dysfunctional behaviors. You might, through this work, understand why some of your family members are the way they are and, while setting boundaries, have empathy for them.

When you do this work, you have the opportunity to identify unhelpful coping mechanisms that have been passed down from generations. You will be able to set better boundaries because you understand the patterns that have been passed down and your intention to

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break them. You will choose not to repeat these unhealthy patterns or behaviors.

Now, I'm going to give it to you straight. Breaking the cycle can be challenging, especially if you lack a role model for what you want it to look like. Some of us have no idea what apologizing and taking responsibility looks like, or valuing the person over the behavior, or moving away from an overemphasis on achievement or distorted body issues. No one has ever modeled that for us, and we're not exactly sure what it would look like. But you can still do it.

The hardest part of breaking a parenting cycle is that the tools that you learn from your parents don't work for you, and you haven't found a way to replace them yet. You just need a good role model and some new ideas and new ways to show up when old patterns knock on the door.

So what happens is, when we're parenting in the heat of the moment, we go to grab a parenting tool but the toolbox is empty. Or you accidentally pick up an old tool, like yelling, shaming, threatening, or being physical, but then you recognize that it feels icky afterwards. That is information that you are on the right path. That is an indication that you are recognizing the patterns and looking for new ways to show up to break the pattern.

So today I want to share with you four new tools that you can add to your parenting toolbox that you can grab in the heat of the moment that will not only work but you're going to feel good using them over and over and over again and are going to break some of the generational patterns that have been handed down to you. So you ready? Let's dig in.

Tool number one, probably not going to be a surprise to you, is the pause. An in-the-moment tool. It's what you do when you're feeling really overwhelmed, angry, frustrated, disappointed, either because of your child's behavior or another life circumstance like being late.

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Using the pause allows you to access calm so you don't take your stress or your big emotions out on your kids. That is one of the greatest ways to break the cycle and put your family in a new trajectory.

Tool number two is connection, the connection tool. A compassion hack for parents. It's a simple tool for helping your kids learn emotional intelligence and self-regulation. When you connect, you're recognizing the emotion, validating it, and offering your child a way to express their feeling in a way that works for everyone. This is going to feel totally foreign, by the way, if no one offered you this empathy as a child.

Just know that putting empathy into place, telling yourself my child is allowed to feel their feelings, I'm going to recognize the emotion even if I don't agree with it, and I'm going to provide empathy that they're feeling the emotion is going to feel really foreign and awkward when you first begin to put this tool into place. But you can do it. This is the backbone of pointing your family in a new trajectory. Allowing feelings to have a place in the family.

Okay, tool number three is limit setting. Setting limits. A script for getting your kids to listen without lecturing, punishing, or threatening. Telling them up front the consequences of their choices. When you set limits, you're teaching your kids how to think before they act, what the consequences will be. You're turning on the internal compass, and you're giving them power to make their own decisions while holding to the consequences all without yelling, threatening, or punishing them.

This is a total cycle breaking tool, setting limits up front. Setting them while you're calm in your higher brain and rational will allow you to stay calm when your kids make a mistake, screw up, do something wrong, and you have to enforce the limit.

Tool number four is shame free consequences. Shame free. People do not learn when they feel shame. Committing to shame free consequences where we understand that every behavior has an impact on others while at

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the same time understanding it's okay to have big feelings, right? This is a game changer. This is emotional maturity.

It's approaching parenting from the place of your kids are allowed to have their feelings, but when their actions cause a problem for others, it's important for your child to repair, replace, or restore whatever impact was created by their actions. It's moving towards a restitution model as a way to repair when kids make mistakes without punishing from a place of shame and pain. So good, right?

Implementing these tools can be transformative for your family. They can be. If you're ready to take this journey further, I want to invite you to join my Peaceful Parenting 101 course. This course is online, lifetime access, easy to use, available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

The significance of this course is that it was designed to help you integrate these tools into your daily parenting with confidence and ease. It was designed to help you identify and break the generational patterns that have been handed down to you that you don't want to continue to repeat over and over and over again.

Over the eight weeks, the length of the course, we'll work together to explore each tool through detailed examples and practical scripts tailored to real-life situations, like bedtime, screen time, sibling fighting, and more. I am with you every step of the way. I'm going to support you every step of the way in this transformative process.

If we can embark on this journey together, we, you and I, can create a peaceful, nurturing environment for your child to thrive while breaking cycles that you want to break and pointing your family in an entire new trajectory. Imagine that. Imagine if by two months from now, you are breaking cycles, creating a peaceful, nurturing environment for your kids, and pointing your family in a new trajectory. I mean, come on. That would be amazing, right?

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We're going to do it by learning and practicing tools over our eight weeks together when you try a tool, if it doesn't work or you get stuck, you'll be able to ask questions during live coaching sessions each week where I show up with you, and you can ask me anything about you, your family, or your kids. I want this for you.

I want to help you break generational cycles. I want to help you be a cycle breaker and point your family more intentionally in the trajectory that you would like to point them. So if this speaks to you, I want you to go to TPP, The Peaceful Parent, tpp101.com to learn more and sign up, or click on the link in the show notes.

I can't wait to teach you all the parenting tools so that you can raise emotionally healthy kids without losing your shiz on the regular, break the cycle that's been handed down to you, and point your family in a new trajectory. The cycle stops here. Yes? Yes, yes, yes. So good. Okay, until we meet again, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

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.