

**Ep #182: Unlock the Secret to Managing Your Child's
Big Emotions—It's Easier Than You Think!**



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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 pleased that you are here. If you live in North America, well, I mean, come on, summer has arrived, right? School's out and emotions tend to run high with the changes in schedule, change in routine, sleep disruption, increased boredom, dietary changes, overstimulation or lack of stimulation, and family dynamics just to name a few. Am I right?

How many on that list did you check? One, two, or maybe all. Well, you're in for a treat because today I want to dig in to a topic that's close to many parents' hearts, understanding and navigating your kids' big emotions, especially during the summer. Yeah? Awesome.

So let's get started. In today's episode, we're going to understand where your child's big feelings come from, learn how to be less triggered by their emotions, and discover effective ways to respond and manage those big feelings.

First, let's bust a common myth. Peaceful parenting does not, I repeat, not mean that your kids will always be peaceful. I'm sorry, I know. It would be so much easier, but that's not how it works. Children are on a long journey to understand the world, their feelings, and their needs. Their brains are not fully developed until the age of 25. So it's a lengthy and sometimes incredibly turbulent process.

Strong-willed kids, in particular, express emotions intensely. If you've got one, I know I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. Their highs are high and their lows are low. Strong-willed kids feel joy deeply and anger intensely. When they're excited, proud, frustrated, bored, or disappointed, you, as the parent, know it. Can I get an amen on that one?

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The only effective way to teach our children about feelings and needs is through modeling. We've talked about this before, but let me remind you that you cannot teach by telling, yelling, lecturing, or punishing. Your actions must align with your words. Modeling the behavior you want to see is critical, required, necessary. Let me say that again. Modeling the behavior you want right now from your kids is critical, necessary, and required.

So, I want you, I implore you, I offer you to get comfortable with being uncomfortable as the parent. If your child has big feelings and even bigger storms, you know what I'm talking about. Those storms can include yelling, meltdowns, slamming doors, sassing, eye-rolling, arguing, sibling fighting, and they are, let's be totally honest, uncomfortable often. They are. I get it. I've been there. I get it.

What I need you to remember is that these behaviors are expressions of big feelings stemming from unmet needs and throw in an underdeveloped brain. Strong willed kids feel intensely and their reactions are just as intense. Our job as parents is not to take it personally. It's not about us. They're not doing it to us. They're expressing their feelings.

When your child is storming, they are speaking literally, figuratively, the language of help. "Help me. If I could help myself, mom or dad or parent, I would. If I could ask for help calmly, I would. This storm, these big emotions, this intense reaction is the only way I know right now to ask you for help. So please see through it and help me."

Remember, your child isn't giving you a hard time. He, she, or they are having a hard time. Their actions are an expression of their struggle, and, sadly and truthfully, the only way in that moment they know how to ask for help. I know it's hard. I know. Especially if you've got a lot of kids or they're really little or there's a lot of storms or you've got a strong-willed kid. You're doing a great job by not taking it personally.

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Here's an important point. Feelings aren't problems to be solved. They're vibrations in the body meant to be felt. Often as parents, we rush to want to fix things for our kids. We want to solve their problems and make these big emotions go away for their sake and ours. But feelings have to be experienced.

They're a natural part of being human. So instead of trying to fix your child's feelings, focus on being there with them, acknowledging their emotions, creating a safe place and letting them know that it's totally okay to feel what they're feeling. You understanding this and communicating this to them makes everything easier. I promise you. I promise.

It's easier to deal with storms, connect with your kids, hold space for the feelings and let them storm when you understand this model. You don't want to shut down the storm out of anger or judgment. That's just going to shove it down and then it's going to have to recirculate down the road.

Let me give you an example. Think back to when your child was a baby. When your child cried, you saw it as a call for help, not a personal affront. You didn't take it personally. You didn't say oh my God, my baby's giving me a hard time. He's so disrespectful. I mean, it makes me laugh to even say it because it's so ridiculous. We didn't take it personally. When our babies cried, we comforted them. We empathized. We played detective to figure out what they need. I invite you to apply the same principles and skills as they grow older at any age. I'm still doing this with my 19-year-old.

Let me share a real-world example to illustrate this point. Sarah, a mom of an eight-year-old strong-willed child named Ethan, often feels disrespected by him. Stress and tension at home lead her to yell, threaten, and punish Ethan on the regular, especially when he's storming and uncooperative. Sarah shared this breakthrough moment with me recently.

She said, "Lisa, today was totally transformational. I picked Ethan up from soccer practice. He was irritable, demanding, and threw his water bottle across the backseat. My brain immediately went to what are you doing?"

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Why are you giving me a hard time? Don't you know all I do for you? I told him you need to pick that water bottle up right now and put it in his bag. He refused, folded his arms across his chest, and just glared at me.

“I started getting really worked up, and then I heard your voice in my head telling me not to take this personally. I heard you telling me that this is his cry for help and to get curious, not furious. So I said, Ethan, what's going on? You seem upset. He burst into tears, said he felt embarrassed because he missed a goal, and all of his teammates laughed at him during practice.

“Oh, that's so tough, buddy. So you felt embarrassed and upset? Yes, mommy, yes. We talked for a bit about how hard it is to feel those feelings. We just sat together in the car. I shared with him how sometimes I feel embarrassed when I make a mistake at work, especially if someone points it out. He actually smiled and said that's just like me.

“Lisa, by not taking it personally, I was really able to connect with him and understand that the throwing of the water bottle was a cry for help. Later that night, we had a conversation about not throwing water bottles, but in the moment, I was really able to move past taking Ethan's storming personally. I was able to shift away from anger into curiosity and connect with him. By not taking the storming personally, I was able to see his SOS or cry for help and help him understand his feelings, connect the dots. I was able to be a safe place for him, Lisa, and it felt absolutely amazing.”

I know, Sarah, right? Here's the thing. If you can get comfortable with your kids' big emotions, you become more available to help them through their storms. You become the safe place for your kids. You become the person that can help them co-regulate and calm down when they're unsure of what's going on. This all starts with you getting comfortable with being uncomfortable because if you're not comfortable with it, you're not modeling it for your kids, and they're not going to be able to get comfortable with big emotions, storming, and being uncomfortable.

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Now, for many of us, this is difficult, because as a kid, we were not allowed to express these big emotions. We might have been punished for it or shamed or teased. We might have been told to stop it immediately, or we might have been told we're not feeling that.

Perhaps we don't know why our kids are storming, or maybe we're locked into the thoughts that they're being manipulative, disrespectful, or uncooperative. I know I used to marinate in thoughts like that all the time. These thoughts trigger us and make us even more uncomfortable with our kids' big emotions.

Here's what I know with a hundred percent certainty now. If we want our children to learn how to manage their emotions, we have to let them see us managing ours, managing them well. As a family, feelings should be spoken about openly and how they impact people.

So you can say to your kids, I'm really tired at the moment, so I'm finding it hard to be calm. I'm really stressed right now. I'm finding it difficult not to get impatient. I'm thinking about something else right now so I'm finding it difficult to listen to you. I'm really upset right now at the fighting that just occurred between you and your brother. So I need a moment to regulate myself.

You can talk about how your body feels and what you can do or what you're doing to try to remain calm. You can even ask your kid or kids what they would do. When your child is getting frustrated, link their body with the emotion with something like wow, your muscles look really tight right now. Are you feeling frustrated?

Then you can talk about what you would do when you're frustrated and your muscles get tight. You can practice together with clapping or jumping jacks or a dance party or breathing exercises as a way to work all of this cortisol out of the body.

Sometimes it's also fear of judgment from others, embarrassment, or fear of where this all might lead that triggers us. Sometimes it can be fear of

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judgment from others, whether they're strangers or our own family, embarrassment, or fear of where this all might lead that causes us to get uncomfortable with our kids' big emotions. Sometimes it can be things like fear of others, both strangers at aisle six of Target or our own extended family, or embarrassment or fear of where this might all lead that causes us to be uncomfortable with the big emotions going on.

This can lead to anger and jumping into storming right alongside our children. That's always an opportunity to model taking a pause, regulating yourself, and returning to a calm state where we're comfortable with being uncomfortable. Yeah?

So here's some key points from today's episode that I want you to remember. It never hurts to write these down and pin them on your dashboard, your mirror to review when you brush your teeth, the refrigerator so everybody in the family can see them.

Number one, don't take your kid's storming personally. Please, I beg you, do not take their storming personally. Number two, be comfortable with your kids' big feelings or be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Leave space for the big feelings. Don't be in a rush to make them go away, push them down, or solve the problem. Leave space for the big feelings. Acknowledge them. Let them have them.

Number three, understanding that your kids are not giving you a hard time, they're having a hard time. This alone can be an absolute game-changer in connecting with your kids and getting maximum cooperation. Part of peaceful parenting is getting comfortable with your kids expressing their feelings in a way that although isn't always pleasant or fun and can be wildly uncomfortable at times, allows your kids to feel seen, heard, and understood, which is connection. Yeah?

Lastly, work on modeling behavior that you'd like to see. Model for your kids emotional regulation. Model being comfortable with big emotions. Model naming the emotions and connecting them to feelings in the body. Model

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calming, even when kids are storming. Model co-regulation. If you find yourself storming alongside them, model taking a pause and moving from reactive to responsive.

This is the number one way your kids are going to learn these tools and raise their emotional intelligence. We can't yell, demand, talk, lecture, or cajole them into learning these things. We have to model for them the exact behavior we want them to follow. Model, model, model.

By following, by understanding, integrating, and modeling these key points, you'll help your children feel seen, heard, and valued, which fosters deep connection. What follows connection? Cooperation. I want that for you. I want that for your kids. I want that for your entire family. So good. Yes? All right. Thank you for joining me on this episode of *Real World 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 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.