

Ep #184: The Secret to Calming Down Your Kids In Any Situation



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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 be with you here today. I just got back from visiting my entire extended family in Missouri for the 4th of July. Happy 4th to you Americans. Let me tell you all something, Midwesterners, man, they know how to celebrate the 4th of July. It was so fun.

I caught a little cold on the way back. My voice is a little scratchy today. So I'm sorry about that, but I did not want to delay bringing you this episode. It's important and I know you're going to love it. So let's dig in.

Today I want to go deep into a powerful technique that can help you calm your kids down under any circumstances. It is the **connect and then, and that's the bolded, all caps, underlined word, connect and then redirect**. Very, very, very useful tool, and I'm going to explain how, when, and why. But first let me share a little story with you about my own journey with this tool.

You see before I embraced peaceful parenting, I struggled with my son Malcolm, who at the time was about four or five before I embraced peaceful parenting. This month he's going to turn 20, which is sort of hard to believe. But whenever Malcolm was upset, when he was little and he was strong-willed and defiant and had big feelings.

Whenever he was upset, I would immediately expect him to calm down by me just telling him to do so. I'd give him instructions and, if I'm honest with you, I expected him to listen immediately because I'm the parent, and I had his best interest in mind and I knew better. But of course it didn't work that way.

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Malcolm would be storming and completely dysregulated and deep in his emotional brain, the right side of his brain. He couldn't just switch to logic because he had an underdeveloped brain, and he was overwhelmed by his emotions.

The inability to switch to logic is normal, especially considering your child's developmental capabilities and brain development. Let me say that again. That's too important for you to zone out and miss that while you're driving to work. A child's inability to switch immediately from emotion to logic is normal. It's normal. It's because of your child's brain development and where they're at with their capabilities and their brain skill set.

So let's talk about why this is happening. When our kids get upset, at any age by the way, at any age, I'm not just talking about two or four year olds here. This applies to two, four, seven, nine, 11, 14, 15, and sometimes 20 year olds.

When our children are upset, their emotional brain, which is the right side of their brain, takes over. They're flooded with thoughts and feelings and hormones, fast-acting hormones, and all of this means they can't access in the moment the logical part of their brain, the left brain, right away. That's proven. That's science.

This is where many of us go wrong because we don't know this and we don't understand this, which is why I felt like it was so important to share this information with you right now today. Because if you can really absorb this and learn it, I promise you this can be a complete game-changer. Not only in your parenting, but in your relationship with your kids at any age, and in how you ultimately feel connected to your kids and feel about your parenting ability.

Because not understanding this is where many of us go wrong because we try to reason with our kids or give them instructions when they're not in a state to really understand and process that information. So what can we do

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instead? Well this is where the connect and then and only then redirect approach comes into play.

So first step is we need to connect with our children emotionally. This means acknowledging their feelings, showing empathy, and validating what they're experiencing, even if we don't agree with their feelings. Connecting with your kids feelings and offering empathy does not, capital N-O-T, does not mean you agree, condone, or sanction their feelings. You're simply offering empathy that in this moment this is how he, she, or they may feel.

Many parents are afraid that in connecting in these storming moments that it will mean that you're agreeing with, coddling, or worse yet permitting the feelings occurring. You can see that your child made a mistake and is the one in the wrong or the one that caused the big storm or the mistake or the situation. You can see this and still offer connection and empathy. Then only after you've made this emotional connection can you start to guide them with logic and reasoning.

Now you might be thinking this sounds great Lisa, but how do I actually do it? Okay let's break it down. Imagine your child's having a meltdown because they can't find their favorite toy, and they're whining and I mean full-on whining, crying, and refusing to put their shoes on.

Instead of immediately telling them to calm down and look for it logically, you start by getting down to their level and saying something like, I see you're really upset because you can't find your toy. That must be so frustrating.

Now here's the thing, the simple act of acknowledging their feelings will make a huge difference. After connecting, you can help them think logically about the situation. You can say hey, let's take a deep breath together and then think about where we last saw the stuffy or the truck or the toy. This shift from emotional connection to logical reasoning helps their brain integrate both responses, leading to a more calm and cooperative child who can actually think about where they might have left the toy.

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Now let's consider an example with a tween or a teen. Suppose your teen is upset because you've asked them to turn off their video game and do their homework. Instead of immediately insisting that they follow your instructions, you might say something like I know you're really into this game right now, and I get that it's hard to stop. That can be frustrating when you have to stop doing something you really enjoy. By validating their feelings first you're connecting emotionally.

Then you can redirect with logic with something like, let's set a timer for 10 more minutes of play and then we can tackle the homework together. This approach helps them feel understood and more willing to cooperate.

Peaceful parenting is all about witnessing ourselves, our kids, and our ability to stay grounded and not match our kids escalated emotions. While this approach may be harder to learn and put into place initially, it ultimately becomes easier for both the parent and the child. It fosters a better connection, one where your child can feel seen, heard, and valued, and that, my friend, leads to more cooperation because cooperation naturally follows connection.

Here's what I know after 16 years as a master certified parent coach. Going in with left brain logic to their right brain emotions often reactivates the current storm and even escalates it to the next level. I know you've probably experienced that. You're probably thinking Lisa I don't need 16 years as parent coach to understand that. We've all been there. We have the best of intentions. We love our kids, and we want to explain why they can't have a cookie or stay the night at their friend's house or not do their homework.

So we go in with our left brain logic. The problem is they're in their right brain. They're in their emotional side of their brain. When we go straight in with that logic, we often reactivate the storm and often escalate it to the next level.

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The brain cannot think with the left side, and it definitely can't learn if the person is distressed. Instead, connecting right brain to right brain, your right brain to their right brain using empathy and emotion and then when a calmness is settled, taking the child to the left brain together not only calms the child but also helps their brain to integrate what you're saying and integrate the emotional and logical responses.

This method of connecting first emotionally and then logically is essential for helping children manage their feelings, learn the lesson you're trying to teach, help them feel safe with you, and know that they can handle their emotions. When we're doing this, our kids come to see us as someone they can co-regulate with which raises their emotional intelligence.

Amazing, yes? I mean who doesn't want that for their kids at any age? All of this is available just by bringing the connect and then and only then redirect tool into your parenting toolbox.

Let's look at some practical examples. If your child is upset about having to leave the park, instead of insisting they stop crying and get in the car, you might say I know you're sad. I know you're sad to leave the park because you were having so much fun, and it's so hard to stop doing something when you're having fun. See this validates their feelings.

Then you can redirect by saying how about we plan our next visit? Let's think about what we want to do next time we come to the park. This helps them transition more smoothly because they feel understood.

Here's another example. If your child is upset and frustrated about homework instead of insisting they just sit down and get it done, you might say I can see you're really frustrated with your homework. It's really tough when assignments are overwhelming, or you're tired and don't want to keep working. See how this validates their feelings?

Then you can redirect by saying how about we take a short break and then get back to it. We can break it down into smaller steps so it doesn't have to

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feel so overwhelming. Can you see how this approach helps your child feel more supported and willing to engage in their homework?

Let's consider a situation involving sibling conflict. If your child is upset because their sibling took their toy, instead of immediately telling them they have to share, or they had a turn earlier and stop fighting, you could say I see you're really upset because sister took your toy or because it's sister's turn. It's hard when you want to play with something and someone else takes it. That's validating their feelings. Then you can redirect by saying let's talk to sister together and find a solution that works for everyone. Maybe we can take turns, or you can find another toy to play with.

This is going to help your child feel heard. After they feel heard, you're working on teaching them problem-solving skills because you connected and then redirected. See how this works?

Okay here's another example regarding bedtime. If your child is upset about having to go to bed and is resisting, instead of insisting that they go to bed, you know you're tired, it's bedtime, you have to go to bed. You might say hey sweetheart I know you were having a lot of fun, and I know you don't want to go to bed yet. Oh my gosh it's so hard to stop playing when you're enjoying yourself.

Okay there we're validating their feelings. Then we can redirect by saying how about we read a story together before bed and we can pick your favorite book. That way you can have a little more fun time before sleeping. This is going to help your child transition to bedtime more smoothly because they first feel understood and then the redirect is to involve them in the process.

I really want to encourage you to commit to trying this approach. What I know with 100% certainty is that it is an absolute game-changer for your family dynamics. Start small, be patient with yourself, and remember it's a learning process for both you and your kid or kids.

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So as we wrap up today I want you to remember these key points. Number one, connect emotionally first. Connect right brain to right brain. Step two, validate their feelings. Then and only then step three, which is then redirect with logic and reasoning. This supportive approach not only calms your child, but it strengthens your bond with them and it raises their emotional intelligence. All the while they rest in the safety of co-regulating with you. So I want to challenge you to give it a try and see the difference it makes. Yeah, can you do that? All right thank you for joining me today.

I have a special favor to ask. If you found this episode, this tool, or this podcast *Real World Peaceful Parenting* in general helpful, I ask you to please share it with other parents who might benefit from it. Don't forget to follow me over on Instagram at The Peaceful Parent for more tips and support. Okay, until next time 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.