

Ep. #217: Perfect Imperfection – Why Your Parenting Mistakes Aren't Failures



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. I am fresh back from visiting my son last weekend where we had an amazing time and just a real opportunity for in person connection and some good memories and some laughs and really just. An amazing time. So a big shout out to Malcolm and thank you for such an amazing weekend.

So I want you to imagine this. It's a busy weekday morning. You're already running late. The toast is burnt. You can't find your car keys. Your child is still in pajamas. When you all should be heading out the door for school. You feel the pressure mounting inside of you, that familiar tightness in your chest.

You know, that heat rising up your neck, and then it happens. You snap. Your voice gets louder than you want, and way harsher than you intended. Can you please get dressed now? And immediately, you see your child's little shoulders drop. And in that moment, the thought that crashes into your mind, isn't about how to fix this situation.

It's that familiar voice whispering, Great job. There you go again. You're failing at this whole peaceful parenting thing again. Yeah? I know I've been there. And maybe you've been there too. That place where one moment of losing your cool feels like it erases all your good parenting moments. That place where you wonder, Am I doing irreparable damage?

Because I'm not the perfect parent. I'm not the always calm parent. I think I should be, or I want to be. Well, if that's you, if you've ever felt like you're failing because you're not parenting perfectly, then today, my friend, this episode is for you and dedicated to you because today we're going to talk about something that needs to be shouted from the rooftops.

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Are you ready? There is no perfection in parenting. There, I said it. And let me say it louder for the people in the back. There is no perfection in parenting. Here's the truth, my friends, and I want you to really let this sink in. Babies cry and they fuss. Toddler's tantrum melt down and say no. Kids talk back and roll their eyes and sass you.

Teenagers test boundaries. And none, I repeat none of this, means you're failing or doing it wrong. None of it. One of my clients, let's call her Emma, came to me in tears last month. She'd had what she called a complete mom meltdown after her four year old refused to get dressed for the third day in a row, turning a simple morning routine into a 45 minute power struggle.

Emma told me, Lisa, I just lost it. I yelled and I threatened to take away his favorite toy, and then I saw his little face crumple. And I felt like the worst mother in the world. Sound familiar? I bet it does. Here's what I told Emma and what I want to tell you right now. We get to be human and make mistakes.

We get to lose our cool once in a while and navigate repair. We get to model imperfection. So our children know that it happens to all of us. Let me say it again, because it's so important. We, you, me, we get to model imperfection. So our children know that it happens to all of us. Take a moment right now.

If you're driving, keep your hands on the wheel, but take a deep breath. If you're folding laundry, washing dishes, or just sitting with a cup of coffee, take a deep breath with me, breathe in

and out, and let this sink in. If you weren't perfect today. You aren't failing. Your child can still know they're safe and loved. You can still foster connection. You've got this and I've got your back on this journey. So I think we need to address the elephant in the room. The truth is you don't yell at your kids because you're a bad parent or a bad person.

You yell sometimes because your nervous system gets overwhelmed when interacting with their under developed nervous systems. Let that sink in for a moment. You yell because your nervous system. gets overwhelmed when

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interacting with their underdeveloped nervous system. Your child's brain is literally under construction.

Their prefrontal cortex, the part responsible for impulse control, decision making, and emotional regulation, won't be fully developed until they're in their mid 20s, around 25. And when their underdeveloped nervous system bumps up against your adult overstimulated, sometimes, nervous system, especially when you're tired, stressed, or triggered, those moments of dysregulation happen.

And here's something uber critical that I want you to understand. Beating yourself up when you lose your cool isn't what actually helps us stop yelling. I remember working with a dad, let's call him James, who would spend hours feeling guilty after yelling at his kids. He'd buy them presents, let them stay up late, and basically compensate for what he saw as his failure.

But guess what? The pattern of guilt and compensation wasn't helping him yell less. If anything, it created this cycle where the kids learned that after dad yells, They get presents and special privileges. What actually helps is having an understanding for yourself, for your kids and everyone, recognizing that it's challenging to regulate our behavior, our volume and reactions.

When we feel scared flooded and overwhelmed, so I want you to try something with me right now Think about the last time you lost your cool with your child. Maybe it was this morning. Maybe it was yesterday Maybe you raised your voice or said something you wish you could take back or used a tone That didn't reflect the parent you want to be now instead of jumping into that place of guilt or shame I want you to get curious Not furious at yourself and ask yourself, what was happening right before I reacted?

Was I hungry? Was I angry? Was I lonely or tired? Was I triggered in that moment? What did I need that I wasn't getting? This curiosity, this self compassion is what actually helps us grow and change. Not the shame spiral. Not the guilt trip. Not the internal voice saying, you're such a bad parent. You're doing it all wrong.

Even when we become skilled at regulating ourselves, In intense moments, we sometimes still lose control. I speak from experience on this one, my friend. Just

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last week, I completely lost my cool when I asked Malcolm to pick up his prescription at his local pharmacy for the third time. And he called to tell me they told him he couldn't have it due to insurance.

I felt that familiar heat rising, and boom, I was raising my voice at him before I even realized what was happening. The truth was I was tired, I was hungry, I'd already gone over all the instructions with him and I was just dysregulated and raising my voice out of frustration for the whole pharmacy system before I even realized what was happening.

But here's what's important. What did I do next? I didn't beat myself up, I didn't justify my actions. I regulated myself. I had compassion for myself. I acknowledged that I lost it. I took responsibility and I apologized. This has become our way of repair in our family. And the truth is, it leads to connection and authenticity.

Malcolm knows I screw up once in a while, and he doesn't make it mean anything about him or our relationship. He makes it mean, oh, my mom's human, and so am I. So one of the things I want you to take away from that story is what matters is coming back to apologize to our kids. When we're human not justify, but really apologize.

I'm sorry. I struggle with staying calm Sometimes you didn't deserve that. Can I have a redo? I will work on this next time What I hope you can see is that these moments of repair teach our children that sometimes we're not at our best But that doesn't make us bad. It's about developing the capacity to stay calm during challenging moments And to take responsibility when we don't.

Here's what I want you to hear, deep down in your heart. You are doing enough. And rupture and repair is part of a healthy relationship. The goal is not perfect parenting. The goal is to be a safe parent. A better parent today than you were yesterday. An open and connected parent. I mean, come on, I'm sure that even Mr.

Rogers lost his shiz every now and then. And if you don't know who Mr. Rogers is, Just know that he's pretty much the gentlest, kindest person who ever appeared on TV. So, I want to share with you three signs that your parent child relationship is

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healthy, and I want to encourage you to take these goals in, and if they're not already your goals, to adopt them.

Number one, you're in a healthy relationship when your kids feel safe enough to sometimes push back on what you say. Scared kids don't do this. Number two, you mess up and repair regularly. And number three, you don't expect perfection of yourself or your children. And if you do expect perfection or you have in the past, I encourage you, no, I beg and plead with you to please drop the perfection of yourself and of your children.

It has no place. In calm, regulated, peaceful parenting. So let's dive into that first one, because it's such an important point that many parents miss. When your child feels safe enough to disagree with you, to express their preferences, or you even have a meltdown in your presence. That's actually a sign of secure attachment, of connection, yeah?

Okay, let me tell you about this one mom in the hive. Let's call her Amanda, who came to a coaching call feeling defeated because her daughter had, quote, started talking back to her. Amanda said, she never used to do this. She was always so sweet and compliant. Now she argues about everything. So when we dug deeper, we realized that Amanda's daughter was actually showing signs of secure attachment.

She felt safe enough to express her true feelings and opinions, even when they differed from her mom's. Which wasn't all the time and everything, but it was enough for Amanda to notice. And at first she was making it mean that her daughter was defiant and difficult. And then she realized that she was creating a really safe place for her daughter to push back, to express her feelings and opinions, to express her preferences, to disagree with her mom.

Amanda came to realize that this wasn't a sign of failure. It was a sign of success of peaceful parenting. Here's the truth. A secure attachment allows for a child to learn emotional regulation within the security of knowing they're safe and even when their parents lose their cool. And for us parents, it can become an, and not an, or we aren't either getting it right or messing up.

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We aren't good parents or bad parents. So one thing you can do immediately is constantly ask yourself for the and here, not the, or move away from the, or, and move into the, and let me share some things with you that can be equally true. I can make a mistake and still be a good parent. I can do my best.

And no, that's enough. I can be strong and still need help. I can love my toddler and still want some alone time. I can learn from others and do what I think is right. And my favorite, I can be imperfect and be exactly what my child or my kids need. It does not have to be one or the other. And when I lose my cool with my kids once in a while, here's what it doesn't mean.

It doesn't mean I failed as a parent. It doesn't mean I'm a bad parent. It doesn't mean I need to beat myself up for days. It doesn't mean my child is bad. Or disrespectful or defiant. And it doesn't mean I'm mean. So now maybe you're thinking, okay, Lisa, well, what could it mean? It could mean something triggered me and I want to find out what it is.

It could mean I'm feeling overwhelmed. It could mean that I got really scared and didn't show up the way I wanted to. It could mean that I need to tune into my own needs and see where I can take care of myself. It could mean I'm still figuring things out as a parent. It could mean I don't want to be acting like this and I know I can do better.

It could mean my child is making me upset right now and I need to take a break before I respond. Kids don't magically learn emotional regulation or repair. They don't breathe it in one day in the air. It doesn't come to them through osmosis. The truth is they learn it by watching us. And one of the best ways to teach this, showing them how to take responsibility and repair after a blow up.

So now let's talk about the practical side of repair. When you've lost your cool with your child and you're not going to beat yourself up or put on the shame shawl or take a guilt trip, here is what you can do. Number one, you can wait until you're calm. Because the truth is you can't repair while you're still dysregulated.

Number two, you can check in with yourself and approach your child with a soft tone and a gentle body language. Number three, you can acknowledge specifically

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what happened earlier when I raised my voice about the spilled milk. I blah, blah, blah. Number four, you can take responsibility without excuses, which is my absolute favorite thing to model for my kid.

It might sound like I reacted in a way that wasn't helpful. Number five, you can express your feelings. I was overwhelmed, but that's not your responsibility to manage. Number six, you can apologize clearly. Again, this language is a favorite of mine. I'm sorry for yelling. You deserve to be spoken to with respect, even when I'm frustrated, angry, upset.

Insert whatever feeling you were feeling. Number seven, make a commitment to do better. Next time, I'll try to take a deep breath first. And number eight, ask if they need anything from you. Is there anything you want to tell me? About how that felt for you and finally number nine and with connection Maybe a hug or a special moment or a big deep smile at your kid depending on what they need now I want to emphasize this isn't about making yourself small or undermining your authority or making yourself A permissive parent.

It's about modeling what healthy relationships look like. It's about showing your child that people can and do make mistakes, including you. That we can take responsibility and move forward together to repair and heal. I was coaching a mom recently, let's call her Taylor, who worried that apologizing to her kids would make them respect her less.

Maybe you can relate to this. And through our coaching, what she actually discovered was quite the opposite. Her children actually began to trust her more. Because they knew she would acknowledge when she'd screwed up, made a mistake, or lost her cool. And ironically, they began to feel safer expressing their feelings because they saw her expressing hers in a healthy way.

You see that? When you repair with your child after losing your cool, you're teaching them so many valuable lessons. You're teaching them that it's okay to make mistakes, that we all do. It's part of the human experience. That we can take responsibility for our actions. The relationships can heal after difficult moments and that they are worthy of respect.

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Even when they've made a mistake themselves. Now, as I begin to wrap up today, I want to give you a homework assignment. I call it the perfect imperfect practice for the next week. I want you to notice when you're feeling hard on yourself. for not being a perfect parent. Just notice that. And when you catch that critical inner voice, pause and take a deep breath.

And then replace that critical thought with one of these statements. You can write them on a sticky note or set them as a reminder on your phone. You can replace the critical thought with, I'm learning and growing, just like my child. This hard moment doesn't define me as a parent. I can make mistakes and be a good parent.

Or repair is part of the process. This practice isn't about ignoring areas where you want to grow as a parent. It is about approaching that growth from a place of compassion rather than criticism, which creates the transformation you're looking for. Believe me, I know this. I've tried it both ways. And what I can assure you with 100 percent confidence is that approaching growth from a place of compassion creates the transformation and deepens it so much more and so much faster than beating yourself up and criticizing yourself.

And if you're resonating with what we talked about today, If you're tired of the shame spiral after hard parenting moments, and you're ready to embrace the beauty of imperfect, peaceful parenting, I want to invite you to come and be a member of The Hive. The Hive is where we're creating a revolution of peaceful parents who understand that perfect parenting isn't the goal, connected parenting is.

We're a community of real world parents dealing with tantrums, sibling rivalry, bedtime battles. And yes, our own moments of losing our cool. When you become a member of the hive, you're going to receive weekly live coaching where you and I can address your specific parenting challenges, where if you want, we can dig into them, those moments.

Of you losing your cool and figure out why, when, and how, and what to do about it. And we'll do that from a place of compassion rather than criticism. You're going to get tips and strategies for repairing after hard moments. You're going to get tools to identify your triggers well, before you reach the boiling point as a member of

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the hive, you're going to enjoy a supportive community of parents right alongside you who get it with no judgment.

And direct access to me as your peaceful parenting coach. Think of the hive as your parenting safe place, a place where you can show up exactly as you are, imperfections, struggles, and all, and find the support you need to grow into the parent you want to be. So if you're ready to come and join, I want you to head over to [thehivecoaching](#).

com to learn more about how we can support you on your parenting journey, because I want you to know you don't have to do this alone. I will be with you every step of the way. As I close out today's episode, I want to leave you with this thought. The goal isn't to be a perfect parent. The goal is to be a real one.

One who shows up, makes mistakes, repairs, and tries again tomorrow. I 100 percent promise you, your kids do not need perfection from you. They need authenticity. They need to see what it looks like to be human, to make mistakes, to take responsibility for those mistakes. They need to learn that relationships can weather storms.

And come out stronger on the other side. So the next time you lose your cool, remember this isn't evidence that you're failing, it's an opportunity to show your child what repair looks like. It's a chance to strengthen your connection through authenticity rather than perfection. Yeah. Yeah. You've got this and I've got your back, I promise.

Okay. Until next time, 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 the [peaceful parent.com](#). See you soon.