

Ep. #233: Chaos Happens — Your Calm is the Solution



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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 grateful to be with you here today, and I wanna start with something that might surprise you and honestly, it might even challenge some of what you think peaceful parenting is all about. Ready here goes. If no one's told you lately, your ability to stay calm when everything feels chaotic, is the parenting win.

Not whether your child listened the first time. Not whether they had a meltdown free day and not. Whenever they say, please, and thank you, without reminding your calm, your regulation, your ability to stay emotionally steady when their world feels upside down, that's the real legacy. You, yes, you are building.

What I'm talking about here is what we call self-regulation. The inner ability to feel your feelings without being hijacked by them. And today we're diving deep into why this matters much more than you may realize. Lemme tell you a story from 2015. Malcolm was 11 at the time. He'd come home from school one day and I could see it immediately.

You know the look when your kid walks through the door and you can just tell they're carrying something heavy. So we were shopping at Target and he wanted a new toy, and I told him no, and he got immediately mad at me and dysregulated and stuck his tongue out at me, which he had never in his life, done before.

And at this point, I was really able to regulate myself. I was really able to step in. Manage my brain, feel my feelings, and not be hijacked by them. I simply told him that I was gonna take a walk around the aisle, make a full circle, and come back to him. Later, we were in the car and I very calmly turned to him and I asked him, why'd you do that, honey?

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He said, mom, something big happened at school today, and I was mad at someone else. He said, and I couldn't believe he said this, but he said, I knew that if I stuck my tongue out at you, I could relieve the pressure. It was so amazing, and the old me would've jumped right in. I would've wanted details. I would've tried to start problem solving.

I might've lectured him on why we can't stick our tongue out at people. I would've gotten swept up in his emotions and made everything bigger and more dramatic. I'd learned something by then about regulation. I'd learned that in the heat of the moment, my job wasn't to fix his feelings or manage his stress.

My job was to stay regulated myself so that he could find his way through the chaos. So, you know what I did? I told him I needed to go to the car to get something, and I told him to stay in the toy aisle. He was 11, so he was funny, old enough, staying by himself that walked to the car. Took maybe two minutes, but the walking to the car brought me back to my higher brain.

It brought me time to think and calm down and pause and respond. And as I was walking back into target, I realized, and I want you to really hear this, I realized I had this moment of choice. Do I punish him? Do I lecture him? Do I cancel his Friday plans or do I have a real short conversation where I state my needs and we figure this out together?

And what I realized is that my brain knew because I was regulated, that I had different paths I could go down, that I had a choice and I chose to stay regulated. I chose to pause and respond. So when I got back to him and we got in the car after paying for our purchases, we had a values-based conversation about respect.

We talked about his choice and how it was not respectful, and you know, what he felt heard, he felt supported. We talked about how when he needs to relieve pressure, he could make a different choice himself. That moment taught me something profound. My regulation was the gift I could give him. Not my advice, not my lecturing, not my discipline in that moment.

Not my solutions, not my consequences, my steady, calm presence. Side note, he never stuck his tongue out at me again. But here's the hard truth. My friends, we,

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you and I, we've been conditioned. To measure parenting success by child compliance Society tells us good kids equals good parents. Society tells us if our children are behaving, we're winning, but what if we're measuring the wrong thing entirely?

What if our ability to stay calm, to remain regulated during their chaos? Is actually the real win. What if I told you that your four year old's tantrum at the swimming pool while you stayed calm and regulated was actually a massive parenting win? Because here's what's really happening. When you're regulated, you're teaching your child's nervous system what safety feels like.

You're showing them that their big feelings don't create your chaos. That helps them feel safe. Secure. You're modeling that adults can handle hard things without falling apart. Your regulation teaches more than your corrections ever could, and there's a ripple effect. One calm, regulated parent can transform an entire family system.

So let's talk about the science behind why your calm and regulation matters. Here's what's happening in your child's brain when you stay calm during their storms. Our kids' nervous systems literally sync up with ours. This is called co-regulation, and it's one of the most beautiful aspects of human development.

Your regulation becomes their regulation. Your calm becomes their calm mirror. Neurons in their brain are firing. Copying not just what you're doing, but how you're being. When you stay regulated during their dysregulation, you're literally teaching their nervous system how to find calm. This is why stating calm down doesn't work, but being calm and regulated does.

You can't talk someone into regulation or command it or demand it, or threaten it or reward it. You have to model it. Let me tell you about Diana, one of her hype members. She is a teenage daughter who's really been dusting boundaries lately. And last week her daughter came home an hour late for family dinner, and she had two of her friends with her.

She marched right in, like nothing was wrong. The old Diana pre hive would've exploded. She would've been embarrassed, angry, and reactive. She would've told

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herself her daughter was being disrespectful, and she would've sent the friends home and launched into a very loud lecture about disrespecting consequences.

But Diana's been working on her regulation in the Hive. So instead she took a deep breath, she walked in. To the kitchen and washed her hands in the sink to help her regulate herself and bring her higher brain back online. Then she walked back into the living room and greeted her daughter and her daughter's friends warmly.

She stayed calm and regulated even though inside she was frustrated, and when she felt really calm, she brought her daughter into the kitchen and told her daughter it was time for her friends to go home. Later, after the friends left. She had a really calm conversation with her daughter. She was able to set clear boundaries about communication and respect because she was coming from her higher brain, not her middle emotional brain.

And you know what her daughter said? Thanks for not embarrassing me and for of my friend's, mom, I know I should have called you. And next time I promise I will. Diana's regulation created safety for connection. Her calm made space for her daughter to take accountability. This is the neuroscience of emotional contagion in families.

When we're dysregulated, everyone catches it. And when we're regulated, everyone benefits. So let me ask you, what did chaos feel like in your childhood home? Was there dysregulation? And as you're listening to this, can you see how it might've shaped you? It might have shaped you into going to reaction when something goes wrong rather than pause and respond.

Now, here's what I really want you to hear. Being a cycle breaker or breaking generational cycles is not capital N, capital O, capital T is not about having perfect kids. It is about becoming regulated Parents. Your healing and regulation becomes. Their foundation, your calm today becomes their calm for the rest of their lives.

Now, let me myth bust for a minute, because there are some misconceptions out there about what it means to be calm and regulated. Being calm and regulated does not mean that you're being a doormat or that you're a permissive parent. It does not mean that you are never going to feel frustrated or overwhelmed.

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It does not mean you're going to automatically have perfectly behaved children, and it does not mean that you should suppress your emotions or put on a fake calm, not one bit. What true, calm and regulation does mean is that you should feel your feelings. Do it without dumping them on your kids, it does mean you can respond instead of react, and that's regulation and action.

It does mean modeling emotional intelligence and self-awareness, and it does mean creating safety in the storm through your steady presence. Yeah. Okay. Let me give you some real world examples across different ages. Let's say your toddler's having a public meltdown. Your calm regulated response teaches them that big feelings are safe and mom doesn't fall apart when I fall apart, which helps them feel safe and secure.

Let's say your tween is refusing to do chores. Your regulated boundary setting shows them that you can be firm and calm at the same time, and the boundaries don't require anger or threats or punishments. Let's say you have a teenager that's coming home past curfew. Your centered, regulated conversation demonstrates we can work through tough problems without chaos, and mistakes don't equal relationship damage.

You know, I've had to face some real hard truths about my own regulation journey. My childhood drama was showing up as dysregulation in my parenting over and over and over again. When Malcolm was little and I realized that I couldn't give Malcolm the calm, I didn't have myself, I realized I had to do the work on myself first, which is why it's called the peaceful parent, not the peaceful kid.

Learning to regulate my own nervous system, healing my own wounds, and developing my own emotional intelligence became the cornerstone of connection and cooperation. Healing yourself and learning regulation is parenting your child? It is. Can you relate to that? Does that sound familiar? Here's my other question.

What fills your emotional tank and helps you stay regulated versus what drains it and dysregulate you? Regulation is like a muscle. The more you practice it, the stronger it gets. But just like physical fitness, you have to be intentional about building it. And the oxygen mask principle applies here. You have to regulate yourself first before you can help anyone else.

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Micro moments of regulation throughout the day can really help you build your calm muscle and to help you. I wanna share the most powerful regulation tool I teach, and so it saved me many times in the moment with Malcolm. And it's what Diana used when her daughter came home late. Pause and respond rather than react.

When you pause even for just a few seconds, you give your brain time to shift from your emotional center to your prefrontal cortex where your executive function is located. This allows you to think a few steps ahead. This allows you to enforce boundaries with empathy. This is where you can discipline to teach rather than punish to harm.

I wanna leave you with three practical regulation tools that you can start using today. Number one is the pause practice. When you feel the volcano building, say to yourself, this is hard, but I am safe. You can even put your hand on your heart again. Say it with me. This is hard, but I am safe. This simple phrase helps regulate your nervous system instantly.

Instantly, and can be done anywhere at any time. Tool number two, body check. Ask yourself, what am I feeling and where? How can I help my body feel calm? Maybe it's dropping your shoulders, maybe it's taking a big, deep breath in and out, or unclenching your jaw. Number three. Is what I call the regulated reframe.

Remind yourself, his, her, or their behavior is a communication from a dysregulated nervous system, not defiance. This shifts you from taking it personally to getting curious. Now, let's be real. You're gonna lose your regulation. Sometimes you're gonna blow it and get dysregulated. We all do. But here's the beautiful thing.

Even when you mess up. There's still a win available. The power is in the repair and returning to regulation, you get to model accountability and self-regulation for your kids. You get to show them what it looks like to take responsibility for your emotions. I'm so sorry, buddy that I yelled, I got dysregulated and that wasn't fair to you.

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I'll work on that. That teaches more than perfect calm ever could. It shows your kids that regulation is a practice, not something they're born with, and it takes practice. I've been practicing this for a while now, so let me tell you what this looks like long term because Malcolm is 20 now and all these years of me working on my regulation of learning to pause and respond and instead to react.

It shows up in his life now in the most beautiful ways. Malcolm has the ability to self-regulate when life gets hard. He knows how to ask for support when he needs it. Just recently, he called me about a challenging situation. Instead of spiraling or making impulsive decisions, he said, mom, I wanna handle this well.

Can we think through this together? The relationship we have now, the trust, the communication, the co-regulation, and the mutual respect. It exists because of the regulated foundation I built when he was younger. He learned to stay calm in hard moments because I learned to stay regulated in his hard moments.

Yeah. So what do you want your child to remember about how it felt to be in your presence during the hardest moments? Chaos or calm dysregulation or safety? The ripple effect starts with you. Regulated parents raise emotionally intelligent, self-regulating kids. Those children become regulated adults who can handle life's challenges with grace.

They become partners, parents and professionals who know how to stay calm under pressure. The generational healing starts with your nervous system. Your regulation today, right now, and it echoes. Forward through generations. Your calm today becomes their superpower tomorrow. So to get there, here's your homework this week, and I want you to approach it with curiosity and not judgment.

So number one, do a daily regulation check-in before reacting to any challenging behavior. Pause and ask yourself, am I regulated right now? What do I need to get calm before I respond? Maybe it's three deep breaths. Maybe it's a quick walk to the car like I did. Maybe it's just dropping your shoulders and softening your face.

Figure out what you need and give it to yourself. Homework number two, write down one moment each day where you stay calm and regulated during chaos. No

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matter how small, maybe you didn't yell when your toddler threw food. Maybe you stayed patient during homework time. Maybe you kept your voice steady when your teenager was pushing boundaries.

This trains your brain to notice your wins instead of just your mistakes. And if you're thinking, Lisa, I wanna build this regulation muscle and learn to stay calm, but I need help. I need a lot of help in knowing how to do this in real life when my kids are pushing every button I have. Well, I want you to come join us in the hive.

In the hive, I teach parents how to pause and respond rather than react using personalized strategies that I'll create just for you. We'll practice these tools together. We'll work through the specific triggers that dysregulate you, and here's what makes it powerful. When you learn to pause and respond, you can use your executive function.

You can think a few steps ahead. You can set and enforce boundaries with empathy. You can discipline rather than punish and your kids, they'll feel connection and validation even in correction, because when connection happens, cooperation follows. And we do all this with a community of parents who get it, who are on the same journey and who are working on their own regulation as a practice.

So if this speaks to you, I want you to go right now. To the [hive coaching.com](https://hivecoaching.com) and join us because your regulation, your calm, and your healing, that's your child's foundation. That's the legacy you're building. That's the healing you're creating, and that's the foundation that will serve your kids for the rest of their lives.

I want that for you and I want that for your kids. 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](https://peacefulparent.com). See you soon.