

Ep. #236: The Day I Realized I'd Broken the Cycle



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 and a bit nervous to be with you here today. Let me set the stage for you. This past weekend I stood next to my almost 21-year-old son, Malcolm, and for the first time in my life I felt what it's like to have a relationship built on trust, not fear, no tension, no performance, just ease.

He wasn't standing beside me out of duty. He wanted to be there. Not because I demanded it, but because I earned it, but because we built it. And in that moment, something cracked open in me because I never had this growing up, not even close. There was no walking on eggshells. No need to manage moods or edit myself.

Just connection, just presence. And I wanna share that with you, not as a look at me. Is a living invitation because what I know for sure is that too many parents think this kind of relationship is either luck or fluke. And I'm here to tell you it's not. In today's episode, I'm not teaching techniques, I'm sharing proof today.

The peaceful parenting doesn't just change the moment, it changes the legacy. The work of regulation, repair and radical love doesn't just create better behavior. It creates real connection, the kind that holds when life gets hard, and that's when it hit me like a lightning bolt. This is what it feels like to have a relationship built on trust, not fear, if I'm completely honest with you, sometimes this ease between.

Malcolm and I feel so foreign to me that I actually start to walk on eggshells myself. I notice my own discomfort and have to stop and regulate myself and remind myself this is how we are. And it's good because this weekend was 100% different than any moment I ever had with my own parents. And today I am not teaching you strategies.

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I'm teaching you something much more powerful living proof that generational healing is real and that the work of peaceful parenting doesn't just shift behavior. It shifts being, yeah. Let me tell you what I didn't have growing up, and maybe you can relate to this because it's the foundation of everything.

I was determined to give Malcolm. I felt so alone as a child and a kid. A teenager and a young adult, like any minute I was going to be criticized, rejected, or told that my feelings were wrong. There was this constant undercurrent of am I safe here? Am I enough? Am I too much? I remember being about 12 years old and telling a friend in the backyard that kids are people too, you know?

After a confrontation with my parents. It felt like this profound truth to me that children deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. And later that day, I heard that parent repeating this to someone else mocking me and laughing. That moment, it left such an impression upon me, like I remember it vividly to this day.

Not just the humiliation, but the realization that even my deepest truth. The children deserve to be treated as worthy human beings with something to be ridiculed. And I guess I subconsciously made a promise to myself that day, though I couldn't articulate it yet, that if I ever had a kid, I would raise any child.

I had to feel like a worthy human being. Like they mattered every day like they were loved, not just for what they did, how they performed, but for who they were. Take a moment right now and think about this with me. What did you long for as a kid that you're determined your kids will have? What wound became your parenting North Star?

Because here's what I've learned, sometimes our deepest pain becomes our greatest purpose. The very thing that broke us becomes the thing we're most committed to healing in our kids. Fast forward to Malcolm at maybe, I think he was about nine years old. We were in Target. He was really angry at me and he stuck his tongue out at me for the first time ever.

I was shocked, dismayed, y'all. I was furious. The disrespect, the attitude he was giving me at Target, because I wouldn't buy him something he wanted. And as you can imagine, based on what I've just shared with you, my instinct, my neuro

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pathways that I had learned growing up were to react, to shame him, to make him feel as small as I'd felt in that moment with my parent all those years ago.

But something different happened that day. I had just started my parent coach training. Learned about regulation, the power of pausing and responding versus reacting. In that moment in target, I remember it vividly as well. I took a deep breath and I literally sealed my mouth shut to regulate before opening it and letting any words or noise come out.

And that pause changed everything. Not just that moment, but my entire understanding of what I could choose. I realized I had options beyond my automatic reactions. I realized I could respond from my higher brain instead of my triggered middle brain. The knowing of the choice was the game changer. It was, now listen, I'm not perfect even now.

I react sometimes. I always know I have a choice. And that awareness, that split second of possibility between the stimulus and the response, that's where transformation lives that day. In target, I chose to see beneath his behavior. I chose to regulate myself first. I chose connection over control. And in that moment everything shifted not just for him, but for me.

I felt my own power as a parent for the first time. Not power over him, but power to choose how I showed up. Here's what I want you to understand in today's episode, this connection with Malcolm that I experienced this weekend, it wasn't luck. It wasn't because I got an easy kid. It was built through a thousand quiet moments of choosing differently.

Lemme tell you what that work actually has looked like over the years. Regulation overreaction, learning to pause, breathe, and respond from calm instead of chaos every single day, multiple times a day, especially when he was little. Making the choice to feel my feelings without dumping them on him. Repair over.

Shame when I mess up and oh my goodness. I did, I do. I own it. I apologize. I show 'em that mistakes don't threaten love, that adults can take responsibility for their emotions and actions. We have this agreement on our family that we don't tell each other to chill out. It's one of our boundaries around respectful communication.

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None of us like to be told to relax or calm down or chill out. A few months ago, Malcolm called me. About picking up a prescription. I was stressed and dysregulated. We ended up hanging up the phone in an argument, both of us dysregulated, and later when I went to repair, he told me that I told him to chill out.

I don't even remember saying it in my dysregulated state, but the moment he told me, I immediately knew I'd broken our agreement and I needed to repair. So I said, Hey, I'm sorry. I know we agreed not to say that to each other, and I was dysregulated and said it anyway. That wasn't fair to you. I'm sorry.

That's repair. Owning it when you mess up, even when you don't remember doing it. Not making excuses, not getting defensive, not justifying why you did it. Just owning it, repairing and committing to doing better next time. Validation over dismissal. I've always made sure he could identify his feelings while still holding him responsible for his actions.

I feel like I need to say that again. I made sure that Malcolm could always identify his feelings and while still holding him responsible for his actions. His emotions are always valid, even in his behavior needed guidance, discipline over punishment. I taught him right from wrong without making him feel like he was wrong as a person.

We worked together to solve problems instead of me just imposing punishments. Unconditional love. This is a big one. He learned that my love doesn't disappear when he struggles, that he matters, when he is succeeding and when he is screwing up, and that there's nothing he could do to make me stop loving him being a safe place.

I listened to him even when it was loud and stormy. I stayed connected even in conflict, and I made sure that he knew coming to me with problems wouldn't create more problems for him. Finding the good, I constantly looked for what was right about him, not just what needed. Fixing when he makes mistakes, we treated them as process problems, not character problems.

He learned that making a mistake. Didn't make him a mistake, but here's what I really want you to hear. This doesn't require perfection. I'm the first one to say I

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haven't gotten it right. Every time I lost my cool, I said things I regretted. I had to repair more times than I could count. What it did require is consistency.

It required showing up. It required choosing connection over control again and again and again. So now at almost 21 years old, what does this look like now for Malcolm and I? What's the harvest of all those choices and actions and intentions? Let me share with you just some insight of who he is. Now, Malcolm doesn't spiral into shame when he makes mistakes.

This is huge, y'all. When something goes wrong, he doesn't hide. He doesn't shut down. He owns it. He names what happened, and then he asks. What do I need to do to make it right? He's not afraid of messing up because he doesn't see it as a threat to his worth. He sees it as a part of being human. That didn't just happen.

That was built through years of me responding to his mistakes with curiosity instead of criticism, which was hard for me in the beginning because it's not how I was raised. When life gets hard, he talks to me. He doesn't isolate. He doesn't numb or explode. He reaches out, not because I force it, but because he knows I'm a safe place.

That's the proof right there. Not that he avoids pain, but that he doesn't walk through it alone. One of my favorite things about him is he comes to me real, not performative. Just recently reached out when he was struggling with something in college, and here's what mattered most to me. He didn't come polished or perfect.

He came honest, frustrated, real, but open. He told me he was struggling and instead of defensiveness or excuses, he asked for reflection. He wanted time to think through the situation together, and he trusted our connection more than his own chaos. That's the legacy being raised with both love and accountability.

Love and accountability. He doesn't confuse mistakes with failure. He knows he can mess up and still be worthy of repair. Standing next to him this weekend while we were visiting all of our family together at my sister-in-law's house, I realized I don't just have a son. I have a young man who trusts himself and trusts me.

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And you know what? Sometimes that connection feels so profound. So different from anything I experienced growing up. It almost doesn't feel real. That's the truth. It almost doesn't feel real. Like I said earlier, sometimes I catch myself walking on eggshells because ease feels foreign to me around parents.

But then I pause and I remember this is what we built. This is what becomes possible when you choose healing over hurting. That's exactly why I'm sharing this with you today. Not to brag, never to brag, but because I know there are parents listening right now, and it might be you who think you've missed your chance.

Maybe you believe this kind of connection is reserved for other families. You wonder if it's too late to repair what feels broken, and I'm here to tell you yes, you, with absolute certainty, you haven't missed your chance. I know this for sure. I've been in parent coach for so long. I've worked with so many different families.

I know you haven't missed your chance, I promise. Now, maybe you're thinking, Lisa, it's too late. My kid is already a teenager. They barely talked to me. We're stuck in these patterns of conflict and disconnection. If that's you, I need you to listen to me. Really listen to this. It's only too late. If you keep parenting from the place that caused the disconnection in the first place, let me say that again.

It's only too late if you don't change, if you keep parenting from the place that caused the disconnection in the first place. But what I know for sure is the moment you choose to show up differently, even if it's messy, even if your teenager or young adult rolls their eyes, even if they push back at first.

You start to rebuild safety and safety is the soil where trust grows. I've watched teenagers soften in the presence of persistence. I've watched teenagers soften in the presence of consistent regulated love. Not instantly, but eventually I've seen families repair relationships into adulthood that felt completely broken.

Repair is always possible, but it starts with you, the parent going first. You, you have to go first. It starts with you choosing to pause instead of react. It starts with you apologizing when you mess up. It starts with you showing a regulated, even when they're dysregulated or staying regulated when they begin to get dysregulated.

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What I want you to know is this real connection, the kind that holds through conflict. Failure in growing up is not a fantasy. It's not something that happens only to other families or in movies or 30 minute sitcoms. It's a result of showing your kid or kids they're loved without condition, that their worth isn't tied to performance.

Even when they screw up, no. Especially when they screw up, they're still safe with you. When you lead with that kind of love, everything shifts. You don't just raise a kid, you raise a human who trusts themselves and trusts you. Take a moment right now. Can you imagine your kid as an adult standing next to you with the same ease I felt with Malcolm this past weekend?

Can you picture them reaching out when life gets hard instead of shutting down, can you see them knowing, really knowing that they're loved exactly as they are. That's what's possible. That's what we're working towards with every choice to pause and every moment to choose connection over control. I want that for you and I want that for your kids.

I want you to have. The same moment I had this weekend with Malcolm. So given that, here's your homework this week, and I want you to start small homework number one, the pause practice. Next time you feel that familiar surge of frustration or anger or dysregulation with your child or your teenager, or your young adult, try what I did in target.

Close your mouth, take one breath. Ask yourself, what choice do I have here? Notice how that pause creates space for a different response. You don't have to be perfect. I just want you to practice the pause, get comfortable with it, extend it out by a second or two every time you practice it. Homework number two, the connection audit.

Look for one moment this week. Where you can choose connection over correction. Maybe it's your kids struggling with homework or melting down over a shirt or a cup or something that seems small to you instead of trying to fix or teach in that moment, just see 'em be with them. Let them know they're not alone with their big feelings.

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Even if you don't agree with the feelings, just let them know they're not alone. That's it. Just two small practices this week, because transformation happens in the small moments, not the grand gestures. Now, if you're thinking, Lisa, I want this, I want that kind of connection you describe that you have with Malcolm, but I don't know how to begin.

It feels chaotic. I'm already in the thick of it, or I need someone walking with me while I practice it. Well, that's exactly why I created the Hive. Inside the Hive. You're not gonna just learn parenting strategies. You will unlearn the reactions you inherited. We will practice real time regulation. You and I, we will build the trust it takes to become your kids' safe place, and we will repair it together consistently.

This isn't a place about perfection. It's about building a relationship where your child doesn't have to be perfect to be loved and neither do you, because here's the truth. When you do this work inside the hive, you don't just heal yourself, you heal forward, you become the safe place you never had. You become the parent.

Your child will one day stand beside and say. I trust you. Not because you were perfect, but because you were present. That's the revolution. So if you feel ready right now, I want you to run. Don't walk, run to the [hive coaching.com](https://hivecoaching.com). You don't have to do this alone to we can get started right now today. I can't wait to welcome you inside.

So let me share with you that this connection with Malcolm wasn't built overnight. It wasn't built through perfect parenting or ideal circumstances. It was built through a thousand small moments of choosing love over fear, presence over perfection, and connection over control. And let me tell you, if I could build this coming from where I came from, healing what I had to heal.

So can you? Yes, you. You have everything you need inside you right now to start creating something beautiful with your kids, and it starts with your next choice right now. Your next choice, your next pause, your next moment of choosing to see them as a whole person worthy of love and respect. It's never, ever, ever, ever too late to choose differently.

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It's never too late to become the parent you needed when you were small. It's never too late to give your kid the gift of knowing they're loved, not for what they do, but who they are. That's the revolution. That's the cycle breaking, and that's what. It becomes possible when we choose to do the work of healing ourselves so we can love our children.

Well. Yeah. Yeah. 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](http://peacefulparent.com). See you soon.