

# Ep. #237: Why *You* Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool



**Full Episode Transcript**

With Your Host  
**Lisa Smith**

# Ep. #237: Why You Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool

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, and I wanna start with something that might completely shift how you think about your kids' mental health and wellbeing. What if I told you the most powerful mental health tool your child will ever have isn't therapy, medication, or perfect circumstances?

It's you. More specifically, it's the quality of the relationship you build with them. Let me share something personal that illustrates this. Malcolm is about to be 21 years old, which is really hard for my brain to comprehend. And over the years he's faced so many of the challenges that come with growing up difficult decisions about his future.

Friendship, drama failures, figuring out what to pursue in life, the pain of losing relationships that matter to him. Loss on the basketball court, not getting or reaching his full potential all the time. You know, all those big, heavy life things that can really impact a young person's mental health. But here's what's been absolutely beautiful to witness because of the constant connection.

I fostered with him over the years, through all these everyday moments, the storms, the repairs, the just being present. He has always felt safe coming to me, and it's not because I have all the answers or because I'm a parent coach or because I can fix everything. Lord knows I can't and I don't even try to fix everything.

He comes to me because he knows. I mean, he really knows that he always has a safe place to land. Just recently, he told me directly that this safety of our connection has really helped him with his mental health. The advice I give him, the solutions we work out together, honestly, those are secondary. What matters most is that he can rest in the knowledge that no matter what's happening in his world.

# Ep. #237: Why You Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool

He has this secure base to return to over and over and over again. And that, my friends, is what we're talking about today because the research is crystal, crystal clear on this. Your relationship with your kids is their greatest protective factor for mental health. Today we're gonna dive into the science behind why this matters so much, and more importantly, what building that kind of relationship actually looks like in real life, in the messy everyday moments of parenting.

So let's start with what the research tells us because this isn't just feel good parenting advice. This is backed by solid science. Study after study shows us that children with secure attachments to their caregivers. Have better emotional regulation throughout their lives. They're less likely to develop anxiety and depression.

They're more resilient when facing stress and trauma. Why? Well, here's what's happening in the brain. When kids feel safe and connected with their parents, their nervous system learns to regulate. Their brains literally wire differently. The area responsible for emotional regulation. Stress management and social connection develop more robustly.

Dr. Allen Shore, one of the leading researchers in this field, talks about how the parent-child relationship actually shapes development of the right brain, the part that handles emotions, stress, regulation, and our sense of self. But here's what's really fascinating. Kids who have secure relationships with their parents.

Show better mental health outcomes, even when they face significant challenges or trauma. The parent-child relationship doesn't prevent all hardship, but it does create a buffer or a safe harbor they can return to when life gets overwhelming. One longitudinal study followed children for over 30 years and found that the quality of their early relationships with caregivers was a stronger predictor of mental health.

Then socioeconomic status IQ or even genetic factors. So think about that for a moment. Your relationship with your kids is more protective for their mental health than almost any other factor. And here's the beautiful part. You do not, I repeat, not need to be a perfect parent to create this kind of security.

# Ep. #237: Why You Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool

You just need to be a present responsive, repair oriented parent. We need to show up consistently, not perfectly. So if relationships are this powerful with our children's mental health, the question becomes how do we actually build these kind of relationships? What does it look like in real life when your 4-year-old is melting down over the wrong cup, or your teenager is giving you attitude about curfew?

That's where we're going next. Because here's the thing, we can know that relationships matter for mental health, but if we don't know how to build these relationships in the everyday moments of parenting, the knowledge doesn't help us much. So my commitment to you today is to get really, really, really practical with you building a relationship that protects your kids' mental health.

At any age, by the way, isn't about grand gestures or perfect moments, it's about how you and I show up in the small, consistent ways. Let me walk you through what this actually looks like. You allow your child to express big emotions safely. This means when your kid is having a meltdown, you don't try to shut it down immediately.

You create safe space for those feelings. Maybe you sit nearby and you say, I can see you're really upset and I'm here with you. One of my coaching clients shared with me how her 8-year-old son was having daily meltdowns after school. Instead of trying to fix or stop them, she started saying, you're safe to have big feelings here.

I'm not going anywhere. And she just did that day in and day out. After a few weeks, he started talking about what was really bothering him at school. It took a few weeks. Yeah. And she had to just attend with him and be patient and create that safety, but he started talking about what was bothering him.

The emotions were communication, and when she made space for them, connections happened and he was able to open up. Number two, you validate their feelings even when you can't fix them. And this is a big one. When our kids feel. Seen, heard, and understood. Even in their most difficult moments, they learned that their inner world matters.

## Ep. #237: Why You Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool

They develop emotional intelligence and self-awareness. Maybe your teenager is devastated about not making a team. You can't fix that disappointment, but you can say, I can see how much this means to you. This is really hard. That validation creates emotional safety. Yeah. Okay. Number three. You apologize.

You apologize when you make mistakes. This one is so important. I cannot emphasize it enough. When you lose your cool and yell, when you're impatient, when you mess up and we all do, you repair, you say, I'm sorry, I raised my voice. You didn't deserve that. I was overwhelmed, and it's not your fault and I will try to do better.

Your kids learn that relationships can survive conflict. They learn that people can take responsibility for their actions. They learn that they're worthy of apologies when they're hurt. That's mental health protection right there. Number four, you listen more than you lecture. This is one admittedly I have to work on constantly, but I see the value of it when your kid comes to you with a problem.

If you're like me, your first instinct might be to jump into advice mode. I mean, come on y'all. I'm a coach. But what builds connection is curiosity. Tell me more. How did that feel? What do you think might help? Malcolm has told me that some of his most meaningful conversations with me. Happened when I just listened, when I was curious about his perspective, instead of rushing to teach him something or correct that listening created safety for him and as a result, he keeps coming back.

Number five, you take time to connect, not just correct. This is about intention. Yes, it is our job to guide and teach our children. It is. But if every single interaction is about behavior management, then we're missing opportunities for connection. Maybe it's 10 minutes of undivided attention after school.

Maybe it's sitting on their bed at bedtime and just talking. Maybe it's asking about their interests without any agenda, these moments of pure connection fill their emotional tank. Number six, you respect their boundaries. Both physical and emotional. When your kid says, I don't wanna hug right now, you honor that.

## Ep. #237: Why You Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool

When they don't wanna talk about something immediately, you give them space, you can come back to the topic. But in that moment, you honor their boundary. When they have a different opinion than you, you make room for that perspective. And you know what happens? This teaches our kids that their voice matters.

That their autonomy is respected. That they can trust their own instincts. I mean, who doesn't want that for their kids? Number seven, you nurture their individuality, not just who you think they should be. I see this all the time. Maybe your kid is more introverted than you hoped. Maybe they're interested in things you don't understand, like gaming and Formula One and cars.

Trust me, y'all, I know way more about Formula One racing than I thought I ever would. Connecting with your kids will do that to you. Maybe they have a different personality than you expected. When we celebrate who they actually are, instead of trying to mold them into someone else, we're protecting their mental health.

Number eight, you model self-care without guilt. When you learn to take care of your own needs, when you manage your own emotions, when you show them what healthy boundaries look like. You're teaching your kids, they matter too. You're showing them what it looks like to value themselves. Number nine, here's something really beautiful.

You're willing to grow and unlearn for them. Maybe you're breaking generational patterns. Maybe you're learning new ways of communicating. Maybe you're healing your own wounds so you don't pass them on. When our kids see us grow, they see us committed to growth. It gives them permission to be imperfect and keep learning to, yeah.

Yeah. Okay. I wanna share a story of one of our Hive members that really illustrates this. Sarah has a 12-year-old daughter who's been getting increasingly impatient and snappy with everyone in the family. Instead of focusing on fixing the impatience or punishing the attitude, Sarah started focusing on building connection.

She began validating her daughter's feelings instead of minimizing them. She started apologizing when she got impatient herself, which she admitted happened

## Ep. #237: Why You Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool

more than she realized. And she made time for connection every day with her daughter. Even if it was just five minutes, she made sure they were doing something her daughter was interested in or thinking about every single day.

And you know what happened? Her daughter started talking more. She started asking for help when she needed it. She began developing her own coping strategies because she felt safe to be vulnerable. The impatience didn't disappear overnight, but her daughter's ability to communicate what was really bothering her and navigate those big feelings of support dramatically improved.

And Sarah was able to see the impatience and the snappiness as a quest for help. A communication tool. That's the power of relationship as mental health protection. Let me paint a picture for you of what this looks like as your kids grow. Because I've been intentional about building this kind of relationship with Malcolm since he was little.

Our connection has only deepened disease, gotten older. When he is facing big decisions, he comes to me, not because he has to, but because he wants to. When he's struggling with something, he knows he has a safe place to process. Just last month, he called me about a challenging situation. He wasn't looking for me to fix it or tell him what to do.

He wanted to talk through his feelings and get perspective from someone he trusts. The call wasn't about my parenting skills or what I could fix for him, it was about the foundation of safety. We built over years of connection. Here's what I want you to hear. It's not about being perfect, y'all. I mess up all the time.

I've made so many mistakes over the years. I've lost my temper. I've been impatient. I've said things I've regretted, but we've repaired. I've repaired, we've grown together, and we've learned that our love is bigger than our mistakes, which was a new thing for me that I had to learn. I broke the generational cycle by learning that our love is bigger than our mistakes.

The research shows us that what matters is imper, perfection is presence and repair. It's showing up consistently, taking responsibility when you mess up, and staying committed to the relationship, even when it's hard. When we build these kinds of

## Ep. #237: Why You Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool

relationships with our children. We're not just boosting their mental health, though, that's important.

We're giving them something much bigger. We're giving them a template for healthy relationships throughout their lives. We're showing them what it feels like to be truly seen and valued. We're teaching them that they're worthy of love, especially during their hardest moments, and that, that my friend becomes their inner voice.

That becomes their foundation, that becomes the soft place they can return to even when they're not physically there anymore inside your home. Malcolm recently said, mom, even when I'm dealing with hard stuff and you're not around, I can hear your voice in my head reminding me that I'm capable and that you believe in me, which I can hardly say without tearing up and getting choked up.

That is the long-term impact of relationships between the parent and the child, the grandparent and the child, as mental health protection. It's not just what we do for them in the moment. It's the internal security we help them build that they will carry with them forever. Okay. I have two pieces of homework for you this week.

Number one. Choose two to three relationship builders from today's episode that resonate most with you. Maybe it's making more time to connect without correcting. Maybe it's validating feelings even when you can't fix them. Maybe it's working on listening more than lecturing. Write them down somewhere where you'll see them and review them daily.

And homework assignment number two. This week, I want you to have at least one conversation. With each kid where your only goal is connection. No teaching, no correction, no problem solving unless they ask for it. Just connect. Ask about their world, listen to their perspective. Show genuine interest in who they are, and notice what happens, not just for you but for them.

Notice how it feels for both of you to prioritize relationship over everything else. Yeah. Okay. If you're thinking, Lisa, this sounds amazing, but I need help knowing how to actually do this in my real life. Then I wanna invite you to join us in the hive. Inside the Hive, I teach parents how to effectively improve the quality of



# Ep. #237: Why You Are Your Child's Most Powerful Mental Health Tool

their relationship with their kids quickly and permanently with personalized strategies created just for you.

We will practice connection skills together. We will work through specific challenges that are getting in the way of the relationship that you want with your kids. And I will be with you every step of the way because here's what I know, you want a close, connected relationship with your kid. How do I know that you wouldn't be here listening to this episode if you didn't?

But the truth is, most of us. We're never taught how to build this kind of relationship, especially during challenging moments. And this is what's happening inside the hive. When you join the Hive, you yes, you will learn exactly how to create emotional safety. You will learn how to repair when things go wrong.

You'll learn how to connect before you correct, and how to build the kind of relationship. That protects your child's mental health for life. What are you waiting for? Come join us right now so we can get started on this. And to join, all you need to do is go to the [hive coaching.com](https://hivecoaching.com) where you can get signed up and join the community of parents who are committed to relationship first parenting.

Yeah, I can't wait to see you there. Okay. In closing, I want you to remember. You don't need to be a perfect parent to be your child's most important mental health tool. You just need to be a present responsive, repair oriented parent who prioritizes connection. Your relationship with your kids isn't just nice to have.

It's their foundation for mental wellness. Resilience and security throughout their entire life. 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](https://peacefulparent.com).

See you soon.