

# Ep. #252: Beyond the Scoreboard: Raising Leaders Through Sports



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host  
**Lisa Smith**

# Ep. #252: Beyond the Scoreboard: Raising Leaders Through Sports

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. You might have spotted it already. I have a little bit of a cold, but the show must go on. So here we are. I'm really excited to be with you all here today, and I'm even more excited to welcome a very special guest today, Jason Holzer. Today I am talking to Jason, who's the co-founder of four D Athletes, an organization that helps coaches, parents, and young athletes grow beyond the scoreboard.

What I love about Jason's work is that it's not just about performance, it's about developing the whole human body, mind, spirit, and emotional intelligence. And y'all know I'm all about emotional intelligence. In a world where kids are feeling more pressure than ever to perform on the field, in school online, Jason and his team are helping families and coaches see sports.

As a training ground for life, not just competition. We're gonna dive into what it looks like in real life, how parents can support without overstepping. Very important, how kids can build confidence to last beyond the game even more important, and how coaches can be catalysts for true growth, not just wins.

Something I'm a big fan of. So let me start by welcoming Jason to real world peaceful parenting. We're so excited to have you here today. Jason Lisa, thanks for, uh, having me. And you know, last time we really got on a podcast, it was 40 athletes. We've actually evolved it to 40 leaders because we've realized the importance of building leaders through sports.

So, uh, excited to be here though. And it's just, I feel like every time we talk it's becomes an even more important conversation, um, as parenting. Has its unique challenges at sports, especially at the youth level. It's even more kind of crazy, if you will, and kind of harder to navigate. So looking forward to the conversation today.

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Awesome. We're so excited to have you back. So you talk about building young athletes beyond wins and losses, especially via emotional intelligence, identity and purpose. What would you say to the listener who has an athlete whose identity is their wins and losses? I think first you gotta reflect on what's the end goal here, right?

And how have I helped my child form their identity of who they are as a person? Because sports is something that you do. It's not, it's not who you are, right? It's you are as somebody that has so many gifts and talents and how have I maybe. Given my kid a variety of different activities that aren't sports related, that helps them see that, you know, sports is a great thing.

There's a lot of great lessons to learn from it. But at the end of the day, we also wanted to nurture other interests and not put all of our eggs in one basket. So I think it goes back to reflecting like, Hey, you know what? Have I done the work on my end to show my child that there is more to sports in life and.

If my child is wrapped up in that identity piece, how can I show him or her that we can do other things to take them outta that element and they're still gonna be the same great person. I'm gonna show them the same love and affection and even foster some interests outside of that as well to help them kind of rewire that identity piece of it.

I would also add, I wonder what you think of this, you know, as the mom of a now college athlete who played sports really his whole life. From second grade on and always loved it. Always wanted to do it. There was no push on our part, but I also think that focusing on the effort, not the result. Right.

Really focusing on, it's not about the wins or losses, it's about how did you show up as a teammate? What effort did you give it? Yeah, the wins feel good, let's be honest. I mean, they feel good. That's why score is kept in sports, but. Sometimes you can lose a game and know you gave it your, all your absolute, every effort you had.

And sometimes you can win a game and know that you also didn't give it your all. And you can challenge yourself to do better next time, even in the face of the win.

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Yeah. You made a good point of, uh, fostering growth mindset. Did you give your best effort? And if you did, look, you know what? There's lessons to be learned and lost.

Way more so than ever you win sometimes to your point, like sometimes winning can make you complacent, right? And with my boys specifically, they hate losing. So it's a great chance for us to also help 'em identify those hard feelings, navigate them as well, work through them in a positive way so that way you get positive outcomes as well.

Um, how do you handle failure? How do you handle when things don't go your way? So I think as parents too, like you mentioned. It is focusing on that effort, but it's also being aware of, gosh, I don't like this feeling of losing. Okay, what would you like to practice? What would you like to get better at? You know?

And I think it's helping them understand like losing really are great lessons to help you identify what are your interests and if you don't like losing and if it's something that you really, you know, want to work on as something to get better at, use that as that loss as a lesson more so than a personal like, well, you know.

I'm not good anymore 'cause I lost like, no, I'm not necessarily like, it just means you just gotta practice more. Yeah. You're not gonna win every match, every game. You know, you, you're just not gonna win at all. Nobody does. Even, even the greatest of all times, don't come away with a championship every single season.

So, and you know, it does build one of a one key characteristic in life, and that is perseverance, right? Yeah. When things don't go your way, when that loss does happen, do you brush it off and do you try again? Do you focus on getting better, like we said, so perseverance is a, is a key component that we all need in any landscape of life.

If we're gonna seek success in anything we do. I couldn't agree more. I think one of the biggest lessons we as parents help our kids with is getting comfortable, being uncomfortable, right? And participating in activities like sports where there's a competition, where there's going to be a ranking or a winning and losing, whether it's a singing contest, a quiz bowl, hockey, baseball, dance, competition, cheer.

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As a parent, I would say if you go into it looking for the opportunities to help your child get comfortable, being uncomfortable, whether it's the, the nerves and anticipation before the grueling practices you don't wanna go to maybe not living up to the performance you had in mind, maybe losing resiliency lives on the other side of that, like you said.

And. I really believe this. I've been a parent coach for 18 years now, and one thing I'm clear on is if you can help your kids experience discomfort and regulate their emotions through the discomfort, it doesn't mean they have to like it, right? But regulate your emotions through the discomfort.

Resiliency sits on the other side and that opens a whole world to us as adults. Wouldn't you agree? Yeah. Yeah. And I think, you know, when we go back to like feeling emotions and processing them, like, well, what we say in our house is that all emotions are welcome and okay, it's our actions, our words, and behaviors that have the consequences.

Yeah. So you may feel disappointed that this doesn't go your way. So here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna take some space, we're gonna take some deep breathing. We're gonna talk about this another day, right? We're just gonna kind of let this sit and we're gonna ride the wave of the emotion, feel it thoroughly all the way through so that way it doesn't bleed into the next thing in our day, right?

So, and not perfect at this, right? And it doesn't always work out a hundred percent that well, but. I think one thing that we can get so caught up in is the car ride home. Well, if you would've done this, this, and this, this would've gone better. Or this, this and that. And like that's just not really helpful and actually like, you know, makes it worse.

But I think allowing and acknowledging like, Hey, you know what? That was a really tough way to end the game. You know, if I was you, I'd probably feel really disappointed as well. So let's just like have a really calm ride home and just kind of like sit in it for a little bit, like just feel it all out and then.

We could come back to it another day. I love it. I love it. I am really excited to dig into this question. Jason, I think you're gonna bring a lot of insight to this in your

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model. Parents, coaches and athletes are meant to grow together. And having been the mom of an athlete, conflict is inevitable.

Expectations, anxiety, control. What's the most common rupture you see between a parent and a coach, and how do you mediate that as the parent? Talk to the parents in a way that honors the athlete's growth and tries to preserve not only the relationship between the parent and the coach, but the coach and the kid.

Give us some insight on that. As someone who runs an organization, four D leaders, that really focuses. On growth and yeah, really help us see into that. First, I think the key thing is having a conversation with your child and aligning goals for whatever sport they're playing in. What is it that your child wants to accomplish by playing this sport?

Then it's doing the homework of, okay, what is my child's playing experience level? Are they just starting out? Have they played a little? Do they have some experience? What is the right type of coach for my kid is, does my kid respond well to the strong disciplinarian like, you're gonna do it this way, or does he respond better to somebody that has more of a easygoing approach right now in youth sports.

Sometimes it's a parent that's coaching. You don't always get to pick who your coach is, but I think asking questions like, what's your coaching style? How do you plan on playing kids? Do you give kids opportunities to play? Is my kid gonna get to play multiple positions? Right. Is character emphasized in your coaching?

Right. I think it's asking questions, number one, with your kid to get on alignment. Like, Hey, we are on the same page of what we're looking for. Then as you're searching for opportunities to play. What is that coach's philosophy and does it match with your philosophy with what you want for your kid, regardless of their competition level, regardless of if they're the best kid or if they're just starting out and they're, or a beginner, you wanna make sure, number one, your kid's playing is having fun.

She's having fun, and the best thing for them to do is play with their friends, right? Because that builds connection and. I saw a study that the number one key to, to

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longevity is the quality of your relationships. So really using sports as a catalyst to build strong relationships and build those character skills.

And let's take it a step further. Let's say I'm a parent and I, I have some concerns, or I have some questions, or I don't understand something that's happening. Maybe I, let's say I have a middle school kid. Okay. And you know. Sports is important to our family. My kid's decent things are getting real. My kid loves it.

You know, maybe it's, uh, a middle school basketball team where I didn't pick the coach or a middle school baseball team where this team is really good and the coach is new. And there's some things that I'm, I'm not quite sure about. Give me some advice on how to approach that coach in a way that gets me answers without.

Ruining the relationship. Again, it's less about ruining the relationship between you, the parent and the coach, and more about not ruining the relationship between the coach and the kid. Yeah, I think it's, it's all about the approach, right? If you come to a coach as a supportive of my child, parent, and just wanting to know, Hey, I'm just looking for what's best for my child, number one, send an email to 'em and say, Hey, I have some questions.

When is a good time for us to discuss? You're gonna do this? Probably like, you know, whether it's, once you find out who your coach is, you're gonna try to do it as soon as possible. Like not before the season starts. Maybe even after a first practice or before a first practice. Maybe it's a phone call, you know, you're, you're seeking out.

When is a good time for the coach to discuss with you? Then what you're doing is like, Hey, my goal is for my kid to play like I want him or her to play. Looking at your roster, what role? Roles, do you see my child playing on this team? And if it's not, and if your kid's not gonna get the playing time that you hope they get, you wanna consider, is this going to be an experience where they're gonna learn and grow and get better from it?

Because the coach is like, maybe he was really good at teaching character, discipline, that kind of thing, or. Is this gonna be a situation where like, man, I really want my kid to play more. I might need to pivot and find somewhere where

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they are gonna get more playing time. Right. Because the last thing you want is to be, have the accolades of being on this elite team where your kid's a practice player.

Yeah. And it's not really getting a whole lot of playing time. Yeah. And then they're, and you're stuck in this commitment that's really not helping. Your child's growth goals. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. So I mean, you know, again, every person's situation's different, right? There's no one size fits all. But if I'm me, I'm like, I want my kid developing leadership skills and playing time more so than just the accolades of being on a specific team because it looks good for me and my parenting.

I do think, and I wonder, I, I'd love to hear what you think about this. I think as the parent. You do have to be very mindful when you approach that coach with those questions because some coaches, they don't wanna tell you playing time. They, they don't like having difficult conversations. They're not good at that honesty and confrontation.

So I also think it's best if you approach it in a way that is creating a win-win. Right. That you're, yeah, no, absolutely. Absolutely. And sometimes a coach might tell you, you know, I don't know what, that's how this plenty time's gonna look like, but what I can tell you is based on the effort I'm seeing, I can let you know how much effort they're putting in at practice to earn that playing time too.

Yeah. And you can even ask him like, Hey, what are your, what are your, uh, standards for getting more play in time? There you go. I agree. Positive, positive attitude's. One of them. Being a great teammate, giving best effort, encouraging other people. Right? When like, do you take advantage of the playing time?

You do get to earn more because I have seen kids that, you know, they, they played for me. They weren't getting as much playing time at the beginning, but by the end of the year because of their positive attitude, because they gave everything they got. I put 'em in situations because I trusted them to get out and give their best effort.

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Yeah. Like we talked about before too, so, you know, if you are on a team and say, Hey, what are your standards for plan time? What does that look like? That's great. What can I encourage my son to do as well too? Right? So that way they can also earn that plan time. And you, as you know, when kids earn something, they feel, they take more ownership of it and it feels more like it's a, it's a big uplifting thing for them as well.

Totally. I mean, I think that's all of us, you know. Now that we're paying a bazillion dollars for our iPhones, they have a lot more value. You know, you, you're probably too young to know this, but in the nineties they handed out cell phones like they were candy. I mean, you could get a new cell phone every three months, a Nokia, a Motorola.

You just went into the store and they were like, here, have a phone on us. And I don't think most of us valued, certainly people weren't putting cases on their phones and cleaning 'em and you know, 'cause it was like, Hey, I lost my phone. I'll just get another one. Nowadays these things that we pay almost a thousand dollars for have a lot of value to us.

Right? Yeah. So I agree with you. I think that that positioning it as how can my kid earn more playing time and then communicating that to your kid. This isn't a guarantee. I didn't go fight for this for you. I got information about how you can earn this in the classroom, on the field, you know, that kind of thing.

Earning it is, I mean, that's how the real world works as adults. So we as well have those conversations with our children and sports is a great way. To, for the kid to see decisions equal consequences. Right. I practice, I get better. I get playing time. Like it's a great way to see life in real time. Yeah.

Let's say that you're, you, you're talking about middle school kids. I would have that middle school kids sit with me as I'm talking to the coach, so that way they see the interaction, the conversations, and then your middle school kid can follow up like, Hey coach, just quick check in. What do you think? Is there something I can get better at?

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You know, the things we talked about in the parent meeting, like I'm really working on being a great teammate, giving 'em my best effort. You know, how's this, you know, and just like giving that kid some, like more ownership and responsibility of like if you really want the playing time. Okay. Then it's also your job to have conversations with the coach as well, to talk with them about, are these things that we talked about.

Where, where do you see me at? What can I do better? Asking those questions too, you know, maybe not every practice, but it's like, you know, once every couple weeks or so. Right. And then getting that feedback and Yeah. As you and I know, uh, being able to take feedback is, is also another important skill as well.

Yeah. Okay. Then the other side of the coin that I want to talk about for a moment is, you know, they're kids and they're meant to have FUN and you know, whether you're doing. Cheer or singing competition or art classes, or baseball or tennis. I think as parents, we have to remind ourselves that there is a very large component of this, that it's just meant for kids to go out there and have fun, enjoy it.

You know, my husband, all the years, Malcolm played basketball all the years. We'd pull up to a tournament or pull up to a game in the car. We'd get outta the car. And Dave would look at Malcolm and he'd say, have fun. Mm-hmm. Have fun. And I think it served my kid. And sometimes fun was in the form of concentrate hard and win.

You know, my son had the opportunity to be on a lot of winning teams and winning is fun, but there was also just play hard and be with, like you said, people that you connect with. And have experiences and I think sometimes as parents we forget or we get competitive ourselves and we get tangled up in the competition and we just forget that it's meant to be fun.

Talk about that. A lot of kids have sports that they really wanna practice and excel at, right? Like they, like for your son, it was basketball, right? He really focused on a lot of the. Technical skills to, to improve and get better, which made him a college athlete, college basketball player. It's also important to have activities that are just, you go out and do for fun too, to kind of help, like make it more relaxing.

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Like me and my son, we've gotten into pickleball lately. We're not on like a, we don't practice it. We just go out and do it because it's, it's different. It's unique. The child's brain craves variety, right? Yes. So. If you can have activities that you just go and do that are not structured, they're not organized, you know, that will also help relax kids that, that are in their structured, organized sports.

Yes. The key thing you can do is understand that there is, that being relaxed and giving your best effort can coexist. I think there's this myth, like you have to be super intense, super focused, super serious. To be at your best level. Well, actually, science says that the more relaxed you are and a combination of giving your best effort, that's when you play your best.

Not when you're overthinking, not whenever you're so serious that you can't enjoy it. Like have that joy of play. Yeah. But also have that competitive spirit at the same time. Yeah. I think athletes call that being in the flow, right? Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Whenever you're over critical, whenever you're over, you know, you're trying too hard.

Then you actually end up doing worse, you know? Yeah. So, yeah, I would say the Celtics basketball player, Jalen Brown is a good example of that. You know, he's just, he's on the court, he's in the flow, you know? Yeah. And, uh, yeah, Tom Brady was also a good example. I feel like Steph Curry is that too. Like they, they get themselves warmed up, but they're, they're very, like, they're not tense.

They're just kind of, they're there. They, they enjoy it. They love to practice as well. They love the feeling of getting better. You know, I think that's key too, is like, how do you teach your kids to love to practice getting better? Like, and so like say, look how, and you can do that by reflecting. Whenever you start it, man, like you, you're making like five out of 25 shots.

Yep. Yep. And now look how much better you've got. Now you're making 20, 22 out of 25. Yep. Just because you love to practice. You know? I feel like Aaron Judge is a good example of that too. The Yankees. Mm-hmm. He steps up to the plate and he just looks like, like he's, you know, in eighth grade baseball, you know, he is just.

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I mean, he's focused, but he's not super tense or tight, you know? And Yeah. Like he just knows when he is gonna whack that ball out of the park. Yeah. The playoffs showed like he had his best playoff ever because he was relaxed and Yep. He, he personally had a great series against the Blue Jays, but, and again, it goes back to like, you know, it, would anybody question his effort?

Absolutely not. Like he was definitely given his best effort. But he was also, you saw him smiling in the dugout. Yeah. You saw him like giving, uh, positive body language to his teammates. You know, I think all of those things will, will lead to more positive sports experiences for, for coaches, for parents, and most importantly for kids.

Yes. I mean, it's about the kids. It's about the kids, right. We're we're there for the kids. We have to check ourselves, right? That we're not living through their experience or we're not overinvested, or we don't love them more when they do well, or we're not disappointed if they don't perform. I, you know, so let's turn our attention to this last and final question.

Give us some advice, Jason, as a parent, as a teacher, as a coach. As someone who leads other coaches, give us some advice on how to be good fans on the sidelines. The number one question you can ask your kid is, what kind of fan do you want me to be? I love that you say this. I, I love this because I have two kids.

One of 'em, uh, is more expressive, extroverted, the one's more introverted. And so when I ask that question, I got two different answers. One of 'em was like, I love hearing your voice. I love whenever you other one was like, I do the best whenever you, I don't hear either you or mom. I was like, check. Got it.

And what I've started doing with my son, my, my 9-year-old son is like, Hey, if you were, if you were your own coach, what would you tell yourself after this practice? How would you coach yourself? And then that as a parent. You get some insights on what they're thinking, on, what they wanna get better at, and then you ask them like, do you, would you like me to help you with that?

Or do you, do you want to figure this out with your coach? Because I'm happy to support you in that way, but if you think you and your coach can handle it, I'm here

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to just be somebody that, that loves you and gives you that nurturing support too. But if you wanna say, Hey, I want you to help me play Catch in the Backyard so I can get better at catching.

Sounds great, man. Happy to do that too. So, you know, I think it's. It's asking the kids, getting their perspective and then listening and then following through. 'cause they're giving you little nuggets about how they want this sports experience to go for them. And at the end of the day, it is their experience.

It's not yours, you know? So those are some things that I think will help the asking, having those kind of questions to ask them, because every parent just wants insights on what's going on in their child's minds, right? Yes. And by asking those questions. You get it, you get some of those little nuggets.

Parents, listen, that is solid gold. That Jason, that is, I, I only wish you would've been in my ear when Malcolm was little. That is so like, that is so helpful for you parents and I don't care what age your kid is. Ask them. Ask them, what kind of fan do you want me to be? It it creates connection because the kid feels seniored and valued.

It gives you an idea of what they're looking for. You know, you don't wanna be that, that loud fan on the sidelines if it distracts your kid, right? If it impedes their performance. And you don't wanna be the quiet fan if your kid's looking for you, if they want to hear your voice. And it also sets up a relationship where.

Over the years, the kid can give the parent feedback like, Hey dad, you know, I don't like when we're up 20 and you're still the loudest guy clapping in the audience. Or, I don't like when you get up and leave the gym to take a phone call or it, it creates a relationship where the kid can give the parent, the mom or the dad feedback on what the experience is like for them.

Yeah, I think you know too, like kids evolve and change as well, so every once in a while you might ask like, Hey, you know what? Last time I asked this question, this is how you wanted me to be. Like, is this still how you want me to show up for you or has it changed? And if it has, then again that's like just giving them the autonomy to say, Hey, you know what?

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I understand at 8-year-old, this is how you work. Now you're 11. Is this still. You Right. You know, so, and you can also say to your kid if something changes, feel free to tell me. Gimme a heads up. Lemme, you don't have to, you don't wait for me to ask. Yeah. I know that when Dave and I get the opportunity, uh, you know, Malcolm's many states away, so we only get in person to a few games a season.

But even now, when we get to a game, we show up as basically anonymous fans. It's a very different experience than high school. Right where, because it's a big gym, there's a lot of people there. We are very, you know, we're, we're just quiet. Whereas in high school it was a smaller gym. We sat with all our friends, we were much louder.

Cheers. It does change over the years and it is a different experience, but I really love the nugget of the parent asking the kid. W, you know, what kind of fan do you want me to be in? If you have a really little kid, you might have to give him some, a menu, you know? Do you want me to be cheering on the sidelines?

Do you want me to be quiet? You know, do you want me to be clapping loud? Do you want me to just do nothing? It is a great question to ask, and it's just solid gold. You gave us that nugget today amongst your other input, so. Thank you, Tim. Yeah. Yeah. I think it's, I think it's important to give kids some autonomy into places where they can have it, right.

Some things, parents, you just have to make the decision for 'em, right? Right. But if you have windows of opportunity where they have a little bit of say in what goes on in their, in their lives, I think it just, it also builds their confidence moving forward that they have some say in some things that happen for 'em.

'cause you know, so much of a kid's life is, you know, either a teacher's telling 'em what to do or a parent's telling 'em what to do, or, you know. Coach. So finding, finding those windows where they have some sort of say that their voice is heard is so good for them to build that confidence in. I love it.

Anything else you wanna share with us before we wrap up and tell people where to find you? You know, I think, and you can probably attest to this as your son's

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down college, but really just slow down and enjoy the journey because however long your kids play sports. It will come to an end and I, I really try to stay present.

Like, man, I'm really glad I get to take, I'm so thankful I get to take kids to practice and be with them and this, and have fun with them because I know one day I'm gonna miss it. Right? So, slow down, have fun. I, I love watching my kids play. It is like the most, it brings me the most joy. Just seeing them out there in their little uniforms, giving their best effort, trying their hardest.

And you know what? Like, at the end of the day, whether they win or lose, it's gonna be okay. Yes, it's gonna be just fine. Yes, I agree. Watching Malcolm play sports over the years was a joy and it goes fast. I mean, it's, you're right, it, it comes to an end at some point. Even LeBron James is gonna retire at some point.

It comes, maybe, we'll see. I don't know, even Tom Brady threw in the towel, you know? So you're right though. And I think to be present and enjoy it, release the pressure, and just be in the moment. Enjoy the experience as a family is great advice for all the listeners. So, Jason, if people wanna learn more and they wanna reach out to you, they wanna, they want to, uh, connect with you, tell 'em where they can find you.

Yeah. Check us out at uh, for d leaders.com. That's for the letter d word leaders altogether.com. I'm on LinkedIn, social media, Instagram as well if you'd like to reach out to me personally and just excited to help people have. Better, more wholesome, positive, uh, sports experiences that you know will help them throughout the, their entire life.

So beautiful. That's four d leaders.com. Jason, thank you again for being here today, for sharing your wisdom, your experience, your leadership, and your nuggets. I know that we're all thinking, wow, I needed to hear that today. So thanks again for joining and. I'll look forward to having you on again in the future.

Thank you all for listening. I loved being with you today, and until we meet again, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

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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.