

**Ep. #255: The One Thing That Ended Our  
Constant Battles (No Threats, No  
Punishments, No Yelling)**



**Full Episode Transcript**

With Your Host  
**Lisa Smith**

# Ep. #255: The One Thing That Ended Our Constant Battles (No Threats, No Punishments, No Yelling)

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 mean that grateful because today is the day before Thanksgiving here in the United States, and as I'm sitting down to record this episode, I'm thinking about what am I truly grateful for this year? And you know, it's at the top of my list.

You, yes, you parents who show up here week after week, listening, learning, and working on yourselves. Trying to break cycles and do things differently for your kids because what I know for sure is this takes courage and commitment, and I don't take it for granted that you're here with me today. So thank you.

Thank you for trusting me with your hardest parenting moments. Thank you for being willing to grow. Thank you for choosing connection over control, even when it's hard. Now, I know that as we head into this holiday season, no matter where you are in the world, no matter what you celebrate, things are about to get intense.

Maybe as you're listening to this right now, you're preparing Thanksgiving. Maybe you're cooking, cleaning, or trying to manage everyone's expectations about who's sitting where and what time dinner starts. Maybe you're already anticipating the family gathering in December. Where your strong-willed kid is going to melt down because grandma has different rules or there are too many people or the schedule's completely thrown off.

Maybe you're dreading the next few weeks because you know the holidays mean more chaos, more over stimulation, more power struggles with your kids. And here's what I want you to know. What if you could walk into December with tools that actually work? What if the holidays stress. Didn't have to mean constant yelling and guilt.

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Well, my friend, that's what today's episode is about, and it's what the class that I wanna invite you to that I'm teaching on December 9th is all about. But before I tell you about this class, I wanna share with you a story many, many, many years ago when I was just making the shift from dominant into peaceful parenting.

Malcolm and I were in a particularly hard season. Bedtime had become a battlefield every single night. Maybe you can relate. I'd ask him to put his pajamas on. He'd argue. I'd ask him to brush his teeth, he'd doddle. I'd ask him to get in bed, and suddenly he needed water or to remember something important he had to tell me, which felt like it took forever or decide his pillow was uncomfortable.

Me at the time, I was exhausted. I was frustrated, and I was at my limit. I remember one particular night I asked him to put his pajamas on and he said, no. I asked him again. He said, no again. And the truth is I could feel the volcano building inside me. You know it, that familiar heat rising up through my chest, tightness in my jaw and words forming that I knew I'd regret.

And on this particular night, something made me pause. Maybe it was pure exhaustion. Maybe it was desperation, maybe it was grace. It was probably the tools I was learning in my parent coaching program. So I took a pause and instead of exploding, I took a deep breath and I asked him a completely different question.

I didn't ask, why won't you listen to me? I didn't ask, what is wrong with you? I asked. Hey bud, what's making this hard for you right now? Tell me. And then I glued my mouth shut so he could answer. And you know what he said? He said, mommy, I don't want the day to be over and my pajamas feel weird, and I can't find my stuffed animal, and I'm just having a hard time.

And in that moment, everything shifted for me. I realized he wasn't giving me a hard time. He was having a hard time. He was struggling. He wasn't trying to defy me or disrespect me or make my life difficult. He was overwhelmed over capacity for the day, and his nervous system was dysregulated and he needed help, not punishment.

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And what I realized is that all my yelling and all my threatening and all my, because I said so that I had done in the past was making it worse. Not better. Here's what I realized that night that I had been using power over Malcolm, trying to force compliance through volume, noise, threats, and intimidation.

It's hard to admit to this day, it's still hard to admit this to you, but I really try to show up and be honest with you, the put your pajamas on now or you're losing screen time tomorrow, the get in the bed now, or no story. I'm going to count to three, and if you're not ready, are all power over tactics.

It's all trying to control him through fear. And you know what? None of those tactics were working. And you know why? Because strong-willed kids don't respond to power over. They push back harder. So that night I tried something different, I said. I hear you. This feels hard right now. What would help? He thought about it for a minute, and he looked at me and he said, can you help me find my stuffed animal and can I change it into the soft pajamas?

And I said, of course. And just like that bedtime happened without a fight, without tears, without me yelling. Not because they gave in, not because I let him be in charge. Honestly, because I shifted from power over to power with, I was still the leader. I was still setting the boundary. The bedtime was happening, but I was doing it alongside him, not dominating over him, and everything changed.

Let me break this down for you, because this framework, power over versus power with is the key to understanding why traditional discipline fails with strong-willed kids. This is what power over looks like. Do it because I said so do it or else I'm the parent, you're the child and you'll do what I tell you.

It's control through fear, control through intimidation, and control through dominance. And that might be hard for you to hear, and I get it. There's no judgment coming from me, I promise. And the truth is, for some kids, power over works. Compliant kids, kids who are hardwired to naturally please their parents and follow the rules.

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They'll respond to power over tactics. I still don't recommend them power over, but they will respond without a lot of pushback. But strong-willed kids, strong-willed kids have what I call oppositional reflex. When you push them, they push back harder. When you threaten them, they dig in deeper. When you try to force compliance, they resist with everything they have, and it's not because they're bad kids, and it's not because something's wrong with them, no matter what label they have attached to them, but because their brains are literally wired differently.

Strong-willed kids need to understand the why behind the rules. They need to feel respected, not controlled, and most importantly, they need to have some autonomy. Even within boundaries. Now here's the secret. Here's the thing I want you to hear, because this has the power to change everything for you. You ready?

Power over parenting triggers their fight response every single time. Let me say that again, because their brains are wired differently. Strong-willed kids need to, number one, understand the why behind the rules. Two, they need to feel not controlled. Three, they need to have some sense of autonomy even within the boundaries.

And four, power over parenting triggers their fight response every single time. I imagine you might be having a big light bulb moment right now. Right. Okay, so what's the alternative? You ask? Well, it's power with. Here's what power with looks like. We're a team. I'm the leader, but I'm leaning alongside you, not dominating over you.

It looks like, here's the boundary, here's why it matters. How can we make it work? It sounds like, I see you're struggling. Let me help power with is firm and kind. Power with is structure and flexibility. Power with is clear expectations and empathy. Let me be crystal clear about this. You're still the parent.

You're still in charge. You're still setting limits and holding boundaries, but power with, you're doing it in a way that respects your child's autonomy, acknowledges their feelings, and invites cooperation instead of forcing compliance. Now let me give you some examples across different ages so you can see what this looks like in real life.

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So for a toddler or preschooler, power over might look like, Get in the car now or we're not going to the park. And power with would look like, I know you wanna keep playing. I know it's so hard to stop when you're having fun and yet it's time to go. Do you wanna walk to the car or should I carry you? Can you see the difference?

The boundary stays we're leaving, but the delivery invites cooperation instead of triggering a meltdown due to a lack of autonomy and a threat. Now, let's look an example for a school age kid. Power over might sound like, turn off that iPad right now, or you're losing it for a week. Power with might sound like this.

Hey, screen time's ending in 10 minutes. I'm setting a timer so you can find a good stopping point. What are you gonna do when the timer goes off? You're still setting the limit, but you're giving your kid a heads up, a sense of control and respect for their experience. Let's look an example with a teenager with a messy room.

Power over might sound like you will go clean your room right now, or your grounded not fun to hear, right? A power with parent might say, Hey, I need your room to be cleaned up. Five o'clock today. You know what clean means to me? Close foot away. Floor, clear desk, organized. How you get there is up to you, but I'd like to know your plan.

Same expectation. Completely different energy. You're inviting. Cooperation. Let's say you have a high school student who's maybe a junior or senior in high school. Power over might sound like curfew's. 11:00 PM. And if you're late, you're grounded and not going out next weekend, period. A power with parent might say, Hey, curfew's 11 o'clock, and that's the boundary.

And if you choose to come home late, the next weekend, curfew will move to 10:00 PM so we can rebuild trust. And here's what I want you to know over time when you're consistently home at curfew or before, we can talk about earning a later curfew. How's that sound? Does that sound fair? In this example, you're still holding the boundary, but you're acknowledging their growing autonomy and you're asking them to build trust with you.

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Now, here's what's important to know about this. When you use power with, you're not being permissive. You're not letting your kids walk all over you. The fact is the limits are still there and the expectations are clear and the consequences happen, but you're inviting cooperation instead of defiance.

You're building trust instead of fear. You're teaching internal motivation instead of compliance, and especially during the holidays when everything is already chaotic and overstimulating and unpredictable. Power with becomes even more crucial because your strong-willed kid is already dysregulated.

Did you know you can actually get dysregulated from too much fun and too much joy in addition to things being stressful? Strong-willed kids get easily dysregulated during the holidays. There's gatherings and schedule changes and too much sugar and too many people and different rules, and they're being asked to talk to strangers and make eye contact and behave and play with people they don't know and get off their phones.

Their nervous system is on overload. If you layer power over parenting on top of it with yelling, threatening, demanding immediate compliance, you're going to get massive meltdowns. But if you use power with, which might look like acknowledging how hard this is, or setting clear expectations or offering support, you give their nervous system a chance to settle.

Yeah. So let me tell you what happens when you make the shift from power over to power with. Three problems get solved. Problem number one, you stop yelling. Not overnight, not perfectly, but significantly, because here's why we yell. We yell when we're trying to force compliance and it's not working. We yell when we feel powerless, we yell when we're desperate for control.

Which one of those can you relate to? Maybe all but when you shift to power with, you're not trying to force anything. You're inviting cooperation while holding limits, which allows you to walk alongside your kid or kids, and that removes the desperation, that triggers yelling. You can stay calm because you're not in a battle, you're in a partnership.

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Problem number two, that gets solved. You stop feeling like a failure. So many parents tell me, I feel like I'm failing. Nothing works. I feel like we've tried everything. What I see is that they've tried everything within the power over framework, the timeouts, the sticker charts, the taking things away, the yelling louder, threatening, bigger rewards, all power over tactics, all intended to control the child.

Whether you realize it or not, power over is with the intention to control. And with strong-willed kids, these tactics don't work. So of course you feel like a failure. It's not that you're failing, it's that you're using the wrong framework. When you shift to power with, suddenly you have tools that actually work with your kids' wiring instead of against it, and you stop feeling like you're failing because you start seeing progress.

And problem number three that gets solved when you use power with parenting is that your kids start cooperating, not because they're afraid of you. Not because they're trying to avoid punishment, but because they feel respected and heard, and trust gets built between both of you and cooperation becomes natural instead of forced.

I see this happen all the time with parents in the hive. They come in exhausted at their wits end convince their strong-willed kid will never listen, and then they learn power with, they practice it, they get support and coaching, and they stay consistent with it. And within weeks, sometimes days, they start seeing cooperation they never thought was possible.

Bedtime gets easier, morning routines flow better. Homework happens without battles. They turn off the iPad when the timer goes off, not because their child changed, but because they changed how they're leading. I want this for you and I want this for your kids. I want it so bad I can taste it. Now what I've shared with you today is just the tip of the iceberg because knowing about power with intellectually is very different from knowing how to implement it in your actual home with your actual strong-willed kid during your actual bedtime battle.

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And that's why I created the class that I'm teaching on December 9th. It's called Discipline without damage, calm, clear ways to Guide your Kids. Without yelling or punishing. And in this 90 minute live class, I'm gonna teach you exactly how to make the shift from power over to power with not in theory, but in practice.

You and I are gonna work through your specific challenges, your bedtime battles, your morning chaos, your homework wars, and your teenager who pushes back on everything. I'm gonna give you the framework and the strategies. We're gonna do live coaching. Why work with parents in real time on their actual scenarios?

And everyone gets to learn by watching. I designed this class specifically for parents of strong-willed kids because that's who I've been coaching for years, and I understand strong-willed kids deeply, and I understand the challenges the parents face. This class is happening on Tuesday, December 9th at 9:00 AM Pacific.

10 Mountain 11 central and noon eastern time, and it's a hundred percent free. Now. I know you might be thinking Lisa. Lisa, December 9th. That's right. In the middle of the holiday chaos. Yes, exactly. That's the point. You're going to learn these tools before the worst of the holiday. Stress starts before the parties.

And traveling and all the family gatherings to trigger your strong-willed kit. You'll have a couple weeks to practice power with before the chaos breaks out. And honestly, taking 90 minutes on December 9th to learn tools that will transform your entire holiday season and beyond is honestly the best gift you can give yourself and your family registration is open right now@thepeacefulparent.com slash class.

That's the peaceful parent.com/class. So I want you to run, not walk, but run and grab a seat to this class. You absolutely will not regret it. Now, if you can't make it live, register anyway, because everyone who signs up gets the replay, but you have to sign up to get the replay. However, I am going to be a hundred percent honest with you.

Live is where the magic happens. The real time coaching, the q and a, the community, the energy in the room. That's what helps create breakthroughs. So if

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you can possibly at all, carve out 90 minutes on December 9th, do it. Do it as they say, do it. And if I haven't mentioned it already, this class is completely free.

My gift to you. To help you move from power over to power with, or maybe I should say it's actually my gift to your strong-willed kid. Before we wrap up today, I wanna give you a homework assignment this week. Maybe it's at Thanksgiving dinner. Maybe it's during a regular bedtime. Maybe it's in the middle of a power struggle.

I want you to notice one moment, just one where you might be using power over. Maybe you catch yourself saying, because I said, so maybe you're threatening a consequence. You don't really mean, maybe you're yelling to force compliance. Just notice it. No judgment, no shame, and then ask yourself, what would power with look like in this moment?

How could I hold the same boundary with respect instead of control? How could I invite cooperation instead of forcing compliance? Write it down and bring it to class on December 9th, because we're going to workshop these scenarios together. We're gonna take your real life power struggles and transform them into power with moments.

That's the work, that's the transformation, and I'm gonna meet you there and help you every step of the way. So again, I wanna just take a moment to mention what I'm grateful for this Thanksgiving. I get to spend Thanksgiving with Malcolm and Dave. I get to see family this Thanksgiving over the weekend, so I'm thankful for those two things and I'm thankful for parents like you who are willing to do things differently, who are willing to question the way they were raised and say there has to be a better way.

I'm thankful for parents who love their strong-willed kids fiercely, even when it's hard. Who show up week after week trying to break cycles and build connection. You're not failing. You've just been using a framework that wasn't built for your kid. Power over doesn't work with strong-willed kids, power with, it changes everything.

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And that's why I'll see you on December 9th at 9:00 AM Pacific for our free class discipline without damage. Calm, clear ways to guide your kids without threatening, yelling, or punishing. So do yourself a favor. Give yourself a gift. Give your entire family a gift, and go right now to the [peaceful parent.com/class](https://peacefulparent.com/class) and save your seat.

It's an absolute game changer, I promise. I'm gonna meet you there and I'm gonna help you transform how you parent, and I'm gonna be with you every step of the way. 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.