

Ep. #292: Open the Box: How Play Creates Connection with Hootenanny Games' Whitney Kimerling



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 delighted to be with you here today because today we're gonna do something a little different. I have a guest with me, and I absolutely cannot wait for you to meet her. But before I introduce her, I wanna ask you a question. When was the last time you felt truly connected to your kids?

Not managing them, not coaching them, not correcting them, not shuffling them from one thing to the next. I mean, really connected through laughter and enjoying each other, and everybody relaxed, maybe a little goofiness, and everyone, including you, just being yourselves. Well, if you had to think hard about that, you're not alone, especially in the summer when the days are packed, everyone's schedule is upside down, and connection is the thing we're all hungry for, and somehow it's the first thing that falls off the plate.

Well, here's the good news. Connection doesn't require a deep heart-to-heart or perfectly planned day at Disneyland. Sometimes all it takes is, are you ready for this? A game on the table. A game. And my guest today is Whitney Kimerling, founder of Hootenanny Games. I mean, how great is that name? She is the founder of Hootenanny Games in Nashville, and more importantly, a mom who's seen firsthand across thousands of families how something as simple as a family game night creates the safety, the laughter, and the closeness we're all after.

When there's a game on the table, the pressure comes off. Kids relax. And the real stuff, it comes up sideways, midterm, in a way it almost never does when we sit our kids down and say, "Let's talk." So if you've been wanting to reconnect with your family before the school year rush swallows everyone up, this episode is for you.

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Whitney, welcome to the show. Hi, Lisa. Thank you so much for having me. I am delighted to be here and talking to you about games and family connection today. Yes, yes. And I was telling Whitney before we hit record, I am a huge game player. I am currently learning Mahjong. I am in a Rummikub group. I play Rummikub every night.

My family, we play Uno and Yahtzee and Cribbage, and I just went away on a family vacation with my husband's whole family, 22 of us staying in a house together in Wisconsin, and we played games nonstop the whole week. And games bonds people. I mean, I have been looking forward to having you on this episode for a while now because I really appreciate what games can do for a family.

Absolutely, and we just got back from family vacation with 12 of us in one house, and we did the exact same thing. So, you know, I mean, it's just a really nice way to bring, you know, generations together- Yes ... of all ages together and bond at the table. I love that. Now before we jump in, tell us how old your kids are.

So I have two boys. They just turned nine and 10 years old. Okay. So you're right in the thick of, "Play with me, but I don't really wanna play with you," but you're in that phase of sort of them craving some independence, but I'm sure you also wanting to stay connected to them, right? So as a mom, when do you feel most connected to your kids, and how does a game at the table create that?

Share that insight with us. Yeah, so Lisa, you're exactly right. Like, my children are, are... We're in the push and pull stage, where I'm learning new ways to play with them to accommodate this growth and independence seeking that they're having. And if I'm thinking about when do I feel connected with them, it's the simple moments, and it's the things like, like you said in the intro, the things that are often a little silly and unexpected, that aren't a big production.

People aren't trying too hard. Usually, when we're doing something together, like playing a game, that connection just automatically comes. Yeah. I agree. I'm, uh, humor, a little funny joke, uh, mistake in a game, uh, creating your own rules, like that really releases the cortisol in the kid's body and can really allow them to open up and be vulnerable, right?

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And really create some good memories. You know, I was, um, I played Clue for the first time this past week. I had never played Clue in my life. I don't know why. Oh my goodness. I know, right? I know. And actually, there were six of us playing Clue one night, and two of us had never played before. So the laughs that we had over the experts that have played a ton of times versus the newbies, and just the mistakes that we made and it's just, it's such a great way to level the playing field, don't you think?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Uh, you know, and I think there are so many different types of games out there that when you find games that fit for different personalities, it really brings out different sides of people and how they react to different scenarios. You know, for example, we have this game called Early Bird where you're trying to get rid of your cards as fast as possible, and you throw this squishy worm across the room.

It's got some fun little challenge things in it. Well, one of my sons gets a little frustrated with how quickly the cards move, but he has the best time playing that game because it has these silly challenges mixed in. So we have this whole running joke in our family, "Oh, well Henry wants to play Early Bird again because he just wants to wreak havoc and play the challenge cards."

And he'll just thread them in the middle, interrupt the flow of the game, and just, like, giggle uncontrollably about it. And what it does is it gives this memorable moment where we all think it's hilarious that he's sort of taken this game that he had a frustration point in, and he turned it into something really fun and experiential for all of us watching the joy that it's brought to him.

I love that. I love that you shared that story with us because as a parent coach, what I hear when you tell me that story is that when Henry gets to throw the cards down and do all the funny little gestures, what he's also doing is he's unpacking his invisible emotional backpack that's probably been filled all day with frustration, disappointment, setback, you know, resentment, jealousy, I didn't get my way, I didn't like breakfast, I'm hungry.

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And, you know, movement, motion changes emotion. So when he's doing all that, he's also probably much calmer after he's had that experience, and then that allows him to feel much more connected to the family. Now, all of this is happening in the background for Henry, but the fact that you guys can let him have that moment, and for you as the mom to watch him go from frustration to delighted must also light your brain up as well, right?

Absolutely. You know, and I think so much of what games do, they check so many boxes, right? And we as parents, until we're in the thick of it and we're seeing what our kids are doing and the growth that they're having and, you know, the push of independence and whatnot that, you know, I'm personally seeing with my kids' ages, when you take a step back and look at games in general, the benefits that they have are endless.

From unpacking the emotional backpack, the learning perspective taking, to understanding how to lose, frankly. There are endless benefits to it Yes. Yes, let's add some more. Learning how to be a gracious winner. Um- Yeah ... develop strategy, seeing yourself improve, right? We, in our family, we, our extended family, we have a couple littles, and watching them over the years get better at Go Fish or Yahtzee, and seeing the joy on their face, right?

And I, so I just love what you just said, and I want, listener, I want you to hear this. Let me repeat what Whitney just said. Games check so many boxes, and the benefits are endless. And talk about that a little more. Like, is that why you started Hootenanny? Tell us a little bit about how this company got started, and some more benefits that you see from family time together over games.

So Hootenanny started, we actually launched in 2023, in fall of 2023, so we're coming up on our third year of making great family games. And I grew up always playing games, and some of my best memories of my childhood are sort of ensconced in funny memories around the table with my immediate family and my extended family.

And I really wanted to... I started playing a lot more games with my kids. They had gotten older. We could progress into games that were more fun for me as a mom to

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play than those, you know, initial toddler games. And I saw that connection happening again. I saw those core memories starting to form, and I thought, "I really want to bring this magic to other families across the country and get them around their tables as well."

And I didn't start out in, in the board game or toy industry. I started out as, as a lawyer. I was a litigator for 12 years, and during COVID, my husband and I were both working from home, and he was working for another game publisher, and I was seeing what was involved behind the scenes, and the fact that what he did every day was bringing joy to people, and I wanted to do that too.

And so we are in this very fortunate position now that if we do our jobs right, people have fun, and that's a really great position to be in. I, I couldn't agree more. Former venture capitalist here myself and- ... medical device executive turned parent coach, and, you know, my, my goal in life is to change the world one family at a time.

And to get to get up every morning and do that, I mean, my goodness, you know. It's a good feeling It really is. It really is. I love your mission, and you said something a minute ago that I wanna come back to for the listener to hear again. You said games can span generations, and, you know, I experience that myself.

In our extended family, we get together twice a year for sure, and then other times in smaller groups, but we all come together twice a year and we play the game of Spoons. Do you know Spoons? Oh, yes. Okay. So talk about spanning generations. I mean, and we have an official family trophy, and you get your name-

on the trophy. And in our family, like, it is a really big deal. All day long, the suspense builds to the Spoons tournament, and, I mean, I have just... I know, listener, you can't see me right now, but having just come home from the Spoons tournament, um, the smile I have on my face, the memories and the giggles and the laughs and the competition and the trash talking that we have across generations.

Like, we have people that are as old as 75 down to, I think the youngest person that plays is 12. I love this. And I mean, just speak to that. Like, talk to this a little bit.

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The grandparents come over and nobody knows how to connect with each other, and you wanna get the kids off the phone, so you get a game out.

Or you're having a play date and there's that moment where Henry and his friend are having a little conflict from imaginative play, and, like, you get a game out on the table and bring them together and focus them. Like, guide us in some examples of how games can really help parents create connections through different people.

So I think you hit on two things there that I kinda wanna talk about a little separately. First, the generational play. I think that is so important because there is this huge disconnect of grandparents not knowing how to relate to kids in today's-technologically driven world, right? They, they don't understand the phones and, and the social media and the streaming that is consuming so many kids today.

For sure. And so what this does is take away that effect of, "I feel like I'm living a different reality in some ways than this child. How do I connect with them?" And it brings everybody back to this analog anchor that everybody can relate to. And so the ability to bring the generations together in a very, what's the word I'm looking for here?

Leveling. In a leveling and cohesive way that you open a box And it literally gives you the roadmap for how to connect and play. Mm-hmm. So that's the generational aspect of it and that connection point. The how do you, how do you redirect a playdate example, one of my favorite examples for that is, you know, when we were growing up, every game was competitive.

Mm-hmm. There were no cooperative games. It wasn't a thing. And now that games are evolving and there are so many great new options out there other than the standard classics, there are a lot of great cooperative games out there. Whereas you've got, whether it's a sibling or a friend, some friction there.

Mm-hmm. You can pull out a cooperative game and reset everybody by getting them on the same team, and that's one of my favorite ways to use a cooperative game in our house. We have a game called Feelin' Cute where you rank the cuteness of animals, and you can play it cooperatively where everybody's trying to

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build this lineup of really cute animals, and you're working together to do it, and what a great easy way to hit reset without your kids knowing that you're trying to redirect and hit reset.

Okay, I could not love that more. I didn't even think about cooperative games, and that is definitely going in my parent coaching toolkit in terms of recommending that to families who are experiencing, you know, sibling resentment, sibling rivalry, sibling jealousy. Um, that, I, I could not love that more, and yeah, I mean, I wanna make a list of cooperative games that can be recommended, right?

And- Absolutely ... yeah. Okay. So let's talk about this, bouncing off of what you've just said. Why do you think, Whitney, kids open up over a game in a way they don't when we sit down to have the official parent-child talk? Tell me why you think that happens as a game-y Ah ... CEO. I think it's that side-by-side connection.

Yeah. Right? You're not, you're on a level playing field. You're doing something else so the kid can let their guard down. You know, when you say to a child, "Tell me about your day," you know, that, that's a pressure point sometimes, and there's a lot going through their minds that they can unpack related to that.

But if it just flows naturally because you're in that side-by-side connection, it feels less heavy and less daunting. I agree. And sometimes that eye contact, especially with little boys, but- Yes ... even kids, I know I experienced this, uh, before I went through my, my parent coach training, you know, I used to say to my son, Malcolm, who's now 22 and a senior in college, you know, when I was wanting him to hear me, I would say, "Look at me.

Look at me." And then I realized that often when I was requesting that, I- his body was secreting cortisol, which would actually block his hearing, right? And so over time, uh, my son is a basketball player. He plays in college, and we have a hoop in our backyard. And when I wanted to have a serious conversation with him, we would actually go out, and he would shoot free throws, and I would rebound for him.

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And just the act of, like, looking at the rim and doing this repetitive thing would allow him to hear me, open up to me Um, me chasing the ball around would sort of help me stay calm, right? And we would have a lot of really important conversations at the free throw line. We still, we kinda laugh about it to this day, how much parenting happened at the free throw line, uh, in our backyard.

And I think games, I, I, as a listener, I cannot overemphasize the value of a side-by-side activity, a game, baking cookies, going for a walk, uh, even riding in the car, right? I, I tell my clients all the time, do a Starbucks drive-through and let your teenager sip on something sugary next to you in the front seat while you're looking through the windshield, and you're having that talk, whatever that is, right?

It, it's so productive. I, I agree with you. Just getting kids to do something with their hands and their brain while listening oftentimes is the magic sauce that gets them to open up. Agree, and I'm absolutely stealing the free throw line talk idea in my house. Yeah. Yeah. Easy to do. All right, let's talk about the frazzled parent who's too tired, who doesn't wanna do this.

You know, um, maybe they don't like games, or they didn't grow up playing games like Lisa and Whitney did, and give them some advice on just two things: how to get started, and how, and how to not see playing games as climbing Mount Everest. So I think it goes back to the fact that there are a lot of great games out there that are different than what we grew up with, and it doesn't have to be a production.

It doesn't have to be a picture perfect- I'm gonna have Pinterest-worthy snacks, and we're gonna sit down and do everything on theme, and everybody's gonna be happy, and everybody's gonna get along." 'Cause it's not always gonna be that way, and it doesn't have to be that way. And so I think picking a game that takes 15 minutes or less, taking the pressure off yourself, and don't make it a whole to-do, right?

You can even just say, "All right, we're just gonna play one quick round of this." You don't have to announce and say, "This is family game night. We're playing these games." Just give yourself permission to just fit it in to that 15-minute lull where you can connect and be together. I love that. I, I think you're spot on.

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And, uh, you're also allowed to quit the game midway if it's not working, right? I mean... Or modify the game in a way that works for your family. And I also love that you touched on it doesn't have to be Pinterest pretty with perfect snacks and, you know, that definitely is not something that's happening in my house at all.

I mean- You know, I don't even really associate games with stats. You know, like, you, you don't have to make a production out of it. You just throw the game on the table. When Malcolm was little, junior high and high school Yahtzee was a big game that we played, not to call out a specific game, but, you know, he liked it, uh, because it's interesting.

He li- I think he liked it because he, he loves math. It's a little bit of, like, gambling or, or making... You know, it's a little bit of gambling and it's decisions. You know, should I take these three fives to my three of a kind or, you know, should I take them as the fives, right? So there's a little bit of strategy.

Right. And sometimes we play a modified game. You know, we'd be like, "We've got 10 minutes. We're just gonna play the top portion only," if you know the game of Yahtzee, which I know you do, but the listener. So yeah, you can make it your own thing, right? We are huge fans of what we call house rules in our, in our home, and that is taking a game and making it work for you.

Change it. It's just rules in a game book. And, you know, we have a dice game where one of the rules is that you can sabotage other players. You can erase Xs from their board. Mm-hmm. I have one kid who does not like sabotage, and so when he and I sit down to play it, we just take that element out and we're essentially playing a dice bingo game, and he loves it.

And so we've taken it and made it a game that works for us. Okay, so what I heard as the CEO of a game company, you just gave us permission to modify the rules so that we have connection and fun. So all those rule followers out there, Whitney just gave you permission to do your own thing. Did I hear that correctly, Whitney?

You heard it correctly, and I'm a fan of a rule follower, and if I have given myself permission to break the rules, that's big. So it is a key point to a great family game.

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Awesome. Break the rules a bit and it'll be great. Awesome. All right, I've got two more questions. Uh, one is how do you keep it fun?

This is- I, I really wanna hear your thoughts on this. How do you keep it fun when a kid rage quits or someone has to win without turning it into a lecture? We actually have someone in our family that gets really upset when he loses a game. Um, so talk to us about that. Well, first of all, I was that kid. Oh.

I would get so mad if I lost. I wanted to win at all costs. That was, that was me. So I can really relate to that. And, you know, I think as a parent now, partially because I know what that feels like, I can really put myself in those shoes, but I think just in general, you know, you just keep it light. And you have to know going into game night that that's gonna happen at, at most tables, at most families.

At one point or another, you're gonna have a kid who has a meltdown about losing. And my biggest piece of advice is don't let that ruin game nights for you, because they're learning. It, it's expected that you're gonna get that type of reaction from time to time. And I think, like you said, not turning it into a lecture and just...

You know, sometimes I like to kind of name it quickly, like, "Ooh, well, losing's kinda tough sometimes." And I think naming it helps, but I also think you have to bear in mind for yourself as a parent, like you are building that resilience- Yeah ... and giving your kid a safe place to work through that emotion of anger that comes with losing and figure out how to handle it.

Now, just like practical tips and things I like to do, we've talked some about the cooperative games already. I think you have to read the room, work in some cooperative games. I think it's really important to alternate who picks the games for game night so that your kid can gravitate to the games that they're good at and that they enjoy.

If you know that you've got a kid that really needs a win this week and they're picking the game, great. And one of the things that was really important for me was I had to learn that my kids Didn't always like the same games that I like Mm-hmm And looking around to find games that fit their little personalities, and what

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they need and what they look for, to give us all permission to learn something about ourselves when we're sitting around the table.

Because I'm still learning things about myself when I sit down for game night. Yeah. I, two things, I liked everything you said, but I wanna call out two things for the listener. One is to validate the kid's feelings. Like, yeah, it hurts to lose. I mean, and, and, and y- you, we don't wanna raise a generation of kids that are like, "Oh, yippee, I lost.

That's great," right? So, and the other thing, uh, from the parent coaching side, I would reinforce what you're saying, Winnie, is I say this all the time to my clients, "Kids are born with all the feelings. They're not born with the skills to manage the feelings," right? So the thing that game night does is it, it, it helps you, the parent, help them build the skills to manage big emotions.

Being a gracious winner, being a okay loser, learning frustration, learning disappointment, learning I'm, I'm, I'm good at winning. Like you just said, if you need a win that week. You know, I was thinking as you were talking about that, about I didn't even think about how games can build self-esteem, right?

Like, oh, I played my favorite game and I won, right? And so really, our biggest job, uh, as a parent, I think, is helping our kids build the skills to manage all emotions, the entire feelings wheel. It's not just happiness. It's, you know, really developing age-appropriate skills to manage all feelings that come up throughout life.

If we send kids out of the house with those skills, we, we're winning. Um, and- Yes ... I, right? I mean, I, when my kid w- went away to college, I wanted the invisible emotional toolbox to be so big that it took six of us to carry it into the dorm room, right? Yeah. You don't want your kid to just be able to manage happiness.

You want him to be able to manage failure, disappointment, rejection, the whole gamut, right? And I am seeing through our conversation how games can provide the medium for parents to help their kids build those skills. I mean, I'm, you're making me into an even bigger fan of games, and I think my standard gift from

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now on is gonna be games to people So with that in mind, walk us through, I wanna ask you, what is one thing you want the listener to take away from today's episode?

And then walk us through Hootenanny's website, and if I'm, let's say I'm a parent who doesn't know a ton of games, I didn't play a bunch of games growing up, how should I use your website to get started? Tell me how to look around on there and what to kind of consider and think about. Can you do that?

Absolutely. So if there's one thing that I want people to take away from this episode, like what, what do you do next? I want them to put one game on the table this week. Keep it simple, doesn't have to be a big production, but pick one 15-minute game to get on the table this week. And I think you'll find that if you're saying, "We're gonna do this for 15 minutes-" A lot of times that 15 minutes will end up turning into 30 because you'll play it again, or you might pull out another game, and that connection will continue to build.

Our website is play, P-L-A-Y, foodnanny.com, and I'm sure you'll have that in the show notes, Lisa- Yes ... because it, uh, is a mouthful. Uh, but playfoodnanny.com. We've got a little bit about all of our games there. One of the best things that I wanted to do as a mom is I wanted our games to be easy to learn, and we've set about doing that with how to play videos.

So all of our games, there's a how to play section on our website. All of our games have a quick few minute video that you can watch instead of reading the rules if you're a visual learner. And not only does it give you as a parent an alternative way to learn the games, but it also, if you need to read the rule, rules as a parent, you can turn that video on for your kids to watch while you can read the rules uninterrupted.

'Cause we've all been there, right, where we're trying to learn a new game, and every few minutes your kids ask you a question, and before you re- realize it, you've read the same paragraph four times and everybody's frustrated. So we wanted to have an alternative method for people to really understand and start game night in an easy way.

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So if you're gonna go anywhere on our website and you wanna learn about games and, and what are some new things that you might be able to find that are different than the standards you currently play, I'd start on the how to play page. That is brilliant, my friend. I mean, absolutely brilliant to have those videos.

I think that every time I learn a new game, there's one rule that gets left out, right? And then you feel like, oh, well, if I would've known that rule, then I could have done better. And so, and also Um, you know, put the kid in front of the video, they watch that. That's getting them excited about the game.

And to your point, I do think sometimes the parent trying to read the rules, understand them themselves, and communicate them to the kid dampens the enthusiasm for the parent, right? And then that's part of that mountain that I have to climb in order to enjoy the game night. So brilliant on you all's part in taking something kids already love, videos, and turning the directions into a game, and that's relieving some of the burden for the parent as well.

I, I, I think that's brilliant marketing on your part, and well done, and a, and a useful tool for the family as well. Well, thank you. I appreciate that. That really is one of those things that was born directly from my personal experience as a mom. There you go. There you go. One other thing I wanted to say, Lisa, I don't know if you wanna just for editing purposes maybe- No, no, I was just about to ask you if you had- Yeah

anything left, and then I was gonna wrap up. So go ahead. With the frazzled parent question. I think if you have older kids, tasking them with reading the rules and explaining the rules for game night is a great way to get them involved and invested and takes something off your plate. I think it teaches them, going back to checking the box of all the things that games can do, it teaches them how to learn and convey that knowledge to a group, and that's just another skill and that self-esteem building that can come from that, of how good they feel when they are the ones who've taught the game.

So it even further lowers the barrier to entry for game night for a parent. I, I agree wholeheartedly with that suggestion, and I'm thinking of one of my families that I

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work with. They have four kids. The oldest is, uh, going to be a, either a sophomore or junior in high school, and the youngest is going into second grade, and that's a big age span, right?

So getting- The oldest and the youngest, and then two in the middle all engaged at the same time. As soon as you were mentioning that, I'm thinking of that parent asking the high school kid with learning the rules of the game and explaining them to the whole family, that's bridging that age gap, right? Or, or a high school student or junior high explaining the rules to a grandparent.

You're right, it's building self-esteem, it's practicing presentation skills, it's practicing communication skills, raising self-esteem, involving them, having, like, brilliant suggestion. Absolutely brilliant. And again, we're building skills. We're using gaming to build skills to handle emotions, right? And you can't go wrong.

I mean, if that's your motivation for game night for a family listening to this, then go forth and game, right? I mean, it's, it's such a beautiful, sports, music, game night. These are all opportunities to, you can tell I mentioned sports first, we're a sports family. But all of these things are a backdrop or are the canvas for the parent to help the child develop the skills to handle all the emotions and the feelings.

Well, there's 77 on there, right? And it gives you a medium or a canvas to do it without sitting down and lecturing your kid, which most kids are resistant to anyway. So if you can have some connection and fun along the way of game night, I mean, you know, get some trophies, get some prizes at the dollar store.

Get, you know, I mean, I'm telling you, this spoons trophy in our family is a coveted, I mean, it's, my, my brother-in-law made it. It's this gold plaque that has two plastic spoons on it that are crisscrossed, and on the back It's all painted in gold, and on the back you get to write the date and your name on the back of the trophy.

And a few of us, myself included, are double winners, right? And the pride of having your name on this Spoons trophy. I mean, think about this, listener, like, what can your Spoons equivalent be within your family? It could be a little plastic

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medal that Henry and your other son get to wear when they win the game that night until the next game night.

I mean, it can be so simple, but it can have such an opportunity of connection and pride with your family. I mean, our Spoons trophy, I swear, y'all, I'm gonna post a picture on Instagram of my Spoons trophy and show everybody how simple it is, but I cannot begin to tell you the joy it brings the family member that wins that Spoons tournament.

Okay, Lisa, I have to ask, did you win it this year? I did not. I came in third. I did not win. Okay, here's a funny story. My son's girlfriend won it, and she's the first rookie to ever win, uh, the Spoons tournament. I love this. Right? And I also have to say, I am 100% getting a trophy for our family. That's happening before our next family vacation.

I recommend it. But I will say, out of everything you just said, Lisa, and you talked about, again, we keep going back to that this checks so many skills off the list, that what I love about games is all you have to do is open the box. Yes. Mic drop right there. Open the box. That's it. And skill development is sitting inside that box.

Boom. I could weep at this. Like, I feel so emotional right now that- Who knew that this is where this was gonna go? But here we are, and I mean, I just, I see the gateway that games are. And you're absolutely right, the tagline should be, "Open the box." Yes. I love it. I do, too. Okay, total mic drop moment there. I mean, listen, I hope you got as much out of this conversation as I did.

I'm telling y'all, gift cards to Hootenanny are gonna be my new gift to people. Side note, my husband is not a huge game player, and this is absolutely 100% a true story, Whitney. You're gonna love this. My husband is not a huge game player. Um, he doesn't really have the attention span and doesn't find as much joy.

When Malcolm was little, he would play to be involved. So every year for my birthday and Mother's Day, uh, one of the gifts he gives me is we play my game of choice for the evening with a glass of wine. That's how much I love games. Good gift. Right? It's a great gift because he- Yeah ... he knows how much I love it.

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And, you know, it's a real sacrifice for him, and he gets into it, and we have a lovely evening. You know? So I- That's great ... I'm not- I know you said you're learning how to play mahjong. I am learning, yes. Well, so my husband has learned how to play mahjong, and his... But he, I mean, he doesn't love it like I love it, you know?

But

the other night our kids were at my parents' house, and I said, "You know, I really wanna play mahjong." And you can play it two player. You're just playing two hands at once. Yes. It's a real, you know, it, it really is a great mental workout. Um, and he said, "Well, let's sit down and let's play two player mahjong."

And so that's his equivalent of like, I mean, it just really fills my cup. Wow, that is awesome. Good for you that he will play mahjong at all in two person. My thing I wanna work on, my husband and I used to play cribbage, uh, before we became- Yes ... parents, and that's my new thing. I would like to, you know, get back to playing cribbage, uh, regularly.

So recently I ordered a new cribbage set and, um, I've been looking around. I need to refresh the rules in my brain and then propose to him that we go back to playing that, and I think I can get him into playing that game. So fingers crossed. I'll keep you posted on that. Love it Yeah. All right, so let's recap what we talked about today because there's so much gold here.

Number one, 10 minutes counts. Connection doesn't need a whole evening. One short fun round after dinner is enough. Lower the bar so it actually happens. Number two, make it a thing you always do. Sunday after dinner, Friday night pizza. A recurring slot gives your kid something to look forward to and count on.

Number three, games no one has to read the manual for. If you can teach it in 60 seconds, your family can play, and we have the advantage of knowing about Hootenanny and the videos attached to the games that are on that website. So complexity is where the fun dies. Don't let that happen for you. Buy your games from Hootenanny.

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And number four, this might be my favorite, let the game do the talking. Don't force the heart-to-heart. Play side by side and let the real stuff surface on its own. It usually does. So y'all know me. You know I love to give out some homework, so this week's homework is just one small step. Open the box. Get started.

Grab a game. Go to playhootennanny.com, grab a game, borrow one, grab a deck of cards, and just get started. One night, one short game, no agenda. Play for the laugh, not the win, and watch what happens. So as Whitney mentioned, you can find Hootenanny at playhootennanny.com. That is a mouthful, so we will link to the website, uh, in the show notes, and also we will link to Hootenanny's Instagram account so you can follow them.

I recommend you do. And listen, if today's episode stirred something in you, and if you're realizing you want connection and more calm in your home, then come join us in the hive. Inside the hive, I teach parents exactly how to build connection with their kids using practical tools and personalized coaching created just for you and your family, and we'll play some games inside there as well.

All right, Whitney, thank you so much for being here. I loved our conversation. Absolutely loved it. Can't wait to gift more people games in the world. You got me all fired up and reminded me of the value of it, and it's been my honor to talk with you today. Well, thank you so much, Lisa. This was just such a wonderful conversation, and I love being able to talk more about games and the joy that they bring.

Yes. Yes. Well done. Well done. 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 thepeacefulparent.com. See you soon.