

The Transition to Peaceful Parenting Q and A with Dr. Laura Markham

- Laura Markham: [00:00:00](#) Hello. This is Dr. Laura Markham. In this audio, I'll be answering some of the most common questions that parents ask about the transition to peaceful parenting. Remember, we're always applying our three big ideas. We start by regulating our own emotions and behavior. Then, we connect with our child. Finally, instead of trying to control our child, we coach them to be their best self, both by helping them with their emotions and by creating an environment where the child can thrive. So, let's see how to apply these three big ideas to daily life with children.
- Laura Markham: [00:00:42](#) We're going to get right into the questions, but first I want to share a general answer with you because I noticed in reviewing the questions that so many of them had, in some ways, the same answer, which is this: I see huge progress on the part of parents taking this course, because you're sharing with me that you're learning to manage your own emotions better. That is no easy task, so please give yourself major credit for that, big hugs, lots of clapping and support of any kind that you need, and acknowledge yourself for the hard work it takes in the moment when you're feeling attacked or you're being screamed at, when your child is being completely unreasonable, and you're able to stop, drop, and breathe and use your pause button. That's huge, and it is what eventually will turn things around in your family.
- Laura Markham: [00:01:45](#) But I want to stress that that doesn't mean that your child is going to behave perfectly right away, and your child may never behave perfectly because first of all, they're children and that means they don't have a fully developed prefrontal cortex. They have a different sense of time and different priorities and simply their brains do not work in the same way ours do. Secondly, many kids have their own challenges. They have a tendency to anxiety or they have sensory challenges or they're on the spectrum or they're in some other way challenging kids. And then finally, if you've been parenting conventionally prior to this time,

there have been many times along the way where your child has felt alone, lonesome, invalidated, unsupported. And I know that was never your intention. You love your children. You would do anything for your child. But sometimes that's how your child felt if you used conventional parenting.

And sometimes maybe they even felt like you hurt them, emotionally or physically.

Laura Markham: [00:02:48](#)

That's all water under the bridge. There's no reason to berate yourself for that, but there is a reason to recognize it because you have to help your child recover. You're going to get tired of hearing me in this call talk about the emotional backpack, but we can't go further with our children until we really understand and support our kids, to work through the feelings that they've been storing up. And those feelings are not just the anger. In fact, the anger is not what's in the backpack. It's the loneliness, it's the desolation, it's the sense that they're a bad person and that life is hopeless and that no one's going to really understand them and love them for who they are. And so, those are the feelings we need to allow to the surface. And right now, what's happening is the child does not want to feel those feelings. That's why they stuff them. But the body knows how to heal itself, so those feelings will come up to get healed.

Laura Markham: [00:03:47](#)

Now, your child's response to those feelings coming up to get healed will not be to welcome them and tell you about them in articulate fashion. Most adults couldn't do that. Instead, they will come up and your child will feel terrible and will lash out at you in anger, which is an attempt to fend off those feelings. Fight, flight, or freeze, remember? They're going to eat, beg for treats, want to watch a screen, or they're going to fight with somebody, provoke a fight. So your job is to not get hooked by their anger, to not respond, to instead stay compassionate, recenter yourself, create safety so those underlying feelings are able to come up, and then acknowledge, validate. You will cry. You will have tears in your eyes, and your child will, too. But until you do that, your child will continue to act out.

Laura Markham: [00:04:40](#) So you have all the tools you need. You have the tools of regulating yourself, although it's going to be a lifelong process to learn how to do it. You have the tools of connection, although you will keep becoming closer to your child every day, hopefully, for a long, long time. And you have the tools to set limits without punishment, although you're going to need to practice those a lot. But those are the basic tools. And you even have preventive maintenance, which are the ways you keep your child on track. Often the questions I get from people are that exact question, "Well, why is my child still being difficult when I'm doing everything you say?" And the answer is, they still have some healing to do from the past. And also, when you remove punishment, you have to substitute connection.

Laura Markham: [00:05:32](#) So what I'm seeing is that often parents don't really understand how to build that connection, and so they're not substituting it, so they're trying to get their kid to cooperate, but without punishment the kid isn't doing it, so there's a connection issue. And then also, the child still has all these leftover big feelings from the past that the parent isn't quite sure how to help the child work through.

Question 1

Laura Markham: [00:05:59](#) A parent says, "Although we're both loving parents, we've struggled in the past controlling our anger and anxiety. We're very new to this kind of parenting. Our seven-year-old daughter has always been very sensitive and compassionate, but recently she's defiant and angry. How can we set limits and help her with her anger?"

Laura Markham: [00:06:15](#) First, good for you for being willing to choose a better path for your family, especially since this is a path that requires you to be courageous and to change. You say your seven year old has recently become defiant and angry and that you're new to peaceful parenting, so if that's the only change in her life, I'm betting that your transitioning to peaceful parenting is part of what is stimulating your daughter to become defiant and angry. And I'm sorry, I

apologize. I know you did not take this course to have your daughter start acting out.

Laura Markham: [00:06:46](#) I don't know how far you've gotten in the course, but if you have gotten to week seven, that's about the transition to peaceful parenting. And as you know, when you stop punishing, kids will often start acting out. So the key to avoiding that is to focus on connection so your child wants to cooperate, even if you're not punishing. And the other thing you have to do, of course, is help your child with the emotions that have been stuffed, so your child is handling those emotions. What happens is, when we stop punishing, all the emotions come up that the kid has been stuffing, that they've been afraid to show you. Now that they feel safer, all the emotions come up, but they don't feel good. Those emotions are really threatening, all those tears and fears. So kids get angry and defiant. That's called the full backpack, right?

Laura Markham: [00:07:36](#) And this is a classic case, I think, of a full backpack of stuffed emotions from the past. They're surfacing to get healed, and I hear you that it's hard to be patient in the face of that. But your daughter, you've described, is very sensitive and compassionate. She has spent seven years accumulating her feelings, so it's only natural that, as your home has become a safer place for vulnerable emotions, those feelings are going to come up to get healed. And also, in the past, you say you had a hard time managing your own anger, your daughter would not have felt entirely safe with those emotions in the past, so she's had to use some method to keep them stuffed, and the most common way people do that is anger.

Laura Markham: [00:08:19](#) So think about from her point of view. What might your daughter say to you if she actually could, if she felt safe enough and actually was older than seven, if she were 37 and could articulate this to you. She might say, "Mom, Dad, all those times you yelled at me and I was so scared. I acted like I didn't care, but I was terrified inside. That fear is still inside me and it's eating away at me and it feels terrible so I lash out at you to keep those feelings down. I'm defiant because I think you can't help me." Pretty powerful, right, if you really heard it from her perspective?

- Laura Markham: [00:08:57](#) So your question about, "How can we set limits and help her with her anger?" Set limits only on action, not on emotion. You're not setting limits on her anger, you're setting limits on her actions. And the way to help her with the anger? Welcome the full range of emotions, including anger. So when she expresses anger, you say, "Wow. You are really mad about this. I didn't know this was so important to you. Tell me more, sweetheart." You ask her what she's angry about. In other words, and you ask her to tell you more about it. If it's something that you have to say no to and she's mad at you about that, you can set that limit. You can say, "Oh, you really want to do this. I hear you." But remember, you're always connecting and empathizing. "I hear how disappointed you are, honey. You really wanted things to be different. I wish we could do it the way you want. I'm sorry it's not going to work out this time to do that."
- Laura Markham: [00:09:50](#) Now, if she's defiant to you, if she says, "You can't make me," don't take that as a serious thing. She's seven years old. She knows who the boss is. You just say, "You feel so strongly about this that you don't want to do what I say. I hear how much this matters to you, sweetie. I'm sorry it has to be that way this time." And then you proceed. So when she's angry, it's not surprising that she does and says things that she'll be sorry for later. I think when we're angry, most humans do things that we're sorry for later, right? Unless we really do work on ourselves and we learn not to do that. So, she's not a bad person because she's defiant and angry. She's a kid. She's a hurting human being who's very young, and when kids aren't controlling their emotions, it's not because they're trying to be obnoxious to us. It's because they can't at that moment control their emotions.
- Laura Markham: [00:10:42](#) This is not the time to teach her not to be rude. If you can stay compassionate, she'll feel safe enough to surface and feel and express the tears and fears that are driving her anger and driving her to act out. And if you can help her feel safe enough to actually feel those tears and fears, they're going to start to evaporate and you'll see the anger and defiance vanish, too.

Laura Markham: [00:11:05](#) So I guess I would wrap up by saying you never have to be mean to hold your limits. But to get your kid to follow your limit, you do have to connect. And to stop the anger, she has to feel safe enough to cry, because that's what's behind the anger, tears and fears. And to do that, you really have to use the peaceful parenting tools like roughhousing, special time, and empathy. You can't skip those tools. I think most people who take this course think, "Okay, well, when I have time I'll roughhouse with my kid." But you're going to hear me today over and over again saying to people, "Yes, if you use the tools, the behavior you're struggling with will really improve." So they're not optional. Daily laughter and roughhousing are not optional. Special time, not optional. 24/7 empathy, essential. All of those lead to better connection, more of a feeling of safety, and that creates your child's ability to cry and work through all the tears and fears, and all that leads to better behavior.

Laura Markham: [00:12:03](#) So I know they're hard to work into your life, but I've never seen these tools fail to work. They improve the parent/child relationship so the child cooperates better and so you feel better about parenting. Also, there's an article, 13 Tips to Transition to Peaceful Parenting, and also there's another article you should read, Five Preventive Maintenance Habits to Keep Your Child out of the Breakdown Lane. I would say give your child a chance to show you the hurts that she's built up in seven years, and when she expresses those hurts, they will begin to dissipate and you will see your daughter transform before your eyes.

Question 2

Parent: [00:12:39](#) I have a seven and nine year old and a four year old, and the four year old I feel like I'm making faster progress with, even though she's a million times more difficult. But-

Laura Markham: [00:12:51](#) Interesting.

Parent: [00:12:53](#) The seven and nine year old, I feel like because of our history of parenting prior to really getting into the depths

of peaceful parenting ... I've been reading your site for a long time, but not really employing the tactics consistently until taking this course, and so I find it more challenging with them. They're used to time outs or yelling. I'm definitely overcoming my yelling issues and-

- Laura Markham: [00:13:19](#) Yay! Congratulations.
- Parent: [00:13:20](#) Yeah, thank you. It's a work in progress.
- Laura Markham: [00:13:23](#) I know it is.
- Parent: [00:13:24](#) And just the shaming, which comes from myself and from my husband, just really kind of nasty tones of voice from parents. And I can tell that my nine year old in particular has totally absorbed that from me and is now spewing it back to his younger siblings, which makes me cringe. But I'm moving forward, I can't feel too badly and dwell on it too much. But my point is is that, when will it sort of kick in for these kids? I mean, is it just a matter of keeping on and maybe you'll see some change? I mean, do you have success stories from parents that have used it with kids who are older, or just any basic information I guess on what they've seen?
- Laura Markham: [00:14:11](#) Okay. I think that the younger you start, the faster you see traction. No question. Children are learning and they don't have so much baggage. And as you say, the older kids already have a view of the world, and so it's going to take a lot longer to dismantle that. But it doesn't mean you can't do it. I have heard from people that these practices work with their teenagers and change the teen's behavior, so it is absolutely possible to do. The older your child gets the more connection helps.
- Laura Markham: [00:14:55](#) But the problem is, the older your child gets, the more they turn away from you in terms of connection. So a four year old is still very much oriented around you. Four year olds really need their parents, right? A nine year old is influenced by his friends a lot and he's already got his world view from you and he has already had his relationship with you somewhat eroded by time outs and yelling and shaming and standard punishment. So he

actually doesn't have as strong a relationship with you as the four year old.

- Laura Markham: [00:15:28](#) I think the place you're going to get the traction is actually by moving into the connection. The people I know who've had success stories with teenagers, it's all about the connection. It's all about somehow getting the child to really trust that you care about them and you're empathizing with them and you really are most concerned about their experience and loving them. I don't know if you're doing the basic preventive maintenance practices, but are you able to find special time for your nine year old?
- Parent: [00:16:04](#) Yeah, so I am doing them, but it's definitely not consistent yet. I'm struggling to find ways to do the special time every single day with all three kids.
- Laura Markham: [00:16:15](#) Sure, sure.
- Parent: [00:16:15](#) But I'm trying. And even prior to us doing this, we've always done date nights but with each individual child, and those have been ...
- Laura Markham: [00:16:26](#) Great!
- Parent: [00:16:26](#) ... of course, very special. Of course, they're not every week and sometimes they're once a month. We go out for dinner or go out for bowling. So we do that. We started doing a little bit of roughhousing, but it hasn't yet become so consistent. I do see some changes. My nine year old will actually come to me. His big special time is throwing the football in the backyard, which is super easy, right?
- Laura Markham: [00:16:53](#) Right.
- Parent: [00:16:54](#) But he will come to me and say, "Hey Mom, can we throw the football?" So I know he lives for that kind of one-on-one connection and he always has. He's always tried to seek that out, and I think sometimes that's his way because he's not able to get that from me, because he has two siblings, that kind of adds towards his resentment of his siblings. Because he's not super lovable and friendly and close with his siblings, even though they're somewhat

close in age to him. He's not horrible, but he's not loving either, and I think he sees them as interfering with his ability to get my attention. And so I know that's a real strong need for him. He doesn't shy away from that, so that's good.

Laura Markham: [00:17:36](#)

It's great that he comes and asks you and that he shows you how much he loved it and that he's seeking that connection with you. Some kids, by the time they're nine or ten, are really turning outside the home and have sort of given up at home and you have to woo them back. So thank goodness he's still there and that he's letting you know loud and clear, "I want you." That's wonderful. So I think the key to his heart is about that one-on-one time. I think that's clear.

I don't know if it's possible during throwing the football back and forth, but I always advise parents to try to find a few minutes with each child every night. That's also a time when children will open up to you because it's dark and they're not looking in your eyes. But whenever it is, whether it's at night, whether it's throwing the football, to find times to make comments that show that you understand the things he faces. So to say ... anything you can appreciate about him, I would let him know because it will help him to feel seen and appreciated. We all need to feel seen and appreciated. So to say, "I saw how you helped your sister with that. I know it must have been frustrating for you to have to stop what you were doing and help her." And even if he wasn't super patient, "And you even tried hard to be patient. I know it's hard." It's almost a backhanded compliment, right? You're saying to him, "I saw what you did, even if it wasn't perfect," and he's going to be like, "Oh, well, Mom really notices this. Next time I'm going to try to be a little more patient."

Laura Markham: [00:19:19](#)

And you can say, "It must be hard sometimes. I saw how you wanted me to help with X, Y, Z and I just wasn't able to help you right then because I was helping the four year old, and it must be so hard sometimes to always have to share me with two other kids. I know it's hard. I want you to know that I love you so much. I could never love anyone more than I love you, and I am always here for you. And even when my hands are busy helping your sister, I always

want to know what it is you want to tell me or what you need help with and I will help you as soon as I can." So you could say something like that while you're throwing the football.

Parent: [00:20:03](#) And I guess deep down it really hurts me. I'm like, "Why in the world would he treat another person, especially somebody in our family, like that?" I just have a hard time with it, so I think he would definitely be open to that. He's a very open child in general. He comes home and tells me all kinds of things about school and friendships and girls he likes, and so he's a gem of a child in that sense that he tells me a ton, and I hope it always remains that way. But I find it hard.

Parent: [00:20:31](#) I definitely do try and praise him when I see him help one of the siblings, but it's definitely a rarity. I do mention it, but I don't necessarily do it in one-on-one time. I've thought about that before. In fact, I thought about it the other way. I thought, "Oh, well next time we go and throw the football, maybe I should ask "Why do you speak like that to your sister?" Without trying to blame and shame, but just kind of figure out why he acts the way that he does to his siblings instead of focusing on the positive. But I could see the benefit in doing it the other way around.

Laura Markham: [00:21:08](#) Well, I think what I just heard you say is that it tears you up when he's mean, and so you're thinking, "Well, maybe I can take advantage of our one-on-one time so that I can find out why he's being mean like that." But we know why he's being mean. We actually already know the answer to it. **He** doesn't know the answer. Honestly, if you asked him, he would just feel put on the spot and he would feel like, "Well, see, I screwed up and I knew Mom doesn't think I'm good enough. She's finding fault with me right now even while we're having our special time together because I'm not good enough, because I screwed up once again and yelled at that bratty sister of mine. And it's not my fault that my sister's a brat. It's really all her fault and she ruins everything with Mom, and once again I'm not good enough." That's what would happen inside him if you asked him.

- Laura Markham: [00:21:58](#) So I think he doesn't know why he's mean to her, but we actually know, and what we know is this: He's the oldest and he never really got over having siblings be born and having to share you with the one who's three years younger and then with yet another one, the four year old. And then, on top of that, you were doing what you thought was best, which is what 99% of parents do, which is conventional parenting, and we know from the research ... and this is all in my sibling book, the research on this ... is that when we parent children conventionally, which means punitively, they are more likely to be punitive with each other. When we parent positively, they're more likely to be positive with each other. It's that simple.
- Laura Markham: [00:22:53](#) So what happened is, he already had this resentment and then he had a very powerful role model, his parents, and so he learned how to do it. He knows what you do when you have a problem with another person. You yell at them or you put them in time out or you shame them. He knows this. So that's what he's doing. So to him, he wouldn't be able to explain it to you and he would feel like there's something wrong with him, but it makes perfect sense that he's doing it. Does that make sense to you?
- Parent: [00:23:23](#) Oh yeah, it definitely does. I see it, I just see it so much the way that he speaks to them and acts with them and I, again, kick myself. But it's all about moving forward as opposed to trying to belabor what happened in the past. But I totally get it.
- Laura Markham: [00:23:40](#) Well, you're so right. I mean, there's no percentage in beating yourself up for it. I think the question we're really dealing with right now is how could you get him to recognize what he's doing and do something different? That's what you're asking me. And you were asking, "Would it work if I asked him why he's doing it?" I don't think it'd work if you ask him, but I do think there's a way to do it. So let's talk about that.
- Laura Markham: [00:24:04](#) When you're throwing the football around, what if you empathized with his experience? We've already talked about how to give him some strokes for anything he does right and empathize with his experience when he has to always share you, which is certainly part of the early

resentment that happened when he was little, and even now. So what if we took that to the next step and we said to him something like, "You know, I've learned a lot about being a mom and you were lucky and unlucky. The lucky thing was, you got two years of me with nobody else, no other kids. You don't remember it, though. It's such a shame because we had two wonderful years with just you and me, and I love that the other kids were born and I am so glad we have them in our family, but you know, those two years with just you and me were really wonderful and I wish you could remember them. But I remember them." So you're acknowledging that there's something special between you, he's your oldest.

- Laura Markham: [00:25:08](#) "So that's the lucky part. But you know, the unlucky part is, in a way I didn't know how to be a mom yet. I did my best, but you remember how I used to yell a lot? And I'm getting better at it, even though I still do some, but do you remember how we used to punish you and do time outs a lot?" And then be quiet, and he'll probably fill your ear with all the times that he remembers that you punished him. Won't he? Will he talk then, chatter about that?
- Parent: [00:25:39](#) He might or he might be really curious as to what the heck I'm talking about... Like, "What kind of spiel is Mom going into right now?" So he might go into it or he might just say, "Yeah, I remember." He may not give much detail.
- Laura Markham: [00:25:52](#) Right, because he wants to know where you're headed. Obviously something interesting is happening here or about to be happening. And at that point after you've said, "Remember how that used to happen?" You can say, "Your dad and I have worked so hard to be good parents, and we've learned a lot along the way and we're getting better at being parents every day. We yell less, we don't punish you anymore, and we talk about things more, and we understand more. I think it's getting better. Have you noticed things are getting better?" And again, you give him an opportunity to tell you and he might go into detail or he might not. He might say, "Yeah, all right, where is this going?" still.
- Laura Markham: [00:26:32](#) And then you say, "So I owe you an apology, sweetheart. I think that I showed you when you were little, that the way

to get people to do what you want is to yell at them and to force them, and that's actually not the best way to get people to do what you want. I've learned that now, and you see that we really try hard not to yell, even when we get frustrated. We try hard not to be yelling and forcing you. But I think we taught you that by doing it ourselves. We taught you that was the right way to do things. Do you think that's right?" Now, will he recognize what you're saying, that he does this? Or would he say, "What do you mean, Mom? I don't do that"?

- Parent: [00:27:17](#) He might recognize it. No, I don't think he'd be defensive about it. I think he knows. I mean, we talk about it a lot. I talked about having the conversation about why he talks to his sister like that. When I bring it up to him, he says things like, "Well, she's just really dumb and she acts like a baby and duh, duh, duh, duh." He doesn't ever say, "I don't know." He always has a reason. That's obviously not the root of the reason, but he always has a reason for it. So I don't think he'd be defensive and say that he doesn't do that, because he's pretty aware of it.
- Laura Markham: [00:27:59](#) That's great. I mean, he sounds like a wonderful boy, I have to say. Is it a brother and a sister, or two sisters?
- Parent: [00:28:17](#) A brother and a sister.
- Laura Markham: [00:28:18](#) Brother to the seven-year-old boy.
- Parent: [00:28:20](#) And the youngest is a girl.
- Laura Markham: [00:28:23](#) Right. And you can focus on the sister if that's the one he's mostly nasty to. Or you can talk about both of them. But you can say, "I know your sister can be really annoying." I mean, first of all, she's four and four year olds can be really annoying.
- Parent: [00:28:39](#) Absolutely.
- Laura Markham: [00:28:40](#) You could say that to him and you can laugh about how they can be annoying and all that. And you can say, "And you know, she's not a baby anymore, but she certainly is a lot closer to being a baby than you are. You're more than twice as old as her." And you can sort of make it clear from

a larger perspective that naturally there's a reason she's annoying. "She's still learning, blah blah, and naturally she acts like a baby." And then you can say, "But you know, all people are annoying sometimes. Not me of course, I'm perfect," and then he'll laugh and you can say, "I know. I'm annoying, too. And your dad can be annoying. I adore your father and he can be annoying sometimes. Have you noticed that? Yep. And your brother. I adore your brother, and you know what? He can be annoying sometimes. Of course never you." And then he'll laugh and you can say, "And I love you no matter what."

Laura Markham: [00:29:29](#) And then you can say, "And that's the thing about a family, is that we love each other no matter what, even when people are annoying. And I guess what I'm trying to say is that I think I did you a disservice by teaching you that it was a good way to get someone to do things your way was to when someone's annoying, you be mean to them, because it's really never okay to be mean to someone. And yet I think by yelling at you I was mean to you, but I didn't mean to be. I didn't know I was mean. I thought I was trying to do what parents are supposed to do and get kids to do the right thing, and instead it turned out I was actually yelling at you and being mean to you. And I think that's what you do with your sister when she's annoying, right?" And he'll say yes and you say, "So I am so sorry that I was that way to you."

Laura Markham: [00:30:23](#) And I have tears in my eyes as I'm saying this. I think as you say it to him, you will have tears in your eyes. You'll really feel it and he will feel that. And give him a big hug and then say, "And you know what? I also think it's not okay for your sister for someone to be mean to her and yell at her. And I know you're not trying to be mean to her, it's just that she's being annoying and you're getting annoyed at her. But I wonder, how could I help you to figure out a new way of being with her?" What if you presented it that way? Do you think he'd hear you?

Parent: [00:30:56](#) Yeah. And we talk about that. I mean, we do this a lot in the house now, when we have an episode. We say, "It's never okay to call names or to yell at a sibling, but what else could you do in the moment when you feel really angry or feel like you're really upset with her instead of

yelling?" And then we go through ideas, "Well, I could come get you or I could say this or I could do that," so we've gone through a lot of that, so I think he's probably used to that kind of language so he'd be open to that.

- Laura Markham: [00:31:28](#) I think the difference here is that when children are still feeling resentful of their sibling or they're not as open ... I mean, even though you've gone through the things, they're not as open. But in this case, what you've just done is actually thrown open the closet door and let the wind come blow out some of that old stuff, and it might be that that's just what he needs to be open to seeing things differently with his sister. And you could even come up with a special signal. Part of what's different is you're not just saying to him, "What could you do that's different?" You're saying to him, "How can I help you do something different?"
- Parent: [00:32:09](#) That's true.
- Laura Markham: [00:32:11](#) And you're basically taking responsibility for half of the problem. You're saying, "I taught you to do this." And you can say, "Even if I had been a different kind of parent to you, your sister would still be annoying sometimes. But you would actually have better tools to be able to handle it with her, and I apologize that I didn't learn until lately how to use those tools. And those tools do not include yelling and being mean to somebody. They are only ever about expressing what you need in a way that doesn't attack the other person, and I want to know how I can help you." And he might say, "I don't know, Mom, how you can help me? I'm trying." In which case you could say, "Okay, could we have a signal or could I step in when I see something happen when you're yelling or being mean?"
- Laura Markham: [00:32:57](#) And I'm using the word "being mean" pretty openly. I wouldn't probably use it for a four year old because I think it's a confusing concept, but I think for a nine year old, he gets what you're talking about. But I think what you can say to him is, "If I hear you raising your voice to her and I'm around, what I'll do is I'll come over and I'll put my arms on both of you and say, 'Wow, I hear some loud voices. Sweetheart, are you trying to tell your sister that you would rather she not make that screeching noise right

next to you when you're on the computer? Could you tell her that without raising your voice to her? Let's do a do-over." And you can give him an example so that in the moment when you actually do it, he feels like you're not criticizing him.

Laura Markham: [00:33:53](#) And you might even have a signal that you could say to him, "I'll use a special signal. What could our special signal be? I'll come over and I'll be pulling on my ear, and that will be our special signal that we're going to try a do-over." Do you think that would be helpful to him?

Parent: [00:34:14](#) Yeah, I do. It's funny though. I have to be really careful. Anything that sounds remotely too touchy-feely or too cheesy, he automatically balks at. He's of that age where he's like, "Mom," and he rolls his eyes. We are affectionate with each other in our family, but there's not a lot of juicy, dripping, affectionate relations between us. There's a lot of joking in our house, a lot of sarcasm, which definitely has its drawbacks but also can be positive, too, sometimes. So when I started employing some of these tactics, if the language I use sounds "too cheesy," he says, "Oh, really Mom?"

Laura Markham: [00:34:58](#) But that's okay. Part of your job description is to be the emotive person. That's for both parents, I'm not just saying the mother. The job of the parents is to role model that people are allowed to have warm, expressive feelings toward each other, and if it feels uncomfortable to you, it's going to transmit to the kids. And it probably will in the beginning feel uncomfortable to you. And you can just say, when he rolls his eyes and says, "Mom," you can just say, "I know. That's cheesy, right? That's my job. I'm the mom. I'm allowed to be cheesy," and it's fine. I mean, I wouldn't let that stop you from being warmly emotional with him. Does that make sense?

Parent: [00:35:42](#) Yes.

Laura Markham: [00:35:43](#) And I think every family, no matter how warmly emotional they are or not, needs to be able to develop language around, "Can you tell your sister what you need without attacking her?" That's the basic skill that humans need in

relating to other people. And we learn from relationships with siblings, usually. Does that make sense?

- Parent: [00:36:09](#) Yeah, absolutely. And I do use a language similar to that when I'm talking to him...
- Laura Markham: [00:36:15](#) Great.
- Parent: [00:36:16](#) ..."I know this is what you need and I understand you. How can we get your message across without calling names?" Our kids are big on calling names and the four year old in particular especially, or shaming, or calling them names. "How can you tell them that without doing it this way? What's another way?" So, yeah.
- Laura Markham: [00:36:34](#) Great, okay. So does this sound like it might help you move to the next step with him on this?
- Parent: [00:36:41](#) I really think so because he does harbor a lot of resentment, and I do think he feels like maybe he's not good enough sometimes in the eyes of his parents. I think we probably are harder on him than we are to the other two, I guess maybe by nature, being the oldest child, which is not fair. And I think it's interesting because he shows a huge amount of confidence. He's a very, very confident child. But I think underneath that confidence that he shows outwardly, there's a lot of insecurity, because he feels like he's always doing something wrong. Even though he never expresses that, but I think because we come down on him so hard for a lot of different things, he probably in turn exhibits that with just a ton of confidence. At sports and other things he's overly confident. But yeah, I think this'll be good for him.
- Laura Markham: [00:37:51](#) Great. Overconfidence is usually a response to insecurity, right?
- Parent: [00:37:56](#) Yes.
- Laura Markham: [00:37:58](#) It shows up as overconfidence rather than just confidence. I mean, confidence is a good thing. Overconfidence is a sign of something else going on, which is probably that he's a little worried. So I'm hoping that this will make a difference, and we spent a lot of time on it because I think

it is actually very representative of oldest kids, and oldest kids really do get the full brunt of the parents' issues. Whatever the parents' issues are on both sides, the oldest kid seems to carry that weight. And we're so much more mellow by the time we get to the third kid. I mean, it makes a huge difference, and so I just encourage all those people who are listening ... Anyone, when you're listening to this, your oldest child needs a lot of extra understanding. And hopefully this has been helpful to everyone to listen to. So thank you for asking your question.

Parent: [00:38:57](#) Thank you for the help.

Question 3

Laura Markham: [00:39:01](#) There's a question about negativity. "When I'm fixing dinner, she regularly comes in and asks in an annoyed tone, "What are we having for dinner?" And you can empathize. "Oh, not what you wanted, huh? I'm sorry you're disappointed. I hope maybe you'll end up liking it." And then later at dinner, talk to her. Ask her what she does like, ask her how you guys could work together to make menus of things she likes and cook together. People who are negative like this feel they have a chip on their shoulder, they feel like the world's against them. Read my article on optimism. Put "optimism" into the search box at the Aha! Parenting website.

Laura Markham: [00:39:36](#) Also, hold your limits peacefully and with humor. "I know, this isn't what you wanted." And also empathize with her as much as you can. I think what you'll see as you meet her needs, that you can help her express those needs without being inappropriate in the expression. But she's only seven, so that's going to take a little bit of time. And also, if you've come only recently to peaceful parenting, she's still getting that chip off her shoulder, so that's going to take a little time. But I think when you look back in a year, if you can keep empathizing, you're going to see that things are really different.

Question 4

- Laura Markham: [00:40:11](#) A parent is asking, "Since I started the course, we're treating our children with empathy and listening instead of giving them consequences. But now they're yelling, crying, and having meltdowns very often. They're more disrespectful to us than before and they're talking to each other roughly." Oh, I am so sorry. This is something that often happens in this course for parents of older kids. Even for younger kids, but they go through it very quickly. It's always much harder in this course for the parents of the older kids. Because remember, as kids get older, first of all, their brain has already taken shape. You have a ten year old, you have an eight year old, you have a five year old who's about to rewire their brain at age six, so the five year old has spent five years wiring the brain in a certain way. I'm betting the five year old is not as challenging right now as your ten and eight year old.
- Laura Markham: [00:41:05](#) But here's the thing. These kids already had their brain wired and they're wired to go into a state of emergency very easily. And so they're also old enough to learn that the only reason to be kind to each other or to you is the consequences you would give them. That doesn't mean they were being kind for the right reasons or that they were really developing a habit of kindness. It means they were doing it out of fear. Parents are often shocked to realize that their child actually has no motivation to be a good person other than fear, because that's what conventional parenting unfortunately uses.
- Laura Markham: [00:41:42](#) The other problem is that of course, kids who have been parented with fear have a full backpack, and when they're ten years old, you can't expect them to just cry easily the way a two year old would about some pretext like the wrong cup. So how are you going to get that ten year old to actually let those feelings out? Mostly they won't. They won't cry. So one thing is laughter. If you can get them laughing, it makes a huge difference. Sometimes if you do enough laughter and enough empathy, kids that age will start crying. They'll have a pretext for crying, like they stubbed their toe and it's all your fault, but they will begin

crying. But remember that kids this age luckily can do some of that expression through words. You and I need a good cry every so often, all adults do, but we can also do a lot of processing of those emotions through words. That's an amazing capacity that humans have.

Laura Markham: [00:42:41](#)

So your goal is to help them to express themselves in words, but that's a lot harder. It's harder than just working directly with the emotions, because there are a lot of defenses in the way because the kids don't want to feel those feelings. So it is hard, and I'm sorry. I want to apologize to you and just say, that it is a hard thing when your kids are making this transition. But it is not a permanent condition. And I've talked to many parents who say that if they had older kids, like a ten year old or an eight year old like you do, then it took them more than the three months of the course to see big changes in their child. And so I'm just encouraging you not to give up. It is possible to get those changes, and let's talk a little bit about how you can help them with disrespect, because I know disrespect must be really hurtful to you.

Laura Markham: [00:43:43](#)

Connection is going to be the most important tool you have. Remember they were connecting with you before maybe, to some degree, but they were mostly doing what you wanted because of the consequences you gave them. So now you're going to have to really step up your game in terms of connection. So every kid should get daily special time, getting them laughing every day, really trying for 24/7 empathy. You're going to feel like you're masquerading as Mother Teresa, but that's really what you have to do so they feel understood. And I want to add, I know this isn't easy because you're retraining yourself, and because a ten year old could laugh at you if you're empathic, but it's still worth it. If your ten year old is angry about something, you're going to say, "Wow sweetheart, you're so mad about this. Tell me about it. I do want to acknowledge that connection is not sufficient by itself, even if you work really hard on the connection, because of the baggage, the emotional baggage we just talked about.

Laura Markham: [00:44:44](#)

You said they're having meltdowns. That's actually a good thing. It means they're still willing to cry, even if the meltdowns start off as anger. And you can expect that

when they get upset, they're going to express some disrespect at you, and the key here is you want to get behind that anger to the tears and fears behind it. If you greet their disrespect by saying, "Don't you be disrespectful to me," which is what we all want to do, our child is just going to get angrier. Whereas if the child is disrespectful and you greet it with kindness, the disrespect will start to melt away. So you could say, "Wow sweetheart, ouch, that hurt. You must be so upset to speak to me that way. Wow, I hear how hurt you are that I did that, that I forgot about this thing I promised you I would do," whatever it is that they're upset about, "that you didn't want chicken for dinner," whatever it is. Remember there's a message behind the disrespect. If you hear the message, the disrespect will melt away.

Laura Markham: [00:45:50](#)

I don't think, however, you should put up with disrespect between the children. To you it's fine. Your heart is big enough to handle this and love your child even if they're disrespectful, and you want to overlook that message of disrespect because the real important message is behind that disrespect. That's just a defense. But when the kids are mean to each other, that's not okay and they're old enough to understand that limit. And so I think you really want to focus on that. "Kids, we do kindness in our house. I know that there was a time when I didn't understand how important kindness is and I wasn't always kind, but now I'm working on being kind as much as I can. In our house, our house rule is kindness, so please tell your brother again in a kind way what you need." And remember, for siblings, you're always teaching them you can express what you need from your sibling without attacking them. "Tell your brother again in a kind way."

Laura Markham: [00:46:49](#)

So I hope in addition to this difficulty, that you're also seeing more glimmers of warmth and happiness and connection as well as the anger. I encourage you, if you're not, please have a few sessions with a parenting coach if you're feeling stuck, because that's what's going to help you pass this stuck point. And it's normal to have this stuck point, but it's not necessary. You can get past this, so don't give up.

Question 5

- Laura Markham: [00:47:17](#) A parent is saying that, "My respectful voice chart is seriously full of stickers, so I really changed my way of talking." Yay! How wonderful. Congratulation!. I know that is not an easy thing to do. But Parent is also saying, "My children are without respect, to me and to each other. The six year old will kick me if he doesn't like lunch. The older one will call me disrespectful names." So, all that hard work you did to stop yelling is fantastic, and now you actually have something even harder to do. You have to help your children heal from all those times in the past when they felt disrespected and scared because you were yelling at them. And I know that you did that because you said because of your respectful voice chart, but also I know it because of the way they're treating you. They're showing you now how they felt then. They're being disrespectful, and to heal this, you have to acknowledge all of their feelings that are causing them to do this.
- Laura Markham: [00:48:19](#) Even while you ask them to be respectful to each other and even while you set limits on the physical aggression. Your six year old cannot kick you because he doesn't like lunch. So when your child calls you a name, what you would say is, "Wow, ouch. You're calling me names. I guess you're showing me how upset you are about this. Sweetheart, you can tell me what you're upset about. I'm listening." And then, notice you haven't even mentioned that he can't call you the name. You've just observed what's happening and he must be very upset to do it. And then you listen and you reflect whatever he's saying. "So you really didn't want this for lunch. You wish you could have pizza every day, huh? I hear you. Pizza is delicious. What would you have on it? Yeah, that's my favorite too, the pepperoni," or whatever.
- Laura Markham: [00:49:10](#) And then at the end of the conversation, when you've created a connection with your child, then you say, "Sweetie, you can always tell me what you're upset about and I will always hear you, but no name calling. Name calling hurts. I know you were mad. If you're so mad at me that you want to hurt my feelings by calling names, you

can tell me what you're mad about. You can always tell me how you feel and what you need without attacking me."

Laura Markham: [00:49:34](#)

So I realize this is hard and it will take some serious emotional self care for you because you're going to get triggered when they call you names, and that's totally understandable. But if you can do this, you'll find that the whole atmosphere in your house will begin to change. When your six year old hits you, No. Or the minute he kicks you because he doesn't like lunch, you say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. No kicking." Seriously. You stand up for yourself and you say, "No kicking. You are mad, tell me. You don't like this lunch? I hear you. Tell me more. You really hate this lunch." "Yes, I hate this lunch. You should have known." And then you just roll with that and you acknowledge it and you let him yell and do whatever he's going to do about telling you about lunch. But no kicking. And I'm not getting the impression that he then goes into a rage and is pacing around the house kicking or anything. I'm getting the impression he's showing you his immediate displeasure, and that if you stand up for yourself, he's going to back off and not do that.

Laura Markham: [00:50:37](#)

If that's not the case, if he's at any point going into rages and attacking you, then you just move away from him. And if he's continuing to try to attack you, you say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa," and you can pull him into your arms and hold him snug and say, "Sweetheart, let's calm down. No kicking, no hitting." I know he's six so he's probably not tiny, but he's also small enough that you can probably physically hold him. And just say, "You are really upset about lunch. I hear you. You can tell me. No kicking." I mean, he's old enough at six that he's going to be able to override his upset, as long as you speak in a soothing voice.

Laura Markham: [00:51:21](#)

Notice that I used a loud voice initially and then I moved right into a soothing voice. The loud voice is just to be really clear, like, "Whoa, no hitting," but then move into soothing like, "Whoa, no, no, no, it's okay. I'm listening, you can tell me about it." Your oldest is already nine, so you might need a few sessions with a parenting coach to help you pass this transitional point. This is understandable behavior from children who've been

conventionally parented, but you don't deserve to be treated this way and a coach can help you set limits at the same time as you're building connection. So that's your goal.

Question 6

Laura Markham: [00:51:58](#) A parent is asking about her ... aw, her 30 month old wants to be with Daddy and not with her and she's saying, "I don't spank them but I did yell at them, and I still do, even though less. I do play with them and I have started special time, but I have lots of housework to do and it really, really hurts my feelings. I don't feel her love for me." That must hurt. It hurts to feel rejected by your own child. I hear you. It's really hard to get past that pain when we do so much for them. I want to remind you that you said to me your first girl had the same stage for more than a year, so you've seen this before and you know your first girl is now past that stage, so that's good news. I also want to remind you that it must hurt your child a lot, too, this rift with you. By rejecting you, she's showing you how much it hurts.

Laura Markham: [00:52:51](#) So it sounds like you're yelling a lot less now. That's wonderful and you've done a lot of work on yourself, I know, to get to this point. And how great that you started doing special time with her. That's really going to have a great result if you're doing special time with her. You're going to find that that is the key to the door that's going to unlock her being close to you again. But she's still showing you that you have more work to do on not yelling and on connecting with her. You don't have to play all day, but I do suggest that you make connecting with her and your other daughter your top priority for a while. Get them laughing, read to them, get down on the floor and play with them. And if they get angry and scream and cry when you try to care for them, empathize about how they're still mad at you from those times when you used to yell at them and you understand that, but they're safe with you now, you're not yelling anymore.

Laura Markham: [00:53:42](#) And of course, this does mean you need to keep working on the yelling so you're not doing that. You can't continue to worsen their fear and resentment and then expect them to feel close to you. This is the time for healing. It's not easy, but you can do this. I have seen many parents recover from yelling and rebuild their relationship with their child, so you can do this. And please, if you need help, contact a coach. This is a hard thing to do when you have those hurt feelings. So, don't even hesitate. Have a few sessions with a coach if that's going to help you. Remember that's the Aha! Parenting website, go to the about button on the dropdown menu, and go to coaching. There are a lot of coaches that I have trained. They're all wonderful. Look and find one that you resonate with.

Question 7

Laura Markham: [00:54:28](#) A parent says, "Tantrums were happening twice a day, but they're down to a couple a week. How do we explain to the seven year old that they shouldn't do that at school, and only do it at home?" So it sounds like since you started the course, she's gone from tantrums twice a day to twice a week, which is fantastic. And that means you've done something since you started the course that's a big change, and that's wonderful. So yes, that's a more normal thing for a seven year old. It still indicates to me that she might have some special challenges, especially the fact that she's having these kinds of outbursts at school with other people. That also indicates that she has some special challenges. It's not just a response to the way you were parenting her before.

Laura Markham: [00:55:13](#) Maybe she has anxiety. Maybe this is sensory issue. Maybe this is sensitivity in her diet. Maybe she had early trauma. Maybe she's just highly sensitive, I don't know. But it does seem like something's happening, so I would consider whether there's something you haven't addressed and really leave no stone unturned to find that. Because I only deal with the psychology, but I've heard from many people who go through the course and they say, "My kid's still having a tantrum a couple times a week and she's already seven, what should I do?" And I say, "Look at diet

sensitivity," and sure enough it turned out once they started working on the diet, she stopped having tantrums. I'm not saying that's what it is. I'm just saying, leave no stone unturned because something's still going on.

Laura Markham: [00:55:54](#)

Then, I would consider whether there's some extra support you can give her at those times, like if you can pinpoint what it is that makes her fall apart twice a week and give her extra support during those times. And then finally, as far as how to get her to regulate with others, you talk about it. She's already seven. I would regularly read books about emotions, about social life, and talk about them. When you read books and talk about them, that's when kids really have high reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is the most important indicator for how children do academically in every subject. And I would also have lots of discussions with her about how the brain works and how she can learn to self-regulate, and I would practice those strategies when she's in a good mood. Talking about the brain is a great tool to give children.

Question 8

Laura Markham: [00:56:42](#)

This is from a parent. "How can parents of toddlers know when we're doing this positive parenting thing right?" And she's asking because her toddler twins seem to be having more tantrums than ever. They're two and a half. Well, I would say, that's not a sign that you're doing something wrong. In fact, they might well be having more big emotions that they're in touch with than before. Now, most two year olds don't really stuff things, so even though they can have a full backpack, you sort of see it. They're in a bad mood and then they're in a good mood because they emptied the backpack. But, it's certainly possible that they're showing you stuff that's been in there for a while. Twins especially, what we see with twins is that it's harder to meet their needs because there are two of them all the time with the same developmental needs.

Laura Markham: [00:57:32](#)

And so it's especially likely that twins are going to have old stuff to show you. Even though they're only two and a half,

two and a half year olds can have stuff in their backpack. So it's entirely possible that what you're seeing is that your kids are feeling safe to show you their feelings, and that's fantastic news because you don't want them stuffing their feelings. That would mean they would be self-medicating as teens, and that's not a pretty picture. So this is way better. In fact, you probably are seeing the positive results of the work you're doing. I would add, though, if the tantrums your kids are having are not tearful, if it's just rage, then there are some things you can do to address that. Playfulness helps. Laughter, in other words, daily laughter. Every kid needs that and it will move the tantrums when they do happen from being just rage to also including more tears, because laughter, basically empties the top layer of fear from their emotional backpack and makes it possible for kids to go deeper into the tears and not be so defended. It makes kids less tense.

Laura Markham: [00:58:40](#)

And the other thing that really helps is connection of any kind. That will also help kids feel safe enough to move into tears. The other thing is since your kids are toddlers, all children are more likely to have meltdowns when they're the HALT acronym, H-A-L-T, hungry, angry, lonely, tired. So if your kids are hungry or tired, or if they're feeling lack of connection, which is the lonely part, then there's going to be more tantrums. So you can actually avoid a lot of those tantrums simply by addressing those needs. And the anger part of that acronym you can address by giving more empathy in the moment. So if the child starts to get angry about something, you can say, "Oh, you really wanted this. You wish we could. I know. You're so disappointed." And even a two and a half year old will understand you well enough that they feel like, "Okay, well I don't always get what I want, but at least Mom and Dad understand what I'm saying. All right, she's telling me I'll go to the park tomorrow. I'm still going to cry a little bit." But they're less likely to just fly into a rage because they feel so powerless and unheard.

Laura Markham: [00:59:48](#)

So those are ways to avoid some of the meltdowns, but you won't avoid all meltdowns if you have two and a half year olds, so try seeing those meltdowns as an expression of overwhelm and empathizing with them. And that also really does tend to shorten them. And then finally, your

question, "How do I know if I'm doing it right?" You should see between the meltdowns more cooperation, more happiness, more affection, more sweetness from your toddlers. So even though kids will have more meltdowns during the backpack emptying, in between, no matter what age the child is, there will be more connection, more happiness, a lighter sensibility to your child. They'll feel lighter and happier and usually they're sweeter and more affectionate to you as well.

Laura Markham: [01:00:38](#)

So you should see a difference by using the peaceful parenting tools and preventive maintenance, and if you're not seeing that difference, then go back and look at the preventive maintenance tools. Are you doing empathy as close to 24/7 as you can do it? Obviously nobody can do it 24/7, but that's your aspiration. Are you doing daily laughter? I call it roughhousing because that's a great way with younger children to get them laughing, but anything to get kids laughing at any age. Are you doing a predictable routine so kids are not surprised? Are you doing daily special time, one on one with each child so they really feel connected to you and adored? If you're doing those things, almost certainly you will see that the time between the meltdowns will be happier times. And then yes, you may see more meltdowns, but you'll see more tears and less anger from the meltdowns, and that's how you know if you're doing it "right," if you're actually getting traction with your kids.

Question 9

Laura Markham: [01:01:44](#)

A parent asked about whether she's expecting too much from her four to six year olds. I would say that in general, what I see from parents is they ask too much. They think everybody else's kids are perfect and their kids are not doing what they should be age appropriately. And I would say in general, we ask too much of them. Especially under the age of six, their brains are not fully formed and when they're upset, they especially can't access the thinking part of their brain. Now, that's true for all humans. When we're upset, we can't access the thinking part of our brain. That's why we say things when we're angry that we would never

say otherwise. But in general, parents do ask too much I would say.

Laura Markham: [01:02:26](#) How do you know if you're in that camp? You know by how much support you have to give your child to do what you're asking. So if you think that your kids should be cleaning up their toys, well, how much support do you need to do to get your kid to clean up their toys? Well, with a six year old, you can usually do support for about two months, and then the kid is able to actually do it themselves with some encouragement from you. With a three year old, three year olds can't clean up their toys by themselves. They just can't. So generally, you need to do it with them at the age of three. And even after two months you'll need to do it with them, or they won't be able to stay on task. So that's an example of, no matter how much support you give, a three year old can't stay on task with something, well, that's probably too much to ask of them.

Laura Markham: [01:03:10](#) But if you give a fair amount of support and make it fun and do it together for two months, could your six year old do it? Probably, so it's okay to ask that of a six year old. That's appropriate, right? So really just think in terms of how much support you have to give them. When you ask about what reasonable expectations are for behavior at various ages, it's hard for me to answer that in a vacuum because there's so many different kinds of behavior.

Laura Markham: [01:03:34](#) But I guess I would say any behavior you want your child to do, start by doing it with your child. If they're having a hard time getting ready for school, getting dressed in the morning, getting their teeth brushed, whatever it is, those kinds of tasks, do it with them. So as long as you do it with them and they gradually begin to do it themselves, then that's age appropriate. If you have to stay involved, then that's what you have to do or otherwise it's too high an expectation. Every child's going to be a little different, too, as to whether they can stay on task with things. So I hope that answers your question.

Question 10

- Laura Markham: [01:04:10](#) There's a question here from A parent about how she made lots of progress and then in the last three weeks she feels like she's backslid. So you don't say how far you got in the course, but if you have gotten through the whole course, the 12 weeks, and you've backslid ... and it sounds like you backslid around the respectful voice stuff ... then get help from a coach. You didn't miss something. Sometimes it's just harder to break old habits that started in your own childhood. And so if you've been through the whole course and you're faithfully using all the tools, I guarantee you it will work. I see the evaluations when the course ends from people. I see how life changing this is.
- Laura Markham: [01:04:49](#) So if you're stuck or if you feel like you're backsliding, you need some help to put some of the preventive maintenance into practice or to stop yourself from yelling. Don't hesitate. Get some help from a coach. Do one or two sessions. That's all you'll need. Since you already saw progress, you'll find that you'll be able to put this together. It's sometimes hard as you're starting out to make everything work and fit it all into your life. And often, it's also because you think you're doing special time but you're not doing it quite right. Maybe you're reading them books during special time, which doesn't actually suffice as special time as an example. Or maybe you're doing great but you still lose it and you yell at them, or maybe you're doing great except you're sleep deprived, so you're having a hard time and you need some help with sleep issues.
- Laura Markham: [01:05:32](#) So whatever your specific issue is, that's where a coach can help you. I don't get any financial benefit from you working with a coach. This is completely for your benefit. The reason I started training coaches is because I can no longer take new clients because of my schedule. I wanted people who I trusted and who I had trained, who I could refer you to. And so that's why these people have trained with me for six months of ongoing reading and meetings and supervision and me listening to the sessions they do, so they're very well trained and they're trained specifically so that I would have someone to refer you to, to go for a couple of sessions if you're stuck. So, if you're stuck or anyone else who feels like you want to get back on the path and you need a little help, that's what you do.

Laura Markham: [01:06:21](#) And really, you can go back and start at the beginning of the course also and just work your way through, and you'll find that it works. People who feel like they've backslid, when they go back and they work their way through the course, they always tell me, "Oh, it's because I had stopped laughing and doing roughhousing with them. Now it's all great again." So I do encourage you to keep plugging away at it. It isn't magic; it takes a lot of work to put it together and it takes a lot of work to maintain it, just like all preventive maintenance. But it really does work, as you've seen, if you saw changes right at the beginning of the course.

Question 11

Laura Markham: [01:07:02](#) This is a question from A parent who says, "My husband and I are good people. We're overall good parents. We're loving the course. There's been a lot of yelling in our house over the past eight years, and some of it has been really hurtful and damaging. I think my three year old is doing fine and is going to benefit immediately from the teachings in this course, but my eight year old I think is a bit scarred from our past emotional outbursts. I'm wondering how I can help her get past that. Is it possible to heal from the past?" And yes. You're not the only one wondering this. So many people have this same question, especially when their children are over the age of six, which gets harder to do this work.

Laura Markham: [01:07:42](#) Yes, your three year old of course will heal faster. For older kids, it takes longer and eight is not that old, but it still does take longer. And partly that's because it's harder for them to cry, and that's such a shortcut to healing, basically transforming all that past pain in the emotional backpack. And partly when they're older, the brain has already rewired. That happens at age six and again at puberty, so it solidifies certain ways of responding to things. So that doesn't mean her brain can't change, it just means that our brains change with any repeated experience, even when we're pretty old. You can have the repeated experience of something and your brain will modify itself to deal with that. So with your eight year old, your job now

is to give her brain the repeated experience of safety and connection rather than fear and hurt and walling herself off, which is how she's probably dealt with fear, hurt, or anger in the past. Maybe she's lashing out in anger. That's very common.

Laura Markham: [01:08:50](#) So that's our clue. That's what we want to give her, so that she can heal. That safety is all about the backpack. If she's carrying around pain that she's walled off, we want to help her get in touch with that pain, share it with you, and the very act of sharing it is what heals the emotions. So I'm going to say that again, because we're going to refer to the emotional backpack a lot during this call. Anger is not in the backpack. Anger is the defense against those feelings that hurt. It's the way we wall ourselves off from the feelings. So our job here is when the child gets angry or in some other way shows that they're walled off from us, our job is to stay compassionate, to not get hooked on the anger, and to create safety so the upsets can surface and the child can start to get tears in their eyes. And until you do that, the child is going to continue to act out usually.

Laura Markham: [01:09:45](#) And so that's the work on the emotional backpack, and the way you create that safety is empathy. It's seeing it from her perspective, it's acknowledging her feelings even if you don't agree with them, it's apologizing for the past, it's apologizing even in the moment for very minor things that she takes offense to. "Oh, I didn't understand what a big deal this is to you. Now I see. I'm so sorry." And of course to do all that, we have to regulate ourselves.

Laura Markham: [01:10:20](#) So you said there's been a lot of yelling in the past so I know you must be working hard now on self regulation, and that's the fundamental way that you create safety. Your child's healing will start with anger usually. It may then move to tears, which is wonderful. And you can stimulate those tears sometimes with things that are even unrelated, like a sad movie sometimes can move a child to tears, and it just taps into the vein of sadness in them that otherwise they wouldn't be able to tap into. Or it might just be that it's all just angry words and your empathy and you not taking it personally is what's going to help her move into the sadness.

Laura Markham: [01:11:08](#) And the final suggestion I would give you and anyone who is dealing with a full backpack is think about art. Art is actually a way of tapping into something much greater than us, the divine. And it's a way to tap into our subconscious. It's a way of going beyond the current limitations of the conscious mind, and that's why art is transformative. And so doing art with a child and letting them tell you about it ... you don't have to be an art therapist to use that as an opportunity for your child to heal. And so if you have a child who's open to doing art with you, I think it's a wonderful way to invite them toward healing.

Laura Markham: [01:11:48](#) So, don't give up. It's so early in the game here. And the wonderful thing is that you're doing this before the teen years. And yes, the people who have 12 year olds who are listening to this, it's not too late for your 12 year old either. It's just more work for you. That's all, because you have to stay more patient in the face of more articulate anger for longer before your child is willing to let you in. But it is never too late. These ideas of connection, self regulation, and compassion, seeing it from the other person's point of view, they allow you to heal relationships with anyone. A child at any age, including young adult children and anyone else in your life.

Question 12

Laura Markham: [01:12:33](#) This is a question from a parent who says, "The biggest challenge I have with Aha! Parenting is about hearing everybody out. It takes a lot of time and we don't get much stuff done, and sometimes we don't get going until late in the day and other people have to wait on us. Quite often I feel like the kids are consuming me." So, I hear how overwhelmed you feel, and I want to reassure you that this is not necessarily the way to peaceful parent. You don't have to do it this way. I think if you're just getting used to this kind of parenting, it does take longer to facilitate disagreements, so that can certainly happen. But when you say you don't get going until late in the day and other people have to wait on you, I just don't think that needs to be part of what goes on in your life.

Laura Markham: [01:13:18](#) I would make it clear to your kids there are some decisions kids are allowed to make for themselves, like what they wear. And obviously the breadth of those decisions broadens as kids get older. And there's some decisions that kids can give input on but you make the decision. And then there's some decisions where kids might want different things and you facilitate. That seems to be where you're running into trouble, facilitating disagreements between them. And of course there are many decisions that are the prerogative of the parent and you need to be clear about what those are and what the time limits are for input, and you're making the decision on those even if you listen to your kids' input. And of course, then you're going to listen to their unhappiness when you make a decision they don't like, and there will be those times. But you get to be in charge.

Laura Markham: [01:14:05](#) So I would encourage you to see yourself more as the leader. That feeling of your kids consuming you, I just want to say ...if Mama's not happy, nobody's happy. And the same thing is true for Papa. Your children don't want to consume you, because then you stop being the emotionally generous parent your kids need. You're not the victim here. You need to put yourself back on the list. Linda Knost, LR Knost, is a wonderful writer and parenting advisor. She once said, "Self care isn't me first, but it definitely is me too." And that's where you have to come in. Me too.

Laura Markham: [01:14:54](#) So I would start to make sure your own cup is full. I think then you won't feel quite so much at the whim of your kids' need to be heard. That's a legitimate need on their part, but it has to be balanced with the overall needs of the whole family. The kids by design are not responsible for the whole family. They don't have the context yet to do that. They are in charge of looking out for their own needs, but YOU are responsible for the whole family. You're the one who has to lead here. That's your job.

Question 13

Laura Markham: [01:15:21](#) A parent's saying, "Now that I'm changing how I approach parenting and now that I've learned so much, I've seen some success but now I have this nagging feeling that it's

all my fault. My child's misbehaviors are all my fault." I would say guilt is not useful. Yes, when your child has a meltdown, when your child's acting out, is uncooperative, that's great. It's like you've just been given huge information that you can use. "My child feels disconnected from me. That's why they're acting out." So build connection. Take responsibility. But it never works to beat up on yourself. Never.

Laura Markham: [01:16:00](#) In fact, I would take that a step further. I would say only self love works to heal us. You'll notice in this course all of those daily inspirations. One of the things we're doing is rewiring our brain to love ourselves and to accept ourselves and to forgive ourselves. Use the daily inspirations that talk about loving yourself, accepting yourself, forgiving yourself, so that you can forgive yourself for the kind of parent you were before. You did the best you could. You know better now, you're going to do better now. And you still won't be perfect because you're human. It takes a long time to change and rewire your brain. So forgive yourself. It's one step forward, one step back, but if you keep taking those steps forward, it becomes two steps forward, one step back. And if it's two steps forward, one step back, sooner or later you're going to be in a whole new landscape.

Laura Markham: [01:16:54](#) It really works. I've seen it in thousands and thousands of parents. So I would just say, your child doesn't do well when he or she is feeling blamed, feeling punished, feeling resentful, and neither do you. Just don't do it to yourself. It's not helpful.

Question 14

Laura Markham: [01:17:15](#) Another parent asked, "Why is it so hard to change? I still find myself lashing out even though I know better now." Well, most of us have stuff from our childhoods that we carry around. So I encourage you to consider ... and also anyone else for whom this resonates ... why am I still lashing out? I would encourage you to consider, if you had a hard childhood, having a couple of sessions with an EMDR therapist. There's an organization for EMDR

therapists that makes sure that the people who are on that website are fully trained and fully certified. You don't want to get just anybody. A lot of people say, "Oh, I can do EMDR," and they aren't fully trained. Like I know a lot about EMDR, but I wouldn't try to do it. You have to be fully trained.

Laura Markham: [01:18:00](#) So go to EMDRIA, which I think stands for International Association, and look for somebody in your area. You won't need 10 sessions. You might need two. But the great thing about it is that it gets right into the heart of any traumas from your childhood. And when I say traumas, they don't have to be super big things. They can be relatively small things that are still causing you to get triggered and lash out. So anything that we couldn't process at the time. What happens when we process an emotion is we dream at night and the hippocampus forms our experience into a memory. It's more complicated than that and we don't fully know what happens, but one of the things that happens is that the emotions get toned down. That's why when we say, "Sleep on it," the next morning we're not so upset about it. A week later we don't even know what we were so upset about, right?

Laura Markham: [01:18:55](#) So if you had something happen that your brain was not able to process at the time, the emotions are still very much part of it. It's not fully filed away in your memory. In fact, it could be like a black hole. It could be that you don't even know it's there. That's what happens with trauma. But if something gets triggered from that, like you hear a loud noise, you're immediately in a state of emergency. So anything, even a small thing like your parent yelling at you or being left alone to cry or an operation when you were little, often things we don't know about, that we don't remember, can cause us years later to lash out. So I would just suggest if you feel like you're still lashing out a lot, consider going into counseling or just doing a session or two with an EMDR therapist to see what's there. I think EMDR is a great place to start only because it's not a long-term thing and it can really get to the root of something right away.

Laura Markham: [01:19:58](#) I see so often talk therapy, which is how I'm trained...I see so often talk therapy, most of us can talk our way in circles

around things, not because we're smarter than the other person who's doing the therapy with us, the counselor, but just because we have good defenses. And so if you bypass the rational brain that's trying to stay defended and you go right into the trauma, you can just resolve it. And why carry that around with you if you don't have to?

Question 15

- Laura Markham: [01:20:27](#) There's a question here, "Is it ever okay to raise your voice? Not to yelling, but to a stern warning." Well, of course. If your child is in danger, you would yell, "Stop!" If they're about to grab a sharp knife, walk into the fire, walk into the street. But I think you're talking about giving them a stern warning about something that's not danger. The clarification is, "Even in adult conversation, I use the 'you are approaching a limit' voice when somebody is stepping over the line." So I would say that's a defense, that's a way that you learned in childhood probably to keep people from infringing on you. Sounds like you had a childhood where people infringed on you, and so you learned that one way to keep them from infringing on you is to use a stern warning voice when someone gets close to that line. I understand that. But I don't think you need to do it.
- Laura Markham: [01:21:19](#) If somebody steps over the line to me ... treating me disrespectfully intentionally ... I would probably stop, take a deep breath ... and we're talking about adults here ... and say, "Excuse me. I think we must have a misunderstanding here." If it's somebody who you think is being disrespectful in a shop or a doctor's office, you can say, "Let's start over on this," to try to put the conversation back in a good place. That's a warning. "Excuse me. We must have a misunderstanding. Let's start over." And you give them a chance to do it over.
- Laura Markham: [01:22:04](#) You notice there was no threat, because what does, "You're stepping over the line," mean? It's a threat, "I'm going to lose my temper." So it's sort of a bullying technique that, "I'm going to keep you in line by threatening to lose my temper." And so if that's what you do with adults, it sounds to me like it's possible that's what

you're doing with your kids. And if that's what you're suggesting, I would say it's not necessary. It's never necessary.

Laura Markham: [01:22:26](#) But I absolutely think it's necessary to be firm with kids or they don't know where the line is. So if you say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. I'm not kidding now. This is dangerous," or, "I'm not kidding now. I am tired. We've had a great time, but we need to stop now. I need your help." That's a stern voice to me. And I would absolutely say, "Excuse me. Let's start over here," with a kid, and that's a stern voice, right? I'm hoping that answers your question. Raising your voice if it means being loud probably is not necessary and it sounds like it might be a threat.

Question 16

Laura Markham: [01:23:06](#) People are having some fears about backpack emptying. "Does this mean that kids are now allowed to be rude to adults?" So for instance, "When my child has a meltdown, she shouts at us and talks back, so that's especially hard if you're out in public." Yes. Absolutely right. It is especially hard when it's out in public. I want to say that emptying your backpack is not about letting your child yell at you. Emptying the backpack is about helping your child experience the emotions that they've been lugging around with them and that they need to feel. And if it's just sadness, it will just come up as tears, but if it's fear, it will come up as struggle and resistance, and if it's either, tears or fears, usually what happens is the child gets angry as the feelings start to come up and they lash out because they can't bear it. So our job is to create safety so they can soften and see the tears in our eyes and feel safe enough to go to the tears and fears underneath the lashing out. That's backpack emptying.

Laura Markham: [01:24:10](#) So if you're out at a restaurant and your child starts to get angry and be rude to you and shout at you, you leave the restaurant. You pick up your child and you leave the restaurant. It says here, "She shouts at us and talks back," so hopefully there are two adults. I would take the child outside and if you have a car, into the car, if not, hopefully

you've got a place that you can find that's a little private so passersby aren't trying to fix your child or you. And you say, "Whoa, you were so upset," and you work with your child on whatever came up. And really, you're just trying to calm the situation down. You're not actually trying to backpack empty at that moment. You're not in a safe place. You're not in a place where your child feels safe or where you feel safe, so why would you backpack empty in a place where you're not safe, right?

Laura Markham: [01:24:55](#) Once you've been doing preventive maintenance, you're backpack emptying at home on a regular basis, probably, if you're just transitioning to peaceful parenting. And no one ever fully empties the backpack because we have constant new stressors, but it does turn out that most of the time, kids can manage themselves at a restaurant, or any place else out in public, and they will backpack empty at home where it's safer. Once you've created a strong practice of listening to your child and being responsive, they have no reason to yell at you. So you're not needing to go through this situation.

Laura Markham: [01:25:32](#) So when you say, "rude to adults," it sounds like your child is being rude to you. Yeah, backpack emptying means your kid's going to be rude to you. Your child is too upset right now. They don't feel heard. But that doesn't continue. That's only a temporary stage. You've probably heard my stories. One that I tell all the time is about my daughter when she was 11, she was rude to me and yelled at me, and I immediately stopped, dropped, breathed, moved over to connect with her. Now remember, she'd been raised completely with peaceful parenting. So even with that, an 11 year old could still be rude to you. And I moved over to her and said, "Whoa, sweetheart. You must be so upset to talk to me that way." If you do that, they stop being rude and they apologize to very soon after that.

Laura Markham: [01:26:20](#) I think she was rude to me one other time in the teen years, so it's not like this becomes what they're like all the time. It's when they're extremely upset for a big reason that they get like this. And right now it doesn't seem like that because in fact they're showing you all their upset from the backpack from a long period of time, so of course they're extremely upset and it's not even about anything

that's happening at the moment. But this is a temporary situation. It does not train your children to go on being rude to you forever. In fact, quite the opposite is true.

Question 17

- Laura Markham: [01:26:53](#) A parent has an 11 and a 17 year old. She wrote, "I want to erase the bad things I've done and only have my children remember the good, patient mom and clean their slates. How can I do this? I try not to be anxious, but my anxiety manifests as irritability and that makes my kids anxious. I'm alone, no family, no backup." So, first of all, good for you. Good for you for taking this course and for changing what happened for your kids in their early years and for your determination to give them something better now, a clean slate now. It is never too late. Your kids are certainly not too old to do this, even your 17 year old.
- Laura Markham: [01:27:43](#) You'll notice if you're on the Facebook page for the group, that parents who have three year olds, three weeks into the course they're changing. But 17 year olds or even 8 year olds can take a lot longer. The reason is that they have a backpack full of stuff and it's a lot harder to get them to work through those vulnerable feelings, and it's also harder to get them to trust us. It's like getting a parking ticket. Now you have to pay the fine. It's not a tragedy, it's a parking ticket, but it is a lot of work to pay that fine because what the fine looks like is that you have to be more patient. You have to be willing to listen to all of those things that your children are going to tell you about, how you were not the mom they wanted and needed.
- Laura Markham: [01:28:35](#) If they're telling you those things, then that is great news. It means they're trusting you to tell you that, instead of just walling you off. But it's of course hard to hear, so it takes extra hard work from us to be able to emotionally show up and be loving and hear those kinds of hurts expressed by our children and let them really resonate with us so that we respond with love and not with defensiveness. And so that means your kids have defenses against a lot of feelings, but you can give them a healing experience, that it's safe to express that old baggage and

you're not going to take it personally, you understand. And also that you can give them a better experience now, that you're going to be more upbeat now, more emotionally generous. You're going to take care of yourself so you're less anxious and less irritable, and you're going to ... since you don't have other people around, you're going to take care of yourself so that you have the ability to show up as the mom you want to be with your kids.

Laura Markham: [01:29:39](#)

I know this is hard because the change has to start with you and you don't have a lot of support. The research shows that meditation and exercise are the best ways to reduce anxiety. I think we're also going to see in 10 years, research is going to show that emotions are really important. When you express the emotions instead of stuffing them, it reduces anxiety. We see it with children already, and I think there will be proof of this soon. So remember anxiety is just fear, and the antidote to fear is love. So if you practice feeling love as often as you can all day long, that's an antidote. It reduces your anxiety. And the research shows that this is also true for meditation, like loving kindness meditation. It decreases anxiety, increases the feeling of well being, and that's because you're sending love to yourself and to other people and that stretches your heart. Or the scientists would say it reduces your anxiety.

Laura Markham: [01:30:38](#)

And so if you can just practice ... certainly meditation is a great one, but if you practice sending love all day long, it will reduce your anxiety. And any meditation you do does eventually also empty your emotional backpack. And make laughter a priority in your family because laughter reduces the stress hormones that are circulating in your body, so that also reduces anxiety. Especially laugh at your own imperfections. Your children are of an age where they will really appreciate that. And really, the truth is, all kids appreciate it when we don't take ourselves too seriously. So start pillow fights with them, be silly. And I would also talk with them about the past and apologize sincerely and express your intention and your determination that you're going to do better. And remember that as soon as your kids feel safe, they're going to start showing you all that past pain. You're going to feel attacked. Be ready for that.

Don't take it personally. It's backpack emptying. Be grateful that they're trusting you. Listen, help them heal.

Laura Markham: [01:31:38](#)

So the key to accomplish giving your children that clean slate is to give yourself the support you need. I'm going to encourage you to write out a plan to support yourself, all the things that I just listed here. And also maybe find other things like talking to someone who you trust or reading books that help you feel better. Just read a short amount every day to get you started on the right path that morning. And I want to encourage you to not give up. This is the work of a lifetime. But every bit you do helps. I'm sure you can already see, even after 12 weeks, that you can turn this around. You're healing this negative cycle from your own childhood, and you can imagine your children's children, and your grandchildren, all smiling at you.

Question 18

Laura Markham: [01:32:25](#)

Our next question is from a parent who says, "Even though we put a lot of energy into our parenting it wasn't peaceful, and now our boys are 9 and 11 and we sometimes feel like it's too late. Our younger son often verbally provokes the older one and he responds with physical attacks. When I calmly intervene, I'm ignored. The only way to keep peace is when there's only one child present, which is when things are fine." So I would just say, it is not too late. You have the skills to create a peaceful home, and I see your boys are 9 and 11, they have a lot of history, and your new skills are not enough to clear up that history very quickly. It takes time.

Laura Markham: [01:33:11](#)

So I have a recommendation for you, which is family therapy. I think your boys are old enough at 9 and 11 and they're in such constant altercations, which include physical violence, that I think you need to go to a family therapist together. Tell the therapist that you want ground rules at your home that include consent before touching, so that eliminates the violence, and family members learning to express their needs and wants to each other without unkind words. Say you want to have a discussion

with your sons about how to achieve that. This is not just for you, and you're also not just sending them to get fixed. It's for the whole family to do this together and develop a shared language for how to handle their fighting.

Laura Markham: [01:33:52](#)

And you also want your boys to express to each other any old hurts, and also to express them to you, to clear up the past. I should add that many family counselors do not really study child development and they don't necessarily know about peaceful parenting, so they will encourage the family to use consequences if rules are broken. As long as your boys and you, in the therapist's office, agree with those consequences and you're not in charge of applying them ... It's more like, "We agree as a family that when someone hits someone else, then this will be the result of that," like they have to do a chore for the other person to make a repair with the other person. I think that would be the consequence you want to suggest. So just be prepared for that when you do go into the therapist's office.

Question 19

Laura Markham: [01:34:47](#)

This is a question from a parent about her 15 month old. "Most of my son's time is spent in his playroom with myself or my husband. We let him choose what he wants to do and our participation is generally limited to saying what we see, but I often feel like we're putting pressure on him to call all the shots." First, I want to say, you're taking a play therapist's approach, and being a play therapist is a really good thing for children to some degree, and we recommend that for special time, that you let them choose and you basically say, "I see, I see, that's really cool. Wow, you're picking the blue one. Oh, you stacked two blocks on top of each other. Oh, you're getting frustrated. That is so hard. That's annoying when that happens." So that's more like a play therapist. You're echoing what the kid is expressing and you're empathizing with the emotions that you see and you're following his lead.

Laura Markham: [01:35:44](#)

But children, throughout human history, did not develop with play therapists with them in the room. They

developed with parents, and authentic parental engagement is really important, where you want the child to really have you show up and be excited to enjoy him or her. Think about a tribal situation where the child is crawling around in the dirt and you're busy stirring the stew pot, but you're also keeping the kid out of the fire and you're also, when he shows you the cool bug he just found, you're enjoying the bug. I think that's more what children are designed to develop in, that kind of a situation. And of course in those days, anthropologists tell us there were six adults to every child because for better or worse, children didn't make it to adulthood as often. They died in childhood so often that there were many more adults than children. And there wasn't enough food to have women be so fertile, so just naturally children were spaced out at least three years.

Laura Markham: [01:36:53](#) And so I think when there were so many adults around, they did have a fair amount of engagement with adults who could enjoy them and play peek-a-boo with them and dangle them on their hip. But a lot of adults were also busy doing other things at the same time, so maybe uncle's got the baby on his hip while he's repairing the fishing net, or big sister has the baby on her hip while she's walking to the stream or something.

Laura Markham: [01:37:19](#) So I think in that context, when you consider it, a playroom sounds like a very limiting place for a toddler to spend most of his time. It's a great place to put your toddler if you're busy and you need to occupy him. All toddlers need time to play without our interference, without us even really being present, just like parallel play with us so they're focusing on something, we're focusing on something else but not on them. That's actually a developmental leap for kids to go through. It's an important thing for them to learn to do where we're not interacting with them every minute, we're doing something else. And they don't need us to interact with them every minute. They need to occupy themselves with what they're doing without having to worry about us sitting there watching them and giving them feedback on, "Oh, that is so cool what you're doing."

Laura Markham: [01:38:12](#) I also think a toddler's job is to explore everything, which means tearing apart your house, so you need to get him outside as much as possible, and he also needs to explore the rest of the house. He needs to play with water, he needs to pull the pans out of your cupboard, he needs to jump on your bed, he needs to take things out of the dryer. Human babies and toddlers are designed to develop by interacting with their family and observing, so he wants to go with you when you do the tasks of everyday life, when you're doing the laundry. It's going to take a lot more time to get the laundry started if he's there with you, but let him help you put the clothes in, let him help you take the clothes out, let him help you with the dials, let him help you pour the soap in. This is what children need in life, not toys, not sitting in a playroom. I'm not saying no toys, but really, toys are a pale approximation of the joy of learning how to navigate the world.

Laura Markham: [01:39:12](#) And don't focus on him every single moment. Focus on the tasks of daily life and let him do it with you. So he knows you're there if he needs you, but it's not helpful for him to feel like he's always the focus of your attention. And obviously responding to his needs is important, but he needs to know that he's not the center of the universe. That would actually be pretty scary for him. And just warmly engage with him as you go through your day. That's the best thing for him. I hope that answers your question.

Question 20

Laura Markham: [01:39:45](#) This parent says she's seen progress with her five year old and her two and a half year old, and progress in her as well, but now she finds herself not yelling at the five year old who's spirited as much as she used to, but she still yells at her husband who has yet to join her in peaceful parenting. So first of all, congratulations. You are seeing progress, that's great. Your son is changing in only three months. That's great after five years of certain habits. And you're changing in only three months after many more years. So that's the hard work on your part that's accomplishing this and that's wonderful.

- Laura Markham: [01:40:19](#) It's going to continue getting better as you work on it. So about yelling at your husband, you need to feel like you're getting on the same page, you're connecting with him. Force is not going to get him aligned with you, so I'm saying try to see it from his perspective. Try to stop, drop, and breathe before you interact with him, role model with your kids so he sees that it works, and start discussions about it in a lighthearted, not intense way when you get the opportunity. And give yourself support to avoid yelling, whatever support you need at that moment of rage. The best support I know would be stop, drop, and breathe. If you do that all the time, you'll find that's almost enough.
- Laura Markham: [01:41:04](#) I think a lot of the behavior that you're seeing and you're asking about would actually be much improved, if not vanish completely. I know these tools are hard to work in, but if you're not using them, you're missing an important opportunity. In fact, I would go so far as to say these are not optional. These are the tools that are going to make this work because kids want to do well, and when you start being more empathic and start connecting more, they will really try to do well, but their feelings will get in the way, and that's why roughhousing and scheduled meltdowns are so important. And special time is important because it allows you that time every day to really connect with your child and for them to feel like they matter to you. It really enhances the connection.
- Laura Markham: [01:41:52](#) So I just want to add, I've never seen these tools fail. If you're using them daily, if you're using them in a really comprehensive way, they always work to improve the parent/child relationship. If your child has challenges, if they're on the spectrum, for instance, it's not going to change that, but it will help your child to be more open to interventions. You're still going to have a child who has extra challenges and who takes an enormous amount of extra work, but your child will be more open to cooperating with you and you'll be happier about parenting them because it also increases your joy quotient in parenting.

Laura Markham:

[01:42:30](#)

And that's all our questions for today. Thank you for listening and I hope this was helpful. If you still have a burning question that wasn't answered on this audio, please submit it for possible inclusion on my podcast. Just go to ahaparenting.com/podcast. So, A-H-A Parenting dot com, forward slash podcast, and leave your question as a voice memo. This is Dr. Laura Markham wishing you less drama and more love. Goodbye for now.