Setting Limits and Discipline with Children Ages 4-6 Q and A with Dr. Laura Markham

Dr. 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 setting limits and discipline for ages four to six. 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.

Question 1:

Parent: 00:00:42 First of all, I just want to say I'm really grateful and thankful for all your work. It's a pleasure talking to you. My question is two-part question. I know we're only allowed one question each, but I come from authoritarian parents and grandparents, it's sort of just the family way. The tiger mom, if you will. My questions are: how do I try and remove that and not really slip into permissive parenting because I find myself doing that a lot.

Parent: Then the second part to that was how can I still push or motivate and support my kids, to give them a sense of drive to achieve without becoming too authoritarian.

Dr. Laura Markham: Hmm. Well, it sounds like you think that you have to push kids to want to achieve, which I just don't believe. Yeah, I think it's a pretty bleak view of human nature. What I have observed is that humans are born with a desire to explore, to learn, to develop capacity, to engage with the world, and everyone has a unique slant on that. Some people, they love to make music. Other people love to build things. Everybody's a little different and I think we're all here to contribute our unique gifts, right?

Dr. Laura Markham: So I think the way we motivate kids is to get out of their way, not do things for them. The classic thing In *Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids* at the end of the book, in the mastery chapter, if your child is learning to roll over, you don't help him roll over. If he's really frustrated, you might help him, but you're not going to help him every time or he's never going to learn to roll over. It's like when you help a butterfly open their wings, they die. They don't end up being able to do it themselves.

Dr. Laura Markham: So I say the way we motivate children is, we get out of their way, but we stand by, noticing if they need specific support. And then we give them targeted support to accomplish what they want. Some kids are more timid than others, that is true. But every child who knows they have backup and support, who feels encouraged, is going to explore -- because that's the way humans are designed. So will your kid be a straight A student in this case? Maybe not. Maybe not if they're a musician or an artist or even a builder. Maybe not, but I think that even there, we know what makes kids straight A students. Reading is the most correlated. Children who read for fun, it's the most highly correlated to good grades and good SATs. Even in math, believe it or not. I don't know whether because it teaches them patience or vocabulary or where it helps them think conceptually.

Dr. Laura Markham: But as an example, we know what helps kids read for fun. It's not about ever pushing them. That backfires. We know that it's reading **to** them. They love books and they love stories and they can't wait to finish that story when you had to put the book down and go answer the phone or make dinner. That's on my website if you want to know how to raise a reader. I don't think you ever have to push your kids. So when you say, "How do I not be a tiger mom, but not be permissive?" I think being a tiger mom is pushing and so I think I've answered that.

Dr. Laura Markham: I think in terms of the permissiveness, if you let your kid walk all over other people, for instance, that would be permissiveness. I think it's fine to have expectations of our

kids where they have to take other people's needs into account, right?

Dr. Laura Markham: I think this is the frame you need to decide if you're being too authoritarian or too permissive. Authoritarian parents just say, "Do what I tell you or else." Permissive parents say, "Oh, you don't have to do what I tell you because that would be asking too much and I don't want to be mean to make you do it." A parent who is parenting from, what I call empathic limits and what the old researchers called authoritative, which is different than authoritarian, those parents would say, "Oh honey, here's what I need you to do. When you're done with the bathroom, you need to wash your hands." "When you get a gift, you need to write a thank you note." Whatever your expectation is. "Yes, I need you to do this and I'm going to give you as much support as you need to do it. I'm not going to be mean and say, “Do this or else,” but I am not going to say, “Oh, go play, don't worry about it.” I'm going to say, “This is my expectation. You need to do it and I will give you all the support you need to do it.”

Dr. Laura Markham: If you can't get your child enough support to do it ... and this is back to the tiger mom reference... You know the woman who wrote the book on the tiger mom, the Yale professor, she really wanted her child to play piano at Carnegie Hall by the time the child was a certain age. So she did all of those threatening things like threatened to burn the stuffed animals if the child didn't practice enough. That isn't support, obviously. But the point is, there's probably not enough support that I could have given my daughter to get her to play the piano at Carnegie Hall. If you can't give your child enough support to achieve it, then either you're asking too much or you're asking too much from that child. Right? So maybe if my daughter had been a piano virtuoso, it would have been different, but in her case, that was not the case. So even though we give support and that's our measure, there will be times when your child still can't meet your expectations because they're developmentally unable to, they have special challenges, or you're just asking too much. But that should

always be your litmus test to tell where you are on the tiger mom to permissive scale. Does that make sense?

Parent: That does make a lot of sense. Thank you so much.

Question 2:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:06:44 This parent says, "I struggle with advice to drop your agenda even temporarily. I feel if I don't insist on a limit, in a firm way at the time, the problem occurs -- like defiance toward tidying up -- then she will not take my limit or expectations seriously. How will she get the message if I drop the agenda and leave the tidying up to others and speak in a soft tone?"

Dr. Laura Markham: I think you've misinterpreted what this stop, drop, and breathe is about. You only drop your agenda until you can be calm, right? If you can stay calm, you don't have to drop your agenda at all. You're in charge of whether you drop your agenda. If you can't control yourself and you're losing your temper, stop, drop and breathe. Drop your agenda temporarily until you're back in charge of yourself.

Dr. Laura Markham: But you're also saying, "How will she get the message if I speak in a soft tone?" That's a different question. I'm not saying you can't use a firm tone. You can say, "It's time to clean up now." That's a firm tone, but notice there's some humor in my voice. There's no brittleness there, but I can not be pushed around. Right? "If I think it's time to clean up, it's time to clean up. I know you don't want to. Nobody ever wants to clean up, do they? But we're going to have fun with it. Come on. I know you're suddenly so tired. Oh, we're so tired, but you know what? It's time, let's go." Notice, I didn't drop my agenda. I didn't use a soft tone either. I used a firm tone with a sense of humor. And it's the tone that children cooperate with. Children follow presence, and leadership is about presence.

Dr. Laura Markham: So, I was all there in that interaction. I was ready to do the tidying up with her. We're not leaving the tidying up to others. Once you're calm, and you work with her to tidy up, she's going to tidy up, right? We're not letting her get away with not tidying up. I hope that clarifies that.

Question 3:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:08:40 A parent is asking, "My four-year-old is very demanding. I think we've trained him in a way, because he just annoys us until he gets his way and we find ourselves giving in. He just yells until he gets his way. Sometimes he'll demand a toy and if I don't get him one, he kicks me. I have such a hard time when he acts like this and is so angry. I don't want him to have a sense of entitlement."

Dr. Laura Markham: This sounds really hard. It sounds like he just wears you down and it's hard to not do what he wants even when that thing is not good for him. Then when he's disappointed, he holds a grudge. I agree that you don't want him growing up thinking he can just get whatever he wants when he wants it. So when you go to a place with toys, like if you're shopping at Target, I would be really clear there's never a toy unless there's a reason, like a birthday or Christmas or holiday or something. You would always discuss it in advance or there won't be a toy. Then you would expect a scene. He's going to have to get used to this. Expect the scene, don't buy the toy. If you have to leave Target without buying for yourself, do that. But I would just sympathize over and over, "I know you wish you could have it. We're not buying it."

Dr. Laura Markham: No, I should actually say that in a different tone of voice, like, "Oh my goodness, you wish you could have that. I know, Sweetie. No toys today. We talked about it. No toys. I can put this on the list for your birthday and if you still want it at your birthday, maybe you'll get lucky. But no toys today. I know that makes you so sad and mad." And that's it. Then if he's got a grudge, keep yourself out of range of his feet and let him have a grudge. Do not let him pressure you into doing what he wants.

Dr. Laura Markham: I actually hear in your question that you're having a hard time when he's angry at you. If you can tolerate his upsets and stay in a good mood, then I think he will not keep acting like this. I think the important thing is for you to be able to stay in a good place. So your ability to tolerate his being upset and not give in, I think that's the important thing here.

Dr. Laura Markham: I would add that you don't have an issue with your six-year-old, your older child. Only with your four-year-old. So there's something very difficult about this particular child that's nothing you're creating. So I'm wondering if this child has a little bit of a delay in self-regulation or ability to delay gratification. To develop those skills ... this is going to sound counterintuitive but here's how you develop that ability. You respond very quickly.

Dr. Laura Markham: It's like when the 14-month-old stands and points to what they want up on the counter that they can't reach and screams. If you say, "Stop screaming and then you can have it," your kid will scream for longer and louder. If you say, "Oh my goodness, you want the XYZ," as you're moving toward it. "Here it is. I can give this to you. You don't have to scream. Say, 'Mommy, XYZ please,' and I'll get it for you." Right? When you have a child who screams for what they want, if you respond quickly and with empathy, your child will stop screaming as much. That's true even if you can't give him what he wants. Even if you say, "I know you wish you could have that." If you tolerate his upset reactions -- even when you can't give it to him -- with empathy and love and patience and humor, your son will learn that he can't get everything he wants. But he can get something even better, a parent who loves him no matter what.

Question 4:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:12:26 A parent says, “There's a lot of improvement with our five year old son since I’ve been in this course.” That's great. Glad to hear it. “He's changed a lot in a good way, but lately he has started to answer me back. So if I say to him,

‘You're making me upset, don't do that.’ He says, ‘No, I'm not making you upset, Mommy, you're making me upset.’”

Dr. Laura Markham: Okay. So the reason this has just started happening is about the course, probably. He feels safe enough to tell you what he really thinks. And that's great. You know from his point of view, this is what's true. He's not trying to answer you back. He's actually telling you that you're making him upset. So when he's doing something that bothers you... I don't know what he's doing. He's banging on his drum very loudly, let's say, your five-year-old. You say, "Stop that noise, that's making me upset," and he says, "I'm not making you upset." Well, first of all, he's not making you upset. It's **your** reaction, you have to own your reaction. No one can ever make you feel something else. It's certainly true that it's hard to shut out a noise, especially if you're sensitive to the noise. I'm just making this example up, but something like this, it would be especially hard to not feel like he's doing it to you because he is making that noise.

Dr. Laura Markham: But I want to say, some people, the noise might bother them. I'm not trying to make anyone feel worse because the noise bothers them. I'm saying we're all different and we have to own our response. Right? And the way we know we're different is because other people, it might not bother them, and some of us, it does bother. So the answer is, our child is **never** responsible for our feelings. When something happens that makes us upset, we can say, "Sweetheart, that drum is so loud, too much for my ears." So you're expressing your needs in a respectful way, but you're not making him responsible for your needs. You say, "Sounds like you really love banging the drum. You can either go up to your room or you can go outside and bang the drum, or you can bang the drum later when Daddy's here with you if Daddy doesn't mind it. But I can't handle the drum. Sorry, Sweetheart."

Dr. Laura Markham: So when he says, "I'm not making you upset, Mommy, you're making me upset," then you need to acknowledge his feelings. You say, "I'm making you upset by telling you to stop banging the drum? I hear you, Sweetie. You wish

you could bang the drum right now. I'm sorry. I can't handle that noise. No drum banging right now. You can play a quiet game with your animals." Let's say you're on the phone or something. "Or you can come over here with me and do something," if you're not on the phone, right? So when he says, "You're making me upset," it's a communication. It's an important communication. "You're making me upset." He's saying to you, "I don't like what you're telling me." And you can say, "I understand. I hear you." It doesn't mean you're changing your limit, but he's allowed to have his feelings, his reaction.

Dr. Laura Markham: This parent goes on to say. "When I say to him, 'You're doing this wrong,' he says, 'No, mommy, I'm right. You're wrong'. He has no respect towards me and it makes me cry." So, it's not true that he has no respect for you. He's asking you to reconsider what respect is. Respect is not something that children will automatically feel for us. Maybe he felt fear, (before) when he didn't answer you back. But what's going on now is, he doesn't feel fear anymore, so he's telling you what he really thinks. When he says you're wrong, you can say, "You think I'm wrong. You think that's the way to do it, that your way is the right way to do it? Honey, no, it's really not okay to do it that way. You know why? When you hold the knife that way it could really hurt you." Right? Or whatever your thing is. If you learn only one thing from this course, this is it. Your child's allowed to have his own feelings. You need to model for him how to express your needs without attacking him or making him wrong and he'll learn to do that with you. Don't take it personally. He's just showing you what he needs and what he thinks. And you know what? Give yourself a lot of credit. Clearly something shifted since the beginning of the course for him and he feels comfortable to show you how he feels. That's a fantastic thing. That means you've done some really good work in this course.

Question 5:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:16:40 A parent is asking, "Our four-year-old is generally cooperative, but when she's tired or hungry, she'll just refuse to back down. Like, 'I'm not going to daycare today,' or 'I want to eat right now,' even when dinner is just 15 minutes away."

Dr. Laura Markham: The answer to this is you do preventive maintenance to be sure you have as much connection as possible, so even when she doesn't want to cooperate, she's more likely to do so. So at that moment when she really doesn't want to go to daycare, she's still more likely to cooperate with you. That's the first thing, preventive maintenance.

Dr. Laura Markham: The second thing is you can re-examine your limit. Like around the food. You know, "You're starving, aren't you Sweetie? You don't even want to wait 15 minutes. I understand. I feel that way too sometimes. What can we do to solve this? Here, how about a glass of milk?" You're not going to fetishize making her wait 15 minutes. You can give her something healthy. You can even give her, you know, if you're cooking chicken and there's chicken there, put some chicken on a plate and let her eat it. She can sit down at the table ahead of time. You know there would be no reason to wait for that 15 minutes. That's not a limit that makes any sense to me to enforce. Because when kids are hungry, they're hungry. And their blood sugar plummets, and they get less and less able to self-regulate. But you know, the daycare thing, you might have to set a firm limit. You just acknowledge her feelings. You listen to her complaints, you try to problem solve, and you empathize. You know, often, even though you need to hold the limit, they just need to see you're serious about the limit, but they just need to be heard. So you might say, you know, "You don't want to go to daycare today. I hear you, Sweetie. Well sometimes I don't want to go to work either. What makes you want to stay home today?" "Oh, I don't want to go to daycare because Genevieve is always mean to me and she always wants to play with Mary Lou and I don't get to play with them." "Wow, so you feel left

out. I can see why that bothers you. Is there anybody you like playing with at daycare?"

Dr. Laura Markham: So now you're problem solving, but you're still letting her blow off steam and you're also helping her look forward to the day and things that might be good in her day. So it's fine that she's a strong-willed kid and says, "I'm not doing that." That's who she is, that's okay. But you want to make sure that: A. Sometimes there are just limits that she has to go along with. And B, you'll always understand, you're always going to want to hear what she has to say about it. And she's always allowed to let off steam even when you need to hold the limit.

Question 6:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:19:04 A parent is asking if it's okay to reconsider when you set a limit and your kid resists the limit and you think, "Well, okay, I could change that limit. That would be okay. We can find a win-win solution here." Yes, that's great. It's fine to change your mind as long as you tell your kid why you're doing that and say, "Yeah. You know, I understand. So you're saying it's really important to you to sleep in the tent in the living room instead of in your bed. That's okay with me, but I want to make sure you get enough sleep and I'm worried that you won't feel safe in the tent, so I want to make sure you get enough sleep. So I think we have to start bedtime a little earlier. Can we make that agreement? Okay, that's fine."

Dr. Laura Markham: I want to say I like your flexibility. I think this is a good thing, but you are expecting a lot of your five-year-old because your five-year-old is, in the anecdote you shared in your question, it was too much for her and she ended up having a meltdown when you changed the agreement. Maybe she just needed to cry and that was fine, that she ended up needing to cry. Great, she got some tears out. Maybe that was what she was crying about. But the way it sounded to me was that she thought you had broken the agreement so she didn't really understand about changing the agreement.

Dr. Laura Markham: If this has happened more than once, I think you need to be more consistent and less flexible and always discuss with her while you're changing your mind. If this is a one-time deal, then I wouldn't worry about it.

Question 7:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:20:28 A parent is asking about her five-year-old and she's saying he's gifted, he's strong-willed, and he responds well to connecting and empathy. But she wonders how much she has to bend to his need to have everything his way, and that there are a lot of power struggles.

Dr. Laura Markham: You're right, it is exhausting, when you have a kid who wants everything their way. You do say that you let him explore and touch and get into things. Yes, how fabulous is that? That is great, to whatever degree you can do it. And it's great that he responds well to empathy and connection. I think the answer to your question is, you don't need to bend to his strong need to have everything his way any more than you think is good for him, and for you. In other words, don't compromise your principles about what's good for him and only do as much as you can handle.

Dr. Laura Markham: So you're not going to let him walk all over you, which is a phrase I think you used, because that's going to make you resentful. It's also not a good model for relationships for him. But you also don't have to turn it into a power struggle. If he wants something and you need to say no, you just say no and you help him through his upset, his disappointment. But it's not a power struggle because you do try to find ways to meet his desires but you also are the parent. You make the decisions. You say yes when you can, and you let him explore in an experiential way as much as you can. But when you don't say yes because of whatever reason -- (for instance) it poses a risk. You know, he's in

the shop, he touching things, the shopkeeper's upset. Or he wants to take apart your toaster and you don't want to buy another toaster. Or simply you're exhausted, you can't deal with the mess if he's going to build a sand castle in your kitchen. You say no. You step up, you set a limit, you empathize. It's that simple, you're the parent.

Dr. Laura Markham: Children only walk all over us if we don't act like the leader. So we have to be big enough people to say no, but then accept their disappointment. I think that's the secret. And remember the other secret of strong-willed kids -- we have to connect with them so they're willing to accept our limits.

Question 8:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:22:40 A parent is asking about times when his five-year-old says, "Bad daddy," or has a loud tantrum when he gives his child an instruction. You just acknowledge the feelings. "I know you don't want to get ready for school. You wish you could watch TV." Stay compassionate, don't negotiate. If he begins to cry, great. Then it's even better, it's a scheduled meltdown, he moves through it. And you make a mental note to do more laughter, or more scheduled meltdowns so you can help him with whatever the problem is.

Dr. Laura Markham: But I do think that kids do this because they can't quite manage themselves or because that's how they've gotten their way in the past. So you certainly can't give in to whatever he's asking for when he tantrums. But also, there is zero reason to correct. You simply acknowledge that he feels badly. He's overwhelmed by those feelings and you don't let him have whatever he's asking for but you allow the feelings so he can get through them and not have to act out on them all the time anymore.

Question 9:

Parent: 00:23:45 My daughter, when I tried to give her some direction, I get into a situation where I just say, you know, "We're going to

have to wait until later to do that," or "I can't have you doing that right now. It's not safe," or any version of, it's not what she wants in that moment. On multiple occasions during the course of a day, she will "Arrr!" at me, get angry and she'll run off. If I go looking for her, try to find her, she'll be on the stairs going up to her bedroom or something else. She will growl at me and sometimes she'll start hitting her own head. She's learned that really upsets me and I get concerned. And I say, “You know we don't hurt anyone. We don't hurt ourselves. I know you're upset, Sweetie pie. I know you really wanted to do that right now and mommy can't do it until I make dinner."

Parent: She'll go, "Arrr, arrr!" and she's hitting herself or she'll just run away and she'll hide. I'm really stumped. I've tried so many different versions of how to communicate calmly and differently with her when I have to tell her something she doesn't want to hear, but nothing seems to matter whether I'm firm or kind. I don't know if my job as a parent is to run after her? I think I shouldn’t leave her alone in that state? I'm not sure if I should go after her, what to do with that moment, how to make it better. Sometimes I either, calm and cuddle, and other times she just says, "Go away, go away, go away," and she'll go and hide and she'll "Arrr!" at me.

Parent: I don't know what to do. I'm also concerned about her self-esteem and her ability to cope with not getting what she wants in a world where she's not going to get it a lot of time.

Dr. Laura Markham: So first of all, forget that. Forget the “not being able to cope thing.” How old is she right now?

Parent: She just turned four two weeks ago.

Dr. Laura Markham: Right. So she is, at this point, still learning a lot of things that she's going to learn over the next bunch of years so I wouldn't worry about that at all. What I would say is, I think this is shame. Is she a highly sensitive child? She seems like it, from what you're saying.

Parent: Yeah and I'm very concerned that I shame her a lot, actually. I'm very concerned about that, yep.

Dr. Laura Markham: Ah, okay. So then I'm hearing here that this is a child who's super sensitive and that she has begun to associate shame with anything…..Do you know what shame is? I won't recount a shame story because I've been posting about it actually in my last few blog posts. You should be on the list and you should be able to read those. But I would say that what's going on is that because she's so super sensitive, she wants desperately to be good. But any correction at all that you're doing with her, or any time you're saying to her, "No, you can't have that thing you want," it is filling her with shame.

Dr. Laura Markham: This is how the actual biological process of shame works: Let's say your daughter is running headlong for what she wants, energetically speaking, if not actually. And we say, "No, no, stop, can't do that. Can't have that," and it pulls her up short. When we have to pull ourselves up short that way, the biological process inside us is shame. We say, "Oops. No, I guess I can't have that. It was bad of me to want that." And this is a universal thing and we know that. We see it universally all over the world in every culture, but the things that people are ashamed of are different. There's a huge wide range of what we're ashamed of in some cultures that is not the same at all in another culture. So that's all learned, but the actual process is biological. So for a super sensitive kid, she has had this experience a lot of heading towards something she wants with great energy and someone saying to her, "No, you can't have that," and that now has filled her with shame and self-loathing.

Dr. Laura Markham: I think the reason I know that is because she's hitting herself, right? Hitting yourself is self-loathing and self-loathing is a sign of shame.

Parent: I wasn’t sure if I was reacting to it so strongly and being so concerned that she does it I think for attention, but I'm not sure.

Dr. Laura Markham: When you say for attention, I think that ... we all say for attention but it's not about attention. In that moment, there's an interaction. She wants something, you told her no, she runs away. You come up to her and she's showing you how distressed she is. She's saying to you, "I am so upset," but when you're upset, you could do lots of things. To begin self damaging ... and that's what it is when you hit your head on something ... to begin to self-flagellate is about expressing self-loathing.

Parent: Now, so what will I do with that? I feel terrible.

Dr. Laura Markham: So, first of all, no shame, no blame here. She's an unusually sensitive kid. You have not been beating her in secret. You're trying really hard to be a good mom. That's just who she is. Conventional parenting that we're taught to do isn't going to work with a kid like that who has both huge strong, I-want-it energy, and strong-willed energy. Plus, that super sensitivity where she's just so finely tuned to everything that you're sending out to her. So if there's any disapproval on your part, even of disapproval of the action, not disapproval of her, she's going to take it as something wrong with her.

Dr. Laura Markham: First of all, let all of that self-blame go. Just let it go, it's not going to help. Instead, commit yourself that you're going to make a difference and here's how you're going to make a difference.

Dr. Laura Markham: One example would be she and her brother are playing. You think, "Okay, well she's hogging the," whatever it is. She's not taking turns. So you might say something like, "Okay, it's time to take turns now." That's very mild, right?

Parent: Right.

Dr. Laura Markham: You know, you're not singling her out for criticism. Even that mild redirection would make her feel criticized. So you would always start by joining with her, connecting with her. You might say something like, "Wow, that looks like fun. Show me. Oh, that's so cool!" Now presumably, her brother is asking for a turn, right, which is why you

were moving in to begin with. So then you turn to him and you say, "Oh, it looks like you want a turn too. Are you saying you want a turn? You can ask your sister, 'Say, when will it be my turn?'"

Dr. Laura Markham: Now, notice the difference here. "It's time to take turns" is good, right? It's what most of us would think was fine. It doesn't single her out, but she knows she's not taking turns so it's going to backfire with her. So in this case, you strengthen your connection to her and then you coach your son to stand up for himself. So you're not rebuking her. He is actually asking for what he needs in a relationship. You know, she's very sensitive to being corrected. She wants to be a good girl, and so when her brother requests this, she'll probably respond well to that.

Dr. Laura Markham: Now let's say she doesn't, just because you're going to have other times when she doesn't, and she runs away and she's screaming. I would say you go after her. You acknowledge that she felt terrible. Like if she's running away screaming, you acknowledge what's happening. You know, that she felt terrible. "Oh Sweetheart, you feel so terrible. I have a hug here when you're ready." If she says, "No, no, go away! Leave me alone," then give her space. That's okay. But the reason she was hitting her head was to show you her distress. So she'll probably, when you give her space, stop hitting her head. But it's not to get attention, it's to show you her distress. You can say, "You're showing me how bad you feel by hitting your head. Oh Sweetie, we're going to protect you. I'm not going to let your poor head get hurt." Don't have a conversation.

Dr. Laura Markham: Most of us want to say, "I didn't mean to criticize you Sweetie, but you were doing this, that, or the other thing." No, none of that. You don't even have that conversation. Experts always say like, "Oh, you chose to do that action. You were doing this wrong thing. I didn't criticize my child, I criticized the action." Kids can't tell the difference between themselves and their actions. They still feel bad about it. So just say, you feel terrible. "I'm so sorry. I love you. I'm ready with a hug when you're ready." If you walk

further away, if she's saying, "No, no, leave me alone," and she goes to hide, you can go let her hide and when she comes down and comes to you for a cuddle, your own emphasis now needs to be safety and empathy. How awful she felt, she felt so bad inside and she was upset, she was scared, she was alone. We know she felt that way because that's how shame feels and that's what this is, shame. We know that from the head beating.

Dr. Laura Markham: Don't even try to teach her. She actually does know the right thing to do. You don't have to teach this girl anything. She already knows what the right thing to do is. You can talk about that much later, but right now -- Let's say she knows she should share with her brother, but she wasn't sharing. Well it's not because she doesn't know how to share. It's because some other part of her won out. And she's ashamed of that part of her. So that part of her is going to win less often if she feels accepted and loved by you.

Dr. Laura Markham: So I'm not saying don't set limits, but I think always connect before you redirect her and try very hard to do less correcting. When she does react, you know with the shame thing, it's all about your compassion. I think you'll be able to see a difference in her as you're accepting her, she will begin to accept herself.

Dr. Laura Markham: I want to add, this could grow into an anxiety issue so when you said her self-esteem and stuff, I think it could grow into an anxiety issue but it doesn't have to at all. Right now is a perfect time to deal with it. You're so on it, you really pegged what it is, and your compassion for her, your acceptance, your love, your clarity about the fact that you adore her and she doesn't have to be perfect. That's what's going to heal the shame thing.

Dr. Laura Markham: And also, I want to say if you want to do some work with yourself on this stuff, in my *Peaceful Parents, Happy Kids*, my new book, there's a lot in it about working on yourself, including shame. I don't know how much you've been listening to the course, but there are daily inspirations that

have to do with healing shame. That also could be really helpful to you.

Parent: Thank you so much. Do I stay with her when she's run off and I'm working on these things, or do I-

Dr. Laura Markham: If she'll let you. And if she won't, that's okay. It's not the end of the world. Great question, and a lot of people have that question, I know, who are listening. I think the answer is, when she is in a good mood, discuss this with her, which is a little hard with her because she easily feels criticized. The way to say it is, "I love you so much, and when you get upset I just want to be with you and help you feel better, but you yell at me sometimes to go away. Should I really go away, or should I stay near, or should I hug you? What should I do?" You could even set it up symbolically, like if this is a bunny and this is the bunny's mommy, when the bunny yells, "Go away, mommy!" when the bunny's mad, and the bunny feels so bad and the mommy wants to make the bunny feel better, what should the mommy do? Should the mommy go this close or that close or that close? Often a kid will show you with the stuffed animal how far away to be and you know, it's usually a medium amount. They don't actually want you to go far away.

Question 10:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:35:49 The next question is from a parent who says, “Which priorities and limits are the most important to enforce when both parents work and we have limited time together?” To me, the most important thing is always the way people treat each other. You might be irritated because you always have to remind your kids when they come home to pick up their jackets and shoes and backpacks, but really who cares in the larger scheme of things? I would be patient about that and just remind them over and over again and eventually they get it. I think it's much more important to enforce the expectation that we treat each other with respect and affection, and of course to model that.

Question 11:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:36:25 My next question is from a parent who says, “Before, I think I was sort of permissive. I had low expectations of his manners. I thought children don't need to learn manners, they're normal to have poor manners. But after taking the course, I realize they need to have good manners. Now I feel I'm becoming too demanding, like an authoritarian parent. Where does the balance lie in setting limits for kids who are six years old and seven months old. I know we're not talking about the seven-month-old, we're talking about the six-year- old. Remember the difference between a peaceful parent and an authoritarian parent is not in your expectation, it's in how you help the child and live up to those expectations. Are you doing it with meanness or are you doing it with support? To help your child develop good manners, ask yourself what kind of support can I give him?

Dr. Laura Markham: You have to remember that it takes time. You can always be kind. You can always smile and remind them patiently. This is very different than being permissive, which is simply not setting limits. You can set limits and expectations patiently, with kindness, support, humor, and your child will want to live up to your expectations. If you think you're being too demanding, ask yourself what kind of support your child needs to live up to your demands. If that's support you can give them, and they're able to meet your expectations, and the experience that they're having is to feel a closeness with you -- If the relationship is getting stronger and more positive -- then you're fine. But if you have to be mean to get your child to meet your expectations or if you're asking so much from them that the relationship is suffering, then that is definitely being too demanding.

Question 12:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:37:58 This is about a five-year-old, the middle child, who resists verbally, not wanting to do what the parents say. He tries

to have connection moments with her and give choices, but the child is very resistant. Middle kids are often the most resistant and defiant, and remember, resistance is a connection issue. You say you have several connection moments in the day, in her case that may not be enough. Moments are not necessarily enough, it might need to be longer. You can tell that by the fact that she's not cooperating with you. There's an article on middle children on the Aha! Parenting website, just put in middle child syndrome, or middle child. They never get to be the baby, and unlike the oldest child, they never get to be the sole apple of your eye where they're the only child and the only one getting your attention, and they can never compete with the oldest child who seems so capable and brilliant to them because they can do so many things and they know so many things.

Dr. Laura Markham: Usually middle children have more of a disconnection issue. You have to work so much harder with them. I would say make connection with her your top priority, and if you do that I think you're going to see that she's going to stop being so defiant. In the meantime, any time she is resistant, you're going to have to cajole her instead of getting angry at her. She sits on the floor and doesn't want to do whatever she's supposed to do, wash her hands for lunch. I would sit next to her and say, "You want to show me that you can sit here for as long as you want. I wonder when you'll be ready to wash your hands?" That's another form of giving them control, but also you want to increase warm interactions with her 24/7. If you can make that warm interaction what's really important (to her), she will give up what she wants -- she's showing you that she doesn't have to do what you say -- in order to get something she wants more, which is to be closer to you.

Question 13:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:40:04 This parent is asking about a five-year-old who won't listen, so he'll agree to the rules but then right in front of her he'll laugh and do them (the forbidden things), like jumping. I think the only answer is, he's doing this to

provoke you, probably. If he looks right at you and he breaks the rules, he's purposely provoking you. That's a full backpack. You say he spits a lot? Usually spitting, sometimes it's a sign of anxiety, but usually it's provocative behavior that kids do on purpose to provoke us so that we will help them empty their backpack. I would say, if you get him laughing every day, if he cries every day or so, you're going to find that this is going to change. What do you do? You intervene ... First of all, you find a way to prevent it, if possible, you meet the need. If he's a very active kid and he needs to jump, you find a way to meet his need to jump. You buy him a trampoline so he can jump.

Dr. Laura Markham: Finally, the minute he does it, you scoop him up and carry him away from there and say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, that's dangerous. Your brother's sleeping. You know, I notice you love to jump, especially when your brother's sleeping. Is it okay to jump there when he's sleeping? No, in fact it's really dangerous, you could really hurt him. But you know what? You can jump on your trampoline. Don't worry, let's go. You can jump on the couch." For instance, if you're letting him jump, but just not when the brother's sleeping. Take him to the couch at that point.

Question 14:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:41:35 Okay, this is a note from a parent who says, "I'm trying to teach my five-year-old to problem solve and it's working great, even with my three-year-old." Wonderful, that's great. Good for you. "But, my five-year-old continues to try to get what he wants by manipulating. He'll say to his brother, 'If you don't give me that truck, I won't give you this ball,' or 'I'll punch you.' Or 'I'll clear off my plate if I can watch a show.' I'll tell him, 'When your plate is cleared, then you can go outside,' and he'll decide he won't go outside and he'll just play inside and then the plate stays on the table." Okay, this is a normal five-year-old. I don't even think he's manipulating you, he's trying to

get what he wants. It may be that you've trained him to negotiate.

Dr. Laura Markham: Often this happens when parents say, "Okay, **if** you take your plate to the sink, then you can go outside," or even, "**When** you take your plate to the sink, then you go outside." That's often what ends up happening, is kids start saying, "If you agree I can watch a show, then I'll eat all my dinner." I would just laugh and say, "Sweetheart, you wish I would let you watch a show, I hear that loud and clear." And then you make your answer about the show yes or no, but you say, "And Sweetie, you still have to clear your plate. We all clear our plates, that's the family rule." He's just testing. Like any normal child, he's experimenting, he's testing, he's trying to figure out where the boundaries are. That's fine, that's what kids do. He's an experiential learner.

Dr. Laura Markham: I wouldn't attach the plate to anything, like playing outside or whatever. I would just say, "After meals we always clear our plate as we get up, before we do anything else." If he sits there and he's playing, I would walk over, put your face in front of his in a friendly way and say, "Emergency! Emergency alert! Guess what? Your plate's on the table! Quick, we've got to go get it!" If he says, "No mom, you move it. I'm busy playing." You say, "No, no, no, no, no, no, family rule! We always clear our plate when we're done eating, before we do anything else. Are you doing something else? Oh my goodness yes, you're playing with your Legos. Come on, up, up, up!" I would lift him up, carry him to the table, get him laughing as you do it, have him pick up the plate, carry him to the sink, have him put the plate down and say, "Okay, thank goodness! Give me five, you did it! Yay!"

Dr. Laura Markham: Did you do all the work? Yes. Did he laugh all the way through it? Yes. But at least you kept it from being an unpleasant interaction or a power struggle, and next time he's going to be more amenable to do it. Here's what kids learn when we do this, "I don't always get whatever I want. When she says it's time to clear the plate because that's the family rule, she means it. I'm not going to get

away without doing it, I might as well just go ahead and do it. I don't always get what I want, but I get something even better, a mom who understands and stays connected to me no matter what."

Question 15:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:44:21 The next question is about consequences. “We seem to have hit a wall with our four-year-old. We spend daily special time. We're self-regulating most of the time. We set empathic limits. We stop, drop, and breathe, but we're finding that our daughter just ignores any asks we make of her, or gets really defiant and yells, "No!" We are starting to question the idea of no consequences. How do you get a child to obey when they simply don't acknowledge what you say? How do you deal with it when a child ignores almost all your empathic limits?” Here's what I'm hearing here. First of all, I'm hearing a child who is not feeling connected. Defiance is a relationship issue. I hear you're doing special time, that's fantastic. I hear you're working hard to self regulate, which is fantastic. I'm wondering why there is defiance in that case, when a child was yelling “no” at you, because defiance is about connection.

Dr. Laura Markham: Is this a question of more empathy 24/7? Is this a question of a full backpack from the past? Defiance really is a red flag that there's a deeper connection issue. I would start in that place and say, "Why do we have the defiance? Do we need to do more daily laughter, more empathy?" If you're not doing special time, do we need to do more special time? That's the first thing. The second thing is, when a child yells “no” at you, they're letting you know how upset they are. You don't just let them get away with that. When you say that there's no consequence, you have to use a consequence...

Dr. Laura Markham: You go over to the child and you connect and you reflect. You empathize with what's going on. When you say, "Honey, it's time for your bath. It's seven o'clock, it's bath time." And your kid says, "No!" Hopefully you've said this when you're next to them anyway, you're not far across

the room. But you walk over, you soften yourself as you walk over, you take a deep breath and you say, "Wow, you just yelled, 'No!' loudly. You feel really strongly about this. You don't want to take a bath?" "No, of course I don't want to take a bath! I'm busy doing this!" "Oh, it's really hard to stop, I know. It's hard to stop playing and go take a bath. I hear how much you don't want to, and no matter what, it's bath time. You know what? I gave you a five-minute warning." Now, if you gave them a five-minute warning, of course you would have shaken hands at the end of that warning and said, "Okay, five minutes. We've got an agreement. We always keep our promises." Then you would be able to refer to it.

Dr. Laura Markham: But let's say in this case for whatever reason that didn't happen and you say, "Why don't we call this our five-minute warning?" And then you negotiate that, so they're getting a little bit of warning time. But let's say that you've already given it to them and they're yelling “No!” at you. At that point you say, "I guess it's really hard to stop what you're doing. Show me what you're doing. Oh, I see why it's hard to stop, you're really in the middle of this. How can we set this up so you can start this tomorrow when you get home from school?" or whatever. You're actually caring about their problem, you're not just imposing a punishment or a consequence, but you're also really sticking to your limit, there is no way this child can ignore the limit.

Dr. Laura Markham: If your child continues to be defiant and angry, "I hate you! I'm never taking a bath!" Then you know it's a meltdown and you probably had warnings before this moment. They were probably cranky at dinner or before during the day, or both. Hopefully you've done a scheduled meltdown already, but let's say you were too busy, let's say her brother was busy having his meltdown, let's say you just didn't have time, and you know what? Life is not perfect and you don't always have time to do everything. At this point now you say, "Well okay, I guess we're going to have a meltdown." You go through the, "I'm sorry Sweetie, it really is time for a bath, no matter what." And she starts to cry or she starts to yell at you and you just soften and say,

"You are really mad at me **and** it's time to stop." She throws her toy and then she runs up the stairs, and you go through the usual thing with a meltdown.

Dr. Laura Markham: The reason I'm saying all this is that there's a reason they're yelling “No!” at you and being defiant, and that is not going to be normal behavior in your house after the backpack emptying. It may happen sometimes, but it shouldn't be a normal thing in your house. If you were just using consequences to get your child to listen, you would completely miss the fact that your child is giving you a red flag that something is very wrong. That's why they're acting this way. That's how you handle the defiance. You also asked, “What do you do when a child just ignores your empathic limit?” If it's a limit, they can't ignore you. Again, you tell the kid it's time for the bath and they ignore you, you go over, you get in their face in a friendly way, with a sense of humor. You say, "Excuse me. Earth to Jennifer, Jennifer, did you hear me? It's bath time, Sweetheart." Jennifer ignores you and continues doing what she's doing.

Dr. Laura Markham: You say, "Jennifer," and you put your hand on hers, and over whatever she's doing, so you're stopping her from moving the doll in the dollhouse or whatever she's doing, and you say, "Jennifer, I know you don't want to take a bath. I'm sorry about that, and you know what? It's bath time." Now we're in five minutes (your five minute warning), so there's no way that she's actually able to ignore you. If you started this when your kids were toddlers it's great because they will learn very quickly, "Mom and dad don't just give up on this. They don't just go away. They pick me up and take me, if that's what's necessary." It's a lot harder to do that with a seven-year-old, so if your child is seven and you're making this transition, it will take a lot more from you. It's much harder to make this transition with older kids because you're starting with a bunch of bad habits, theirs and yours, and you maybe have let them get away with things before and they think if you don't punish them that it doesn't matter, which is why we start at the beginning with two really important parts.

Dr. Laura Markham: One, you have to self regulate so you're not losing your temper, and two, you have to connect so they have a reason to do what you want. Kids do what you want because of the connection with you. If you punish them -- for all the reasons we've already discussed in this course, those consequences -- you'll just have to keep escalating the punishment. So really, I think when you say you're wondering how you can do this without consequences, the way you do it without consequences is with connection and with holding your own equilibrium and getting in their face in a friendly way to insist that they do what you're asking them to do.

Question 16:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:51:15 The next question is,"My husband has a terrible time when he asks the children to do something and they say no or show disrespect verbally or physically. He really feels something needs to be done. How can he respond when they flat out ignore his simple request?" As I just said, you get in their face in a friendly way and you restate your limit and you keep your sense of humor. You say things like, "Excuse me, I think you're ignoring me. We'll see about that!" Or, "I hear you say no you don't want to do it, you wish you didn't have to. I know, Sweetie, and it's time."

Dr. Laura Markham: During this, the only thing that's going to stop you here is if you lose your temper. The person who framed the original question said, "My husband has a terrible time." I would just ask him what the disrespect feels like for him, because when Jennifer is ignoring us and playing with her dollhouse when we say it's bath time, you could feel disrespected or you could just say, " She wants to do what she wants to do, and she's going to go ahead and do it unless we get in her face and insist on our limit." Why is that necessarily disrespectful if they're ignoring us? I don't consider it necessarily disrespectful. I would even go far as to say that often when we struggle with feeling

disrespected by our children, it's because of old baggage that we're carrying. Maybe we felt disrespected as children or somewhere else in our lives we feel disrespected. Road rage is caused by feeling disrespected as a child. You grow up and when anybody cuts you off in traffic and you feel disrespected and you're screaming at them. That's old baggage, because not all of us do respond that way when we're cut off in traffic.

Dr. Laura Markham: When your children trigger your disrespect, start by noticing it. Notice it in your body. What does it feel like? What's going on for you? Notice when else you have felt like this, either in the present or in your childhood. When you go to deal with your children, take a deep breath and talk yourself off the cliff. Give yourself a little mantra, "Don't take it personally. She's acting like a kid because she is a kid. Naturally she wants to keep playing." There's nothing disrespectful about it, you don't have to take it in those terms.

Dr. Laura Markham: Since there were a lot of likes on both of those questions, just to review, here's the process for setting a limit. You state your expectations, like it's bath time, it's time to go take your bath, or no pushing your sister or whatever. Then you empathize with the child, "I know it's hard to stop playing," or, "You wanted your sister to move. She's standing in your way." You acknowledge their perspective, whatever it is. You don't have to label the feelings, just acknowledge their perspective. And then you give them an alternate. If they're doing something like shoving their sister, "You can say to your sister, 'Move, please.'" If they're not meeting your expectation and you have both acknowledged and set the limit, you restate the limit, and if you can, you find a win-win solution or something they can look forward to.

Dr. Laura Markham: You might say, "I know it's so hard to stop playing and to get ready for bed. You know what? If we hurry we'll have time for two stories instead ..." because one is your foundation, but you might add one if they have time. And if they don't have time, if they get past a certain point on the clock, "Oh well, not tonight. Maybe tomorrow we'll

have time. Maybe we'll be able to stop playing earlier," or whatever. With an expectation, you're trying to find a way to make it palatable. "It's hard for you to stop playing. Let's park your plane over here, or let's fly your plane up to the bath," or, "Here, climb on my back and we'll zoom up to the bath together," or, "I'm the bath robot and I always get my girl," whatever it is that makes it more palatable to them to go ahead and go along with your limit is what you would do. That's basic limit setting.

Question 17:

Dr. Laura Markham: 00:55:37 "I struggle with the line between having high standards and letting the small stuff go." You know what? You start where you are, you use what you have, you do what you can, and you do one thing at a time. You can really only work on one big thing at a time with your child. How many puppet shows can you do in the course of a day on different topics? How many could your child take in? To me, how they treat their siblings is the most important thing, then how they interact with peers, then how they interact with you, all of that. This is all about people, so much more important than grooming or tidying up, so much more important than grooming. Who cares? Grooming, really. Who cares about tidying up, really, when it's a question of them being mean to their little brother?

Dr. Laura Markham: That's where you want to focus, one thing at a time. Once you've gotten those things straightened out and your child is generally happy and cooperative and being nice to the people in their life, and you've gotten past any big bumps about social anxiety, for instance, or whatever, or separation at school, school anxiety, then I would say you can start to deal with other things. By then, maybe grooming. They're having a hard time with hair washes, which is sort of universal at a certain age. You have to brush their teeth right along, but bigger things in terms of grooming, like them taking some responsibility for it.

Dr. Laura Markham: Again, I would work on one thing at a time, and I would not worry about tidying up their room, at that point. Then, when all those things are working, then you can think about tidying up the room if you haven't already gotten onto homework or whatever. I guess what I'm saying is, don't sweat the small stuff. Your expectations for the basic values, the kindness and respect values, I think are the most important and your time needs to be spent on things like connection and emotional backpack. I wouldn't even bother, frankly, with the stuff that's less important until those things are no longer taking so much time and then sure, why not? Why wouldn't you work on social niceties at that point?

Question 18:

Parent: 00:57:45 I have a question on coaching and problem solving. My four-year-old does not ever want to talk about a problem that we've had or her situation. I've attempted many times, I've gotten on her side, I've asked her to tell me what happened and I'll empathize with her, but as soon as I try to even suggest that there might be another option to how she handled it, she just says, "I don't want to talk anymore," or she'll change the subject, or she'll look away from me and just start getting distracted or something like that.

Dr. Laura Markham: Give me an example.

Parent: Okay. An example would be her fighting with her sister. She took a toy from her sister in the morning and after everybody's calmed down, probably even after dinner, I'd be cuddling with her and say, "We had a really hard time with Sister today." She'd say, "Yeah, I took her toy." I'm like, "Yeah, you really wanted that toy, huh?" "Yeah, I really wanted that toy and she wouldn't give it to me." "Oh, that's so hard. Do you think there would be something else we could do instead of taking the toy from sister when we really want that toy?" "Yeah. Oh look, I want to read a story." It's literally that, instead of ..."

Dr. Laura Markham: Wonderful.

Parent: It's completely a change of subject. Half the time she won't even say, "Yeah." Half the time it's just, "I want to read a story now," or, "I don't want to talk about Sister anymore." And that's it.

Dr. Laura Markham: Right. She's no dummy. It feels uncomfortable to recognize that she grabbed the toy away from sister. It sounds like you're handling it beautifully and it sounds like she's a normal four-year-old who feels uncomfortable. I'll give you the formula, a formula that you will use with your children for probably the rest of their lives, but certainly until they're 18, and the formula goes something like this. “What did you want?” Some version of this, obviously you'll adapt it. “What did you want? What did you do to get it? How did that work out for you? Would you try anything different next time?” You could think of it as, "So you really wanted the toy? Wow!" "Yeah, I really wanted it." "What did you do to get the toy?" "I took it from sister." "How did that work out?" What would she say to that?

Parent: She would recognize that it made her sister cry, because she has said that before. Just in her telling the story she said, "I took the toy and then Sister cried a lot."

Dr. Laura Markham: You say, "Wow, so how did that work out?" You really want to know how it worked out for her, not for sister. You also want to know for both of them but, "How did that work out?" She'll say, "Sister cried." You could say, "Well, you were happy you got the toy, I guess, but you were probably sad that sister cried." You're still trying to explore how it worked out. "You were happy, but you were sad. How do you think sister felt?" "Sad." She may still ask for a book right about now because she's uncomfortable that she made sister sad, but you're asking, "How did that work out?" "I got the toy, but sister cried. Yeah, she felt sad." And then you could say, "Would you do it the same next time or would you do it different?" It's a little bit less judgmental a way of saying, "What could you do next time?" What could you do next time for a sensitive kid

feels like shame. By the way, it's not. Your tone of voice is beautiful, you're not shaming her, you're doing a great job of it, but she's old enough and sophisticated enough to get, "Yeah, I did it wrong. I made my sister cry. I'm ashamed of myself. Can we just drop this already?" That's where she's coming from.

Dr. Laura Markham: We're just looking for ways to shift it a little bit to really try to not have her run. "How did that work out for you?" and "Would you do the same next time or different?" She'll look at you, probably in shock. What would she say?

Parent: She would probably say different.

Dr. Laura Markham: Well that's good.

Parent: But usually at this point she's done talking and she may not even respond, she'll just ask for a book again, because she is done, she's just like, "This is too uncomfortable for me to talk about."

Dr. Laura Markham: We need to shift to laughter then.

Parent: Okay.

Dr. Laura Markham: You've just said, "Do you think you would do the same thing next time or different?" She's probably going to look at you in shock, like, "Duh, what kind of a dummy are you? Of course I'm supposed to say ..." She might change the subject or she might say, "Different, mom," like she knows the answer, what it's supposed to be. At this point, clearly she's getting uncomfortable, she might say, "Different. I would trade with her, Mom. Can we just read a book now?" Some version of that. You can say, "Different? Different? You mean you aren't just going to grab the toy from her next time? Are you sure?" Notice that it's a complete joke in my voice here. I'm snuggling her and nuzzling her as I'm saying this, "Are you sure?" She's going to be laughing in spite of herself, which is good because that's how you're shifting the energy from the self-blaming, self-shaming thing that she's got going on where she's feeling anxious that she did this bad thing.

Dr. Laura Markham: Remember, she doesn't want to hurt her sister, it's that her prefrontal cortex is not fully developed so she wants two things. She wants the toy and she wants not to hurt her sister. The toy won out, but it won't always win out, and it will not win out faster if we can help her to not feel the shame and blame and to feel less overlay of blame about this. We're actually moving right into laughter of, "You would do something different, huh? I'm glad to hear that!" Let's say she's picked up the book that she wants to read, "Because I wouldn't want you to think that we just grab the book ..." Go like you're going to grab the book from her and then laugh, and obviously you're not grabbing it out of her hand. Do you think that she would laugh if you did that kind of thing with her?

Parent: Yeah. Her response is usually, "I don't know." If I said, "Oh, you can't think of it," or something like that, then usually she'll laugh. It's more of as long as I'm roughhousing with her or nuzzling into her or tickling her or something like that.

Dr. Laura Markham: Yes.

Parent: That gets her laughing instead of being uncomfortable or unhappy with whatever the situation is that we're trying to address.

Dr. Laura Markham: I think that's the path here to getting her to be willing to sit with that discomfort, because it is uncomfortable and she's only four. I think getting her laughing and then saying, "So next time you're going to try not to grab the toy away from her? Give me five! Yay! All right, we're going to read our book, I know you want to read the book. Tell me one thing you could do instead of grabbing the toy away from her, just one thing and then we're going to read the book." You could even do that, where you're pushing her a little bit, but only when you've already had a laugh, because then she's feeling good and connected to you and she'll be like, "All right mom, I could try to trade with her." You'd be like, "Yes, that is a brilliant idea. I love that idea. Give me five! Okay, which book are we reading?" And then you just move on. Does that make sense?

Parent: Yeah. I've never done the connection with the laughter part in the scenario. It goes from her being uncomfortable and then me trying to force the conversation to continue, to then just making everything worse.

Dr. Laura Markham: Yes, exactly. We all think we're supposed to teach them a lesson. But the truth is that children know what's right and wrong, they really do already. If they don't, we should be teaching that. She knows she's not supposed to grab the toy from her sister and make her sister cry. Really, what are we trying to do? We're trying to make her **want** to do that and build the prefrontal cortex power to do it. I think when kids resist -- I'm so glad you asked this question because I think it's a universal question -- When kids resist our teaching, even later in the day, it's because they go into blame and shame of themselves, and the more we can defuse that, the better it is.

Parent: Thank you.

Question 19:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:06:58 There's a question from a parent about her five-year-old who seems to not be able to control his tone of voice and is always very loud. This isn't just about setting limits though. I'm getting the impression that this is just that he is loud, he's a loud kid. The first thing I would suggest is that you get his hearing checked, and she's already done that. I would say, your instinct to play games with him, from the framing of your question, is absolutely right on the money. Play games with him. Even during normal life when he uses a loud voice, whisper to him, just ratchet your voice down and whisper.

Dr. Laura Markham: “Is your voice at a one or is it at a 10 on the loudness scale, if 10 is the loudest it can be and zero is the softest? What is your voice right now?” You could play games with that. If you're in the supermarket and he's using a really a loud voice and you don't think that's appropriate in the market, you can say, "What level is your voice right now?" Not in a

scolding way, but more in a game way. He he can say, "I don't know, what is it?" You can say, "I think it's a seven. Should we try and use a two? What would happen? Could we still hear each other?" "It's a loud market, I don't know. Let's try." You can just play with him with that.

Dr. Laura Markham: I also think, even with him, that ratcheting up your responsiveness when they shout will probably help him to shout less, but with him it may be a different kind of an issue. If he's shouting all the time it may just be that that's the way he relates to the world and that there's some difference in his perception, even though his hearing is normal, that is making him shout. I think playing with it is a way to increase his awareness without shaming him.

Question 20:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:08:51 Okay. Now we have a bunch of questions about empathy and where to set the limit and how to draw lines when you know you're supposed to be empathic but you really do need to set a limit. This parent gives an example. Her son throws a toy at his brother and then he's requesting a cuddle, or he kicks his brother and then asks his mom to come in and lift him up when his brother is hurt. You can set a limit with empathy any time. It's a question of whether you feel empathic, really. If he just kicked his brother you're not likely to feel empathic, and you set the limit. "No kicking! Kicking hurts! Ouch!" Then you turn your attention to the brother, "Oh my goodness that hurt, that kick, and it surprised you, too. Come here. I know, show me. Owie! Do you want me to kiss that? Let's rub it."

Dr. Laura Markham: If your other child comes up to you and says, "I need a cuddle. I need a cuddle," at that moment while you're cuddling the first one, if you can't treat him with kindness

and respect at that moment, you just focus on the one that's hurt. That's all you do. When you've breathed deeply enough to remind yourself that the kid who did the kicking was hurting inside too, right? It isn't just the kicked child who's hurting. The other child hurt because he couldn't bear his pain. That's why he lashed out. That's where all aggression comes from. It comes from our own inner pain that we don't deal with. When we don't deal with our pain, we visit it in other people. Just look around the world today. That's where violence comes from.

Dr. Laura Markham: When you can remind yourself of that, after you're convinced that your child who's been kicked is okay, then you can turn to the one who did the kicking, who's begging you for a cuddle. You can put your arm around him, while you still are tending with your hand on the one who got kicked, and you can say, "You feel bad too, I know. And you're worried because you kicked your brother and you want to make sure I still love you. I love you no matter what, but no kicking. Kicking hurts. Come and let's make things better for your brother."

Dr. Laura Markham: Now if he feels like he's actually understood and loved at that point, he will try to make things better for his brother. If he feels like you're still holding it against him, he won't. You can see why it is in everyone's best interest for you to actually get over your own stuff and empathize with him. We all think that somehow it's protecting his brother if we continue to hold it against the one who's been kicking and say, "You know you can't kick like that. Bad boy." Even though you might not use those words. But actually you're doing more for his brother if you can get past your own anger, your own pain about it, which is making you want to lash out. If you can get past that, and you can instead offer him understanding, he's much more likely to make up with his brother and not to kick him again. That's, of course, what you're really going for, right?

Dr. Laura Markham: We know that being punitive in those situations does not stop the aggression in the future. It just increases the child's pain. The question isn't how you do it. I think you've all heard that throughout the course. I think the question

is really, if you look into your heart at that moment, can you take that deep breath and remind yourself that, A, your child who got kicked is actually okay? Now you have to make sure of that first or you can't do this. And then, B, your child who did the kicking was hurting too. Can you offer him understanding?

Question 21:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:12:34 There were some followup questions to that. One was, “Are we allowed to say that the action made Mama angry or made Mama sad?” Well, you're allowed to do whatever you want. Is it an effective way to parent? Well, think about it. If you were a child and your parents said to you, "You made Mama sad," wouldn't you feel like you were suddenly responsible for her emotions? "You made Mama sad," makes your child responsible for your emotions. It's basically a guilt trip.

Dr. Laura Markham: I understand you're trying to teach him empathy. I mean, I assume that's what you're trying to teach them. I'm not sure what you're trying to teach them. But if you're trying to teach them empathy, let's assume he did something to you. I suppose even if he did something to his brother, you could still be trying to teach them empathy. That's not how kids learn empathy. They only learn empathy from being empathized with. So, again, if you put your arm around him when he comes in for a cuddle, even though he's just hurt his brother, you're going to teach him empathy. If you say, "You made Mama mad," or, "You Made mama sad," you're not teaching empathy.

Dr. Laura Markham: Maybe what you're trying to do is to make him see it was a result, a consequence if you will, a natural consequence of his action. I mean, yeah, he did kick his brother after all, naturally that made you mad. But think about it. What do you want to role play for him? What do you want to role model for him? You want him to see that when he hurts somebody, it hurts **them**, not that it made **you** mad. It's

that it hurts them. What you want to say is, "Oh no, your brother's crying. I see you want a cuddle. We need to take care of your brother first. I see you're hurting. We're going to take care of your brother first."

Dr. Laura Markham: That's still withholding something from him. But at least he's seen that he is having to take into account that his brother is hurting. But if it's your feelings that he has to take care of here, he's not going to be worried about what he actually did that caused the problem. He's going to be worried about how to manipulate your feelings. I think it always has a bad result when we make kids responsible for our feelings. They're not really learning the actual lesson we want. It's like in school, do you want them to be curious and enjoy learning or do you want them to just do well on the test even if they have to cheat to do it? Right? That's the difference here. It's sort of an extraneous indicator, your sadness or your anger. I don't think it's an effective way to teach your child anything.

Question 22:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:15:14 There's another related question here. This one is about blame. “How do you correct the child without blaming them for what they've done. The no-blame household is a great idea. But what about when the six-year-old just walks by and wallops his little brother for no reason at all, or he didn't like what was for dinner so he poked holes in the dinner table with his fork? How do we do this without feeling like I'm faking it and not a total pushover?"

Dr. Laura Markham: That's the key to me. Because you are faking it at that moment if you're enraged at him for using his fork to poke holes in your dining room table. You're probably enraged, and you probably feel like you want to lash out at him, or else you're a total pushover, right? He's walking on you. I think what you're really asking isn't how you do it. Although, I will tell you how to do it. I think what you're

asking is: “How could I feel like doing that? How would I even want to do that?”

Dr. Laura Markham: Let's start with how to do it. The key to a no-blame household is that, the minute we start to want to blame, we focus on problem solving. We focus on empathizing. We focus on setting limits for sure, but empathizing as we do it, and we focus on taking responsibility for any part of the problem ourselves. There's a reason that he attacked his brother as he walked by. I know it doesn't look like there's a reason, but people don't just lash out aggressively for no reason. Obviously, there's a sibling issue or there's a backpack issue, that he just got home from school and he's got a lot going on. Something is going on with him that he needs help with.

Dr. Laura Markham: The dinner, it's an interesting thing to me. I don't think it's just that he didn't like his dinner. If he just didn't like his dinner, he could use his words. There's something going on here. "There was nothing he liked for dinner," is the way you phrased this. You said he didn't like what was for dinner. There should always be something the child likes for dinner as a basic rule of thumb. Make sure there's always something they like for dinner, even if it's carrots out of the bag as their vegetable.

Dr. Laura Markham: Now, many kids don't like carrots out of the bag, but I'm thinking of something easy for you to do. Maybe he never likes broccoli or he never likes kale or whatever else you might like on your table, but he'll at least eat carrots out of the bag, or he'll at least eat cooked carrots, in which case, make the cooked carrots at the beginning of the weekend and put two of them on his plate every single day for dinner, so that there's always something he likes on his plate. That's one thing.

Dr. Laura Markham: You wouldn't want to sit down to dinner and find there was nothing you liked on your plate and feel trapped there and not feel like you could express it. Even if you're not forcing him to eat it, you could see why he could feel pretty powerless and negative about that. Now, if he at that moment starts to gouge your table with his fork,

obviously, you take the fork away, right? How do you set limits? You take the fork away, that's the limiting. You say, "You're so upset about this dinner. I can see we need to do some real problem solving about dinner and you really don't like the dinner. Let's figure out right now what you could have to eat that you can make yourself."

Dr. Laura Markham: Maybe your rule in your family is there can always be a peanut butter sandwich or there can always be an unsweetened yogurt, something that he can have when he doesn't like what's for dinner. When somebody takes a fork and gouges holes in the table, they are showing you they feel powerless. I guess what I'm saying is if you want to not blame, you're not only empathizing, you're helping him solve his problem, right, instead of being punitive. How do you do that? You stop, drop, and breathe. You actually try to connect with the child's feelings.

Dr. Laura Markham: I mean, if you're only connecting with your own feelings, you're going to feel like any of us would feel, which is, "That's my hard earned money that I scrimped and saved to buy us a beautiful table," or whatever kind of table it is that you can't just whip out your credit card and replace. The idea that he would put holes in it would enrage you, right? If you're just coming from your point of view, we would all feel that way. The question is, he's six, he doesn't understand any of that. What he understands is that he feels trapped and powerless and he's showing you in the only way he knows how. If you can see it from that point of view, then you can respond in the stress of the moment in a more positive way. Again, if it happens very often that he's unhappy with dinner or that he hits his brother out of nowhere, then there's some problem solving to be done. Prevention is always so much easier than trying to solve it later when he's gouging holes in the table or he's attacking his brother.

Question 23:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:20:17 Still in limit setting, but related is threats. This parent says, "Sometimes if I very rapidly want something to stop happening, not necessarily dangerous, just something that will cause lots of upset, I end up threatening the kids. Sometimes instead of shouting I end up threatening to shout. "I'm going to start shouting if you do that." I want to say to you, congratulations. I'm sure you used to shout automatically, and now you just threaten to shout. That's a huge achievement. You're regulating yourself much more and you're using your words instead of your shouting, so you're not emotionally bullying like the three year-old who was shouting at his mother when he didn't like something. You're not doing that to your kids. You're modeling something different for them. Fantastic. You're making progress! But you're still threatening to shout.

Dr. Laura Markham: Think about what happens in that moment. They're doing something. It's escalating. There's going to be an upset. An example might be that one kid is teasing the other, and you can see there's going to be a big upset. You want to get serious about it. You can turn it into a game, "Wait a minute, pick on someone your own size. What about me? I'm the only stupid head around here." If you want to turn it into a game and you can do that, great. But if not, and I presume you're not in a gaming kind of mood or you wouldn't be threatening to shout, and it sounds like you feel powerless to stop what's going on. You get right in the face of the kid who's doing the teasing, that's going to upset his brother and you say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Sweetheart, we don't talk to each other that way in this house. Do you hear your brother?"

Dr. Laura Markham: Now, if the brother hasn't stuck up for himself, the first thing you do is you help their brother stick up for himself, right? "You can tell your brother, 'I don't like that.'" But let's assume that's already happened, and you see the upset is still about to happen. Then you say, "Do you hear your brother? He's saying no more talking this way to him. That's teasing. I think you're having a hard time. What's going on, Sweetheart? Let me help."

Dr. Laura Markham: Now, notice how different that is than, "If you don't stop that right now, I'm going to yell and shout," right? I think that threatening to shout just comes from powerlessness and from you're feeling like you don't know what to do in that moment. I would say in that moment it's your own anxiety about becoming upset that's causing you to stop thinking clearly, so you don't know what to do. The first thing is always to regulate yourself. Stop, drop, and breathe. Just that moment of stop, drop, and breathe. Taking that breath is going to allow you to think more clearly, so you're going to have more answers, so you're not having to threaten to shout. Then set your limits, in no uncertain terms, but connect with your kid. Try to see it from their point of view. The kid is not listening to you. The kid is escalating. The kid that's going to cause the upset, connect with them and insist that they stop whatever the behavior is, but not with a threat, with understanding and helping them solve whatever problem is driving them to do this.

Question 24:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:23:30 Here's a question about shame. "My four-year-old asks if she's being good today, and I answered that I love her no matter if she's good or not, but she always needs reassurance. My seven-year-old, when I correct him, tells me about other kids and how they're bad or he blames someone else. It's difficult to talk about his mistakes and what he could do better next time. How can I get him to face up to his issues without feeling ashamed?"

Dr. Laura Markham: There's already shame going on here. Your job is to try to sidestep that shame. I do think you're right that it's shame. Remember, shame is a lack of self love. It's like they're feelings that are unbearable, like the feeling that you're not good enough. I don't think you have to help your son face up to his issues. That will just make him hate himself more. Your children are both worried about being good enough. There's no such thing as a child being a good child

or a bad child. When you say, "Is she being good today or bad today?" She's always good. There's just a good child doing her best, just like the rest of us, like you and me. We're good people doing our best, and just like us, they struggle with lots of things that keep them from being their best, like tiredness or jealousy, and in their case, an immature brain and fewer skills to manage themselves. The cure is always to see them as a wonderful person who is struggling and yourself as their partner who offers to help them and support them so they can be their best self.

Dr. Laura Markham: I think it's really important for all of us not to see ourselves as correcting our kids and facing up to their issues. It's always about, "Oh no wonder you felt that. No wonder you did that. I totally get it." It's not okay to hit or be mean or whatever. But if you're talking about something minor, he knows that's not okay. You can say, "Next time, what could you do?" But I would never do that while he's still feeling bad because then it just comes off as shaming.

Question 25:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:25:16 This parent is saying, "Is there ever a time when an unrelated consequence, like taking away their Pokemon cards or their screen time, is okay after we've made a strong effort to self regulate, to empathize, to nurture, to connect, and then they're defiant and we have to get them to do something? When we're on a time limit and can't be late, what do we do?" Well, there are times that you do pull rank. You've got a time limit. You have to walk out of the house, and the kid is being defiant or having a tantrum, and they're not going to cooperate with you. That is true.

Dr. Laura Markham: Sometimes you just pick them up. But when you say, "Do you have to threaten them?" You have a one-year-old, so you're certainly not going to threaten your one-year-old. You're going to pick your one-year-old up. Your six-year-old, you can probably still pick up, but you can get your six-year-old out of the house with empathy, even when

they're defiant and having a really hard time usually. But if they're in the middle of a tantrum, you can just say, "Sweetheart, I want to listen. I want to hear what you have to say, and right now we have to go. I know you're really upset. Right now we have to go." If there's nothing else to do and it's an emergency, sure go ahead and try to take away his Pokemon cards, but you know what? Every time you do punishment, you're going to get pushback. It undermines your relationship because you're basically using your power against the child to punish them and taking away something and purposely hurting them, basically, to get your way.

Dr. Laura Markham: You only did it because you were in the breakdown lane. Why are you in the breakdown lane? You didn't do enough preventive maintenance. If you're doing preventive maintenance enough, you don't end up in the breakdown lane. You want my permission to use a consequence when it's an emergency, sure, do it. But remember when you do that, you say to yourself, "Okay that was the emergency. I'm in the breakdown lane. I can't do this again. I have to be doing the preventive maintenance that's necessary so we don't end up in the breakdown lane. This is a wake-up call for me." That's the answer.

Question 26:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:27:14 The next question is from a parent who says, "How do you handle it when kids cross the limits?" She's asking, ”How do you avoid taking away something as punishment. What do you say? What do you do instead of punishment? So, I would say that when kids cross the limit, if they knew they were crossing the limit, then we need to understand why. Now, obviously, if they didn't know they were crossing the limit, then you're just going to teach them what the limit is, and there would be no impulse toward punishment because they didn't know they weren't supposed to do this. A toddler sometimes doesn't know that they're not supposed to flush your tax returns down the toilet. You

may think they should know, but a two-year-old doesn't necessarily know. They saw the tax return sitting on the table and they wanted to see if it would flush. When they don't know, there's just teaching that goes on.

Dr. Laura Markham: When they do know and they cross that limit, then they were so upset that they crossed the limit. We need to know what drove them to do that, or at least we need to understand, from their perspective, that something was a really big upset that made them do it. I would think of your intervention as having sort of three phases to it. Most of the time parents go right into punishment. They just start yelling and they say, "Okay, no TV for you tonight," or no iPad usage or something. But instead, first, your first step is always to stop the problem with as little comment as possible. Now, you may not have come in time to stop your tax returns from going down the toilet, but usually if you're happening upon the incident, you can immediately intervene and say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, no hitting. Hitting hurts," and grab your kid or grab the child who's getting hit or whatever. You can get between your kids and stop whatever's going on.

Dr. Laura Markham: You stop the problem with as little comment as possible. You're trying to stay calm yourself or return yourself to calm as soon as you intervene. You're trying to restore a sense of safety for your children. Sometimes, if tempers are fraying, you just have to separate your kids or do whatever you need to do to return everything to a sense of safety. The second phase is to help the perpetrator work out the emotion. The first phase when you're returning things to a sense of safety would include helping a child who's been hurt by another child or helping a child with his feelings when his brother knocked down his tower.

Dr. Laura Markham: The second phase is when you look at the perpetrator and, no, you're not punishing them, you're helping them with their feelings. You'll get to teaching them in a moment, but you can't teach when they're upset. They're still upset. There's a reason they knocked down their brother's tower. So, at that point, you're just helping them with the

emotions. You describe what they're feeling and you describe why they're feeling it as much as you know. You do that without asking questions because if you say, "Why did you do that?" they won't be able to tell you why, and it will be very hard for them to express the emotions. They feel they're being shamed and that you're blaming them for it, and they're not going to tell you anything.

Dr. Laura Markham: Instead, you describe, "Oh my goodness, Sweetheart, you must've been so upset." Now you might start it by saying, "Wow, your brother was really crying, huh? I think he's okay now. I took care of him." Right? If that's indeed what happened. Or, "I think he's okay now. Thank you for getting the ice pack. I think he's feeling better. He's playing with his truck now."

Dr. Laura Markham: You might add a little okay-ness to the situation, first, to restore some safety so that your child doesn't feel like you're now blaming and shaming him. He'll get that, "Okay. It's no longer an emergency even though I hit my brother." Then you describe what he was feeling. "You must've been so upset to hit him that way." Then you want to describe why he's feeling it. "I guess you were pretty mad at him for grabbing your truck," or touching your truck or looking covetously at your truck, if they were glancing at your truck from across the room. "I guess you were pretty mad at him," if you know why. You may not know that the brother glanced at his truck. But if you know that, in general, he can't stand his brother touching his things, you can say, "I know it's really hard for you when your brother touches your things. Is that what happened?"

Dr. Laura Markham: Then you're offering understanding so he can say, "Yes, that is what happened. He looked at my truck like he was going to take it," or whatever, and he'll tell you. You continue with those feelings. You say, "Oh my goodness, I know you really hate it when he touches your things. You wish that you didn't have to share them. It must sometimes feel like you have to share everything with your brother, even me. It's hard for kids to share their parents, and it's hard for kids to share their toys. This is your very special birthday truck that you don't have to share with

him, right? I know, and it sounds like he wanted to play with it," or he took it or whatever. "Wow. No wonder you got upset."

Dr. Laura Markham: Notice I've not said one word about the transgression. All I've done is understand him. What you do here is you offer so much understanding that your child will talk and tell you about the awful feelings that drove him to act in this awful way. You're not encouraging him to hit his brother. You're not encouraging more crossing limits by listening to these feelings. You're pulling up the weed at the roots. You're eliminating the driving force behind the behavior so you can avoid him crossing the limits in the future. You stay calm, you empathize. It's great if you feel his point of view. You might really feel his point of view very acutely. If you do, you might even tear up. That would be fantastic. The reason is he'll tear up too, and if he'll cry. That is so great because he will release all those feelings that are driving him to cross those limits.

Dr. Laura Markham: That's phase two of the discussion, and it might be all you can do at that point. Maybe the brother comes in while you're talking and that's all you can get to. Or maybe he's still unhappy at the end of the discussion, and you have to go get dinner ready or whatever. You give him a hug and you say, "Thank you for sharing that with me." Then you restate the limit. "Sweetheart, you know, no matter what, it's not okay to hit someone. Hitting hurts. You can always tell me when you need help and I will help you keep your truck from your brother. It's never okay to hit." You're restating your limit. You give him another hug, and you say, "Your brother was really hurt." Now you're introducing phase three even though you have to leave the room and prepare dinner, you're introducing phase three. "Your brother was really hurt. I know you wanted to protect your truck from him, and so you hit him. That didn't work out too well. It hurt him. It made you feel bad. I know you don't want to be someone who hits, so we need to find a way that you can make that up to your brother and make things better with him. You know he loves you so much, and he really looks up to you. Think about how you might make this up to him, and let's talk

about this in a few minutes, or you can come with me right now. We'll keep talking about it while I get dinner ready or after I put your brother down for his nap," or whatever is going to happen next. "We can talk about it more then, and I'll help you if I can, but I know you'll come up with a great idea for how you can make things better with your brother."

Dr. Laura Markham: Now notice this is not a punishment. If you use shame and blame here, they're not going to sit still for this, and they're not going to do it either. It has to be empowering. It has to be positive and exciting for them to redeem themselves in your eyes. You're not the punisher. You're the assistant problem solver in helping your child reclaim their integrity. This should be their idea, but if they're stuck, you can help them brainstorm ideas. You absolutely have a definite expectation that they will make things better, just like you would make things better if you lost your temper and yelled at them or forgot to wash their Superman costume or whatever.

Dr. Laura Markham: But this is not a punishment. In the question the parent asks, "How do you avoid something negative like taking something away from them as punishment." I would say this is never taking something away, and it's never imposing or adding something negative to their lives. What you are doing is adding something positive to your child's life, which is you are helping them come up with a positive interaction that they can do with the other person, in this case, the brother, so that they can make things better with that person. That's what you're doing. You're helping them come up with something extra for their life, something positive for their life. So it's never something negative getting added, and it's never something getting taken away. I think that's a way you can tell if you're on the right track. But, really, as you start introducing this, you'll see that as long as you can stay away from the shame and blame, and as long as you help them with their feelings, your child will more and more be able to come up with these ideas themselves.

Dr. Laura Markham: If your child is already seven, let's say, and has a chip on their shoulder towards their three or four-year-old sibling, you may find that in the beginning they're not going to want to come up with things. They will just say things like, "No, I hate him. I really hate him. I don't want to make things better with him." In that case, you know you have some big healing to do. In that case, I'm going to suggest you get your hands on my sibling book, *Peaceful Parent, Happy Siblings*, which has a lot of advice for how to do that healing. Depending on how old your kids are, if they're seven and up, you'll want my book because it has scripts even for older kids, or it has ideas even for older kids, even though the scripts are younger.

Dr. Laura Markham: I also suggest for seven and up, for school-aged kids, that you get your hands on the book by Faber and Mazlish. They're the authors of *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen*. This book is *Siblings Without Rivalry*, and it has a lot of great scenarios for kids who are eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. That's helpful to heal a more deep-seated issue.

Question 27:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:37:27 Okay. Bribing. "Is it ever okay to bribe? My child won't wash her hands or do something else I want her to do, and I let her know there's something she really wants, like putting on a costume. If she does what I want, then she can get what she wants." Well, it's hard to tell what bribing is. I would just say if you're finding a win-win solution that's not a bribe, but if it's a situation where you're buying your child off and where your child starts to use it against you, then it's a bribe.

Dr. Laura Markham: If you're in the supermarket, and the child says, "I'll stop crying," or, "I'll stop screaming if you buy me that candy bar," then you know you've bribed one too many times, and your kid's going to use it against you. If you're saying, "When you've cleaned up your room, when we've cleaned up all the toys, then we can read a story together, or then

you can put on your special costume," that is just “when we've done this, then we can do that.” That's just the schedule. That's just the way it works. We always clean up our toys first, then we can do X, Y, Z. That's not a bribe. That's a win-win solution, or that's the routine at our house, and it's fine to do that.

Dr. Laura Markham: I'm hoping that clarifies the difference. I just want to say, bribing does not mean you're a terrible parent. It means you are out of options at that moment, and so you went ahead and tried to figure out a way to make it worth their while, and if they start using it against you, then you know, oops, I’ve got to find a better way to get them cooperating. Got to rely on connection, got to do more preventative maintenance, or whatever. You're probably finding win-win solutions, and that's a good thing.

Question 28:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:38:53 This is about lying, and what to do when a four-year-old constantly lies. The answer is that lying is completely normal and typical. Three-year-olds don't actually have the capacity to lie. Four-year-olds do. When you walk into the room and your three-year-old has put her toy doll under the couch, and you ask her where the doll is, she thinks you know it's under the couch because she knows. But your four-year-old has figured out that you don't know. You both have a different information base. That’s a huge developmental leap. And that's what makes lying possible. So every four-year-old will try lying.

Dr. Laura Markham: When your child is lying to you often, then you want to wonder, "Hmm, what's going on here?" Now I invoke Gandhi. Gandhi said when his son lied to him, what he said was, "What about me is not safe enough for you to tell me the truth?" If we've ever punished, our child becomes a better liar because they don't want to tell us the truth because we're no longer safe if we've punished them.

Dr. Laura Markham: Now, I'm not assuming that the person who asked this question is punishing her child or even has punished her child. But when you ask, "Did you brush your teeth?" And she says yes, and you say, "That's great. Let me smell your delicious breath." She breathes, and you know perfectly well she didn't brush her teeth. You say, "Hmm, I guess you wish you brushed your teeth. Come on, let's go brush them." "No, no, mommy, I brushed my teeth." "I hear you brushed, but maybe you brushed in your imagination. Maybe you brushed on Mars." Now we have to brush here on Earth. Let's go." And you brush your teeth again. That's it. No, you don't just let her have a cavity. You go brush her teeth. It's that simple.

Dr. Laura Markham: If she's only lying because she doesn't enjoy brushing her teeth, I would just say, what child does? Nobody wants to brush their teeth. My 20-year-old daughter still says, "You know what? I hate brushing my teeth, but I make myself do it." She was one of those kids who it was hard to get her to brush her teeth. Here's the thing, you can tell if she's brushed her teeth, so I wouldn't even ask. I would just say, "Okay, let's go brush your teeth." If she says, "But I brushed them," then that's when you say, "Okay, let me smell." Sooner or later she's going to start to realize that she can't actually get away with that. Now there will be other things she'll lie to you about that you're not actually going to know, but if you're not punishing, and if you're always connecting, then it's going to be few and far between because kids realize over time that they'd rather not mislead you. There's a post that I sent out very recently in the last couple of weeks about how to have a trustworthy 14-year-old.

Dr. Laura Markham: In it, I describe how my daughter, when she was 14, she had a sleepover with some girls, and the other girls wanted to get up at midnight and go out and run around outside. I don't just mean in our yard. We live in New York City, so run around on the streets and whatever. My daughter said no, she wasn't going to do that. She had made a promise to me that they were all going to actually go to bed and go to sleep at 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock, or whatever our agreement was. The other girls gave her a

really hard time. "Why won't you do this? Why can't you just tell your mom you did (go to sleep)? Why don't you just lie to her?"

Dr. Laura Markham: My daughter was like, "Why would I ever lie to my mother?" The way I see it, she would no more lie to me than she would burn down our house because our relationship is one of the most important things in her world. Why would she lie to me and wound me? If I ever found out she lied, I would be quite wounded, and she knew that by 14. It's not that my daughter didn't disagree with me about many things and lobby for whatever she wanted versus what I wanted, but she knew I would always listen. She knew I cared more about making her happy and helping her be happy and healthy more than anything else. She would not have lied to me and wounded me on purpose ever by the age of 14.

Dr. Laura Markham: I'm not saying at four she wouldn't. She would lie to me at four, of course. "No, I didn't eat the chocolate." And I would say, "I bet you wish you hadn't eaten the chocolate, Sweetie, but here's the wrapper. Let's go. Brush your teeth. I'm going to have to not keep chocolate at home. It's too hard for you right now not to eat the chocolate." That's the way you approach it with a four-year-old. If you continue parenting this way and you resist punishment, you'll get a kid who eventually thinks it's not worth their while to lie to you.

Question 29:

Dr. Laura Markham: 01:43:25 Our next question is from a parent who asks, "How do you handle lying?" We've tried telling our four-year-old that he can always tell us the truth. We won't yell or be angry with him, but he does tell us small lies here and there. First of all, this is developmentally normal. It happens to all four-year-olds when they make a developmental leap, and they realize that they have a different experience than we do. They know things, for instance, they just shoved their toy

under the bed and we don't necessarily know that. They explore different perspectives, by telling us things that aren't true.

Dr. Laura Markham: Of course, like every other human being, they tell us things that aren't true because they'd like to get their way, or they would like to not have conflict. Often four-year-olds, or older kids, tell us lies because they don't want conflict with us. They don't want to disappoint us, but they still want to do whatever they want to do. I think the appropriate way to handle a four-year-old is, "I guess you wished you washed your heads. Come on, let's go," right? You wish something was true, but it's not true." So I know you're not punishing your son, but I wonder if something about you would make him think it was such a big deal that he felt it wasn't safe enough to tell you the truth. So really I think we had it drummed into us when we were young that lying is a very big deal, and so we freak out when our children lie and yet it is completely developmentally normal. So our job is to take it in stride when they are only four. And of course remind them that in fact, telling the truth is what we need them to do, but not make a super big deal of it. And usually what happens when there's no power struggle around it, is that the lying vanishes along the way.

Dr. Laura Markham: I would say if you have an older child who's lying, like an eight-year-old, you might want to sit them down and say, "We have a relationship between us and there are these cords of light between your heart and my heart that connect us. And when we lie to each other, we cut one of those courts of light. And that's why I do not lie to you ever no matter what, and why I don't want you to lie to me. So since you lied to me about eating that cookie, clearly you were frightened of what I would say, and I want you to always feel you can tell me the truth without having to lie to me. And I want you to know that when you choose to lie to me, it's cutting a cord between us. So I think it's time we repair that. How can we repair the trust between us after this lie?"

Dr. Laura Markham: So as kids get older, it's perfectly reasonable to talk to them about lying in that way. But I think you'll find if you have a household without blame or punishment, and your child feels supported by you, lying is not going to be a problem for you.

Question 30:

Parent: 01:46:43 So we're having trouble with our five-year-old who is stealing and it's usually just knickknacks. We've talked to him before, it keeps happening. He usually comes home from school with these little knickknacks in his pocket and we ask him where it's from and he's honest about it. He tells us exactly what it is. He took it from school. But it keeps happening. And I mean, we've had him apologize, do apology letters and do things like that but nothing seems to be helping because it keeps occurring. And so we're wondering what your thoughts are on this.

Dr. Laura Markham: My thought is that this is a child who feels like he's deprived in some fundamental way. That somehow he's not getting what he needs or deserves or what other people get, and so he's stealing in order to get those things, those things that he wants and other people have. Now I love that he's totally willing to tell you about it. Talk to you. So that implies to me that he trusts you and he isn't afraid of getting punished. And that's great. And what happens when he brings the knickknacks home and he tells you, "Oh, yeah, I got it at school." Then what do you say and what happens next?

Parent: Well, we try to stay calm, obviously. And we basically try to do the positive parenting and say, "Oh, I guess you really wanted to take this." But we let him know that it's not allowed, you can't take what's not yours. And then we actually have him try to think of solutions to make things right. So if things are returnable, he returns it. But in one

instance he took someone's ChapStick and he used it, so we couldn't return that. So we made him think of a solution and the solution would be to actually go and buy one with his own money that he saved up. But even with these natural consequences, it just keeps happening. So, I mean, we've been giving him more connection time, one-on-one time, but I mean it just keeps going on and on like every month, once a month maybe it'll happen at least.

Dr. Laura Markham: I love that you're helping him think of ways to make a repair, that he either returns something or has to buy a new ChapStick out of his own money or whatever. Do you have any idea why he might be feeling such a deep desire, wanting something so badly that even though he knows it's against the rules, he's willing to help himself to something that's not his?

Parent: To be honest, I have no idea because if I look in his room, he's got everything that a kid could ever ask for. I mean, we've told him before, "If you want something just let us know and we'll see if we can get it for you." But I think it's just an impulse.

Dr. Laura Markham: So that's physical things?

Parent: Yeah.

Dr. Laura Markham: I hear the impulse, but I'm wondering if there's something emotional going on. I hear physically he has everything he needs, but he's still seeing things and wanting them and helping himself to other people’s things. There's a sense of maybe emotional deprivation? Is that possible?

Parent: I'm not sure because, we try to connect with him, we spend a lot of time with him at nighttime, we spend time as well. We take him out of school some days just to spend one-on-one time.

Dr. Laura Markham: So something's going on here.

Parent: I mean, he does have a younger sibling. There is some resentment with her at times, but I'm not sure if that's related.

Dr. Laura Markham: Most people, most humans resent their younger siblings when they're little, and they don't react by breaking the rules at school and helping them to someone else's stuff. So usually that comes from something bigger or deeper, but I would make sure that he gets a chance to talk about his resentment of his younger sibling and that he feels like he is unfairly treated. I would make sure of that at home because that could be feeding this. I would be no-nonsense about the fact that in our larger society it is punished when people steal. And so no one has punished him yet it sounds like at school, and I'm not suggesting you punish him. I know one kid who was older than him who was stealing and she was told that in fact even a nine-year-old who was stealing could get locked in jail. And in some countries, they cut their hand off. I don't think she ever stole again. I think she was like, "Okay, I got that."

Dr. Laura Markham: So I'm not suggesting that you tell him he's going to get his hand cut off. I don't even think that was said to her. I think it was in some countries this happens. I would talk about actually the way law works in society. In Canada, there are certain things that are not allowed and when you do them, you get arrested. Do you know what those things are? Yes. If you go speeding through a stop sign. And why would it be that you'd be arrested? Well, because it could be very dangerous. You could hit another car and everybody could die in the cars. So having those kinds of conversations about what's allowed and what's not allowed and talking about that-

Parent: I actually have had that conversation with him about jail, stealing, what happens to people who steal, and I mean, it doesn't seem to faze him. I mean, he was even sent to the principal's office and he's only in SK. He's been sent there twice for stealing, and both times, he didn't feel any remorse. There's zero remorse for what he does actually. So I'm not even sure where to go with this anymore.

Dr. Laura Markham: And at home besides the stealing thing, how's the rest of his behavior at home?

Parent: Like any other SK kid I guess. He's good otherwise.

Dr. Laura Markham: Okay, great.

Parent: I mean, we've been doing the positive parenting for at least two or three years. I mean, he's getting much better at self-regulating, but this is probably his main issue right now. Stealing.

Dr. Laura Markham: And when you say he doesn't have remorse, I see that as shame. Shame kicks in and they act like they don't have remorse. Does he see himself as unable to stop himself from taking things or he doesn't see a reason to stop himself from taking things?

Parent: He promises not to steal. He makes these promises with us every time it happens. He can even recite to us why it's wrong and what he did was wrong. He even writes us notes saying that he won't do it again, but it keeps happening.

Dr. Laura Markham: So this is a compulsion. He wants not to steal and he recites what's wrong about it, and he writes you notes about how he's not going to do it. So it's not true that he has no remorse. He actually feels shame when he does it. And we see shame as a sort of shutting down and we assume that means no remorse. I don't think it's true that he has no remorse. I think he doesn't know how to stop himself. And you say his impulse control has gotten better. That's great.

Dr. Laura Markham: I would say start by playing with him, like actually play with stuffed animals with him, with a theme about stealing. You could put an apron on and start stealing things from around the house to get him laughing about the stealing, "Oh, I think I would like this. Oh, I would like this Lego. Oh, I'm going to take this." Just put them in your apron pocket and get him laughing about it. I think you'll see, if you start that kind of a game, that it's going to open

something up in him and he might start crying. He might really get into it and start laughing hysterically about stealing things. He's going to go around the house and steal things too. But basically you'll be taking some of the tension out of it so that you could start to uncover what's really going on. I would say though that if this doesn't seem to help, if you do this and then you have another incident, I would say that you probably need to take him for some sort of help. I don't know what's going on but there is something going on that would create this compulsion, and I think he needs support for it before he gets into more trouble at school really. But I will say that I have seen the playing and laughter thing really work to take the edge off this to help kids get to the bottom of it. And usually what happens is they laugh hysterically and then they start crying. They might get angry like, "No, you can't steal my Lego." And then they start to sob and sob and sob.

Dr. Laura Markham: There won't be a lot of articulation with this. He won't say, "How come other kids get ChapStick and I don't?" I don't think that's going to happen. I think it'll just be a lot of crying after a lot of laughter and then you might see things be different. But if you don't, then I think it's time to get professional help.

Question 31:

Parent: 01:56:30 I have a question about working with a child and providing empathetic limits. It may be that my own empathy is not enough, but there are times when I'm trying to do this consciously and she's scared, she's five. From the very beginning I have tried to redirect because she hears “No. Bad girl,” from other people. And then there's one or two cases when I've done that, and she got very upset, and she takes it out on herself.

Parent: And even when I am working to try and think about different ways of doing things with her, she'll say, "Oh, it's

just because I'm a bad person, aren't I?" And she takes it to heart. And of course, we back up and say, "No, no, it's just that there is something going on that can't continue this way. You can't continue to do whatever it is that you're doing. We can do it a different way, but it's just not because you're a bad person." So it breaks our heart when she says, "I'm a bad person. This is why. I should just go away." Or something like that.

Dr. Laura Markham: Okay. I have an answer for you. It's about repair. It's about making repairs. She feels bad about herself because she's done something wrong. It's not just because she's been told she's a bad person, it's because she's done something that she knows was harmful either to a person or property or something. And so the question here is, is there a way for her to redeem herself? There always is.

Dr. Laura Markham: I'm going to suggest that you talk to her about repair, that basically you say to her, "Honey, you are feeling bad because you did this, but don't worry, you can make that better." And depending on what it is you can say, "It sounds like when you said that your friend got upset at you, that you felt like a bad person because you said that. But you know what? Everybody says things sometimes that they don't mean when they're really angry. And here's the thing, you can redeem yourself," for lack of a better word. And I'd teach her that word. I mean, that's what she's doing. You can make things better. Giving her the opportunity to redeem herself means she doesn't have to continue to feel like a bad person.

Dr. Laura Markham: It's sort of like guilt. I mean, guilt is there for a reason. It's to help us move back into integrity. So what you're doing is you're saying, "Oh Sweetheart, you know what? You did this because you were upset or angry or whatever and you're six, or you're five and a half," or whatever she is. I just think it's so important that kids understand that they don't do these things because they're bad. They do them because they're young. And you can say to her, "I did much worse things than that when I was six years of age." And she'll say, "What did you do, Mommy?" And you can regale her with tales about the things you did when you

were six or whatever. But the point is that she gets that, okay, she did it. It was understandable she did it and now she has the chance to redeem herself and make things better. I think that's really what makes the difference.

Parent: I think she really has the agency and the power to do that.

Dr. Laura Markham: Exactly. Exactly, those are the words, agency and power. You're empowering her. It's like we all make messes. It's like when you're pouring the milk, you spill the milk, you clean up your own mess. We want to teach our children from the time they're little, "You made a mess with your friend. He's got these yucky feelings. You can clean this up."

Parent: Right. Thank you.

Question 32:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:00:30 “My daughter interrupts if I'm trying to have a conversation with someone else. My husband and I can barely have a conversation if she's around.” You're probably not going to have a conversation with your husband while your daughter's around, depending on how old she is. It's really not age appropriate for children to let parents have a conversation to tell you the truth. So have them in private. Don't have them in front of your child if it's a long conversation. By long, I mean five minutes.

Dr. Laura Markham: If you're talking to someone else, you're on the playground with another mom and your daughter comes running up to you and says, "Mom, mom." I would put my hand on her, my arm around her and squeeze her, smile at the other person who's talking and say, "Excuse me one second." Hold up your other hand, like your finger and say, "Excuse me one second." Turn to your daughter and say, "Hi Sweetheart, so and so is just explaining about Zachary’s baseball team. I'll be with you in just a minute." And your daughter might say, "But it's an emergency. So-and-so fell

down.” Or, "But I have to show you this bug." Or whatever. And you say, "That seems important. Okay, I'll be with you in one minute."

Dr. Laura Markham: And you turn back and you say, "Mrs. so-and-so, it sounds like we’ve got a big bug situation over here that I need to go to. It was great to hear this and I'd love to hear more about Zachary's baseball team soon. I can't wait to catch up with you more soon. See you in a little bit." And you turn around and you walk off with your kid because you're at the playground with her and that's your time to be with her. It's really not your time to have a long conversation with somebody else.

Dr. Laura Markham: But if it's something that you need to do, you can say, "Mrs. so-and-so and I are just talking about the bake sale and we need to finish this conversation. I see you're really excited about the bug. I'll be with you in just a minute. Okay?" Hopefully she'll run off with the bug. If not, if she's going to stand there. If she says, "All right, I'm waiting." You can say, "It's going to be hard for you to wait. I do need to finish this conversation. It's going to be five minutes and I'll wave to you when I'm starting to walk over." Something like that.

Dr. Laura Markham: So you can see what I'm doing is I'm really not privileging the adult. I'm meeting my child's needs even while I'm meeting my own need, in this case to plan the bake sale. I'm not assuming that adults come first, but I am being respectful to the other adults I'm talking with.

Question 33:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:02:40 “How can we encourage our five-year-old daughter to do something she needs to do the first time we ask?”

Dr. Laura Markham: Well, that's easy and it's hard. It's the easiest and the hardest thing. You can connect with her. So if she needs to do something, you get right up in her face and you join

with her, because she's busy doing something else, I assume. And you say, "Wow, that's so cool what you're doing." You join with her, you connect with her, and then you say, "You know what? Almost time to do X, Y, Z. You know? 'Yeah, I know.' You would rather keep doing what you're doing, but it is time to do it. Do you want to do it now or you want to do it in five minutes? 'Five minutes. Okay, no problem. Let's shake.'"

Dr. Laura Markham: You've asked once, but you do have to go back in five minutes and say, "Wow, that's so cool, what you're working on that is the neatest thing ever. Hey, you know what? We agreed five minutes, it's five minutes, got to do this thing now." And she's like, "No, no, I can't do this thing." And you say, "I know it's hard to stop doing what you're doing, but we agreed five minutes, we always keep our promises. Come on, let's go. I'll help you go." That's what you do. That sounds like a lot of fuss I know, but that's how you get them to do it the first time you ask. If you're asking and you're not connected, you're not going to get them to do it. It's really that simple. I'm afraid.

Question 34:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:03:58 Our next question is from a parent who says, "We can't get our four-and-a-half-year-old engaged. When we tried talking with him about the situation and his feelings after he misbehaves, we wait until after the heat of the moment. Ideally we'd like to get to the part where we think of alternatives to do better next time, but he seems to have a very short attention span. He starts playing with his hands and feet and stops listening. We don't know if he can't focus or he doesn't care. Is it too much to expect to talk for five minutes? How else could we do this?"

Dr. Laura Markham: So first of all, it's too much to expect him to sit and listen to a lecture for five minutes. For sure, you can expect him then to stop listening. I'm really glad you asked this question because I think that most parents get confused

about this, and the conversation you have with your child after they have done off track behavior is not about correcting their behavior until way after they've been able to work through feelings. So I think it's great you're waiting until the heat of the moment is past. But I'm wondering how the conversation actually unfolds. Because if your child feels this is an opportunity to be heard and to be listened to, he's not going to have a hard time focusing. So when parents tell me that the child won't listen or won't focus, I think it's because they're being expected to listen and take something in, rather than we're listening to them. That's where the conversation has to start. So let's say the four and a half year old does something that's not okay and you intervene, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Your brother's saying, stop. Did you hear him? He saying, 'No, I don't like that.' It's time to stop. When someone says stop, we stop touching their body." At that point, you either move the two-year-old or you move the four-year-old and life goes on. But there was a reason the four-year-old was doing that. The heat of the moment as you say. So as soon as the two-year-old is safely situated, you sit down with the four-year-old and you say, "You were pretty mad, huh? You were pushing your brother. He said stop, but you said no and you pushed, right? You must've been pretty mad to push him even though he said stop, right?"

Dr. Laura Markham: Your four-year-old, if he feels safe with you is not going to be fidgeting and playing with his hands and feet. He's going to be saying, "I had to push him. He was doing whatever. He was going to hurt my tower I was building." And at that point you say, "Oh, no wonder you needed to push him. He was going to hurt your tower. Right? You were worried about your tower. You worked so hard on that tower, didn't you?" And your kid will tell you all about how hard he worked on the tower, how impossible it would have been to build it all over again. How the two-year-old is always the problem, always in the way, always getting into his stuff and never listens to him when he says, "Stop touching my tower. He's the one who has to learn how to stop!"

Dr. Laura Markham: So your kid tells you all this and you listen and you acknowledge and you validate and you empathize and you say how hard it is for a two-year-old to learn the important rule of listening when big brother says stop. And how you hear big brother and he needs the two-year-old to stop when he says stop so his tower doesn't get ruined. And at this point, your four-year-old is not looking at his hands and feet. He hasn't stopped listening. He feels like he is in the best possible situation in the world where he finally has somebody listening to his problem and maybe understanding and taking his side. You acknowledge and you listen, and you really help him feel heard, and acknowledge just what a big deal this was for him. And yes, this could definitely take five minutes. It probably won't take more than that for the simple thing I'm describing, but it could definitely take five minutes.

Dr. Laura Markham: And then you try to help your four-and-a-half-year-old solve the problem they had. "Wow, how can we keep this from happening next time when your brother does X , Y, Z, what will you do?" And he might say, "Well, you have to stop my brother from doing that." And you can say, "Yes, we're going to need to talk to your brother and you're going to have to help him understand that when you say stop, you mean stop, right? So he can't touch your tower. And what else could you do to stop him?" At this point you're not lecturing. You're being his assistant. You're helping him come up with ideas. You're helping him prevent this problem that is the bane of his existence. And you say in the course of this, "It is hard for a two-year-old to stop when we say stop. He's still learning that. But you're pretty good at it now, aren't you?" And your four year old proudly says, "Right, I am. When someone says, stop, I stop." And you say, "That's right. And when your brother asks you to stop, when you have your hands on his body pushing him, even though you're worried about your tower, are you able to stop then? Do you think you can stop yourself then?" And he might look shamefaced or abashed and you say, "I know it's hard." Because you're trying to remove the shame. There's no shame here. There's no lecture. There's no "You are a bad person" or even "You did a bad thing." There's, "Here's a skill that you

can learn. We're not going to overlay it with any shame or blame or embarrassment. We're just going to help you develop the skill. And is this something that you think you can do? How can I help you remember it next time?" I think you'll find that he's able to talk to you about this if he sees that this conversation is you helping him to get his needs met, instead of you lecturing him for doing something wrong and misbehaving. Because that will just make him feel like a bad person and **he** doesn't think he did anything wrong. There were extenuating circumstances. His brother was about to knock over his tower.

Dr. Laura Markham: Of course, he had to push his brother down with all his force, just like many parents will say “Of course, I don't yell at my kid very often, but sometimes they are extenuating circumstances and I have to. I just can't stop myself, because he just pushed his brother down” for instance. So when we see it from our perspective, it makes sense, but we're grownups. And we even have a hard time with those extenuating circumstances. And if I sat you down and said, "You know better than to yell like that. Don't you do that. How could you do that? What could you do next time so you don't do that?" You would glaze over and play with your hands and feet and have a hard time focusing because no one wants to be treated that way. And besides, in that circumstance, I wouldn't be listening to you. I wouldn't be understanding the extenuating circumstances that caused you to yell at your child.

Dr. Laura Markham: But if I sat down with you and I said, "Boy, that must've been so tough when he pushed his brother and his brother was crying." You might say to me, "Oh my goodness, you don't know the half of it." And you might tell me all the things that make you feel like yelling at your kid and how finally this extenuating circumstance pushed you over the edge. And sure you broke the rule of yelling, but you know he has to learn a lesson. I would completely understand. And if you had the chance to say all that, you might well get to the point where you said, "I know I shouldn't have yelled at him still. Well, let's think what I could do instead next time." You'd be ready to take that on because you

know you shouldn't be yelling at your kid no matter what. And he knows that he shouldn't be pushing his brother down no matter what. But he has to get that all off his chest and he has to feel like somebody understands that there were extenuating circumstances.

Dr. Laura Markham: So it's our job to listen and validate that and then help them get to the point where we're his assistant. You're the parent, I'm your assistant in helping you to figure out how to meet your goal of not yelling at your kid, even in these tough circumstances. And so we are the assistant to the child in helping him figure out how he can meet his goal of not pushing his brother down even in those tough circumstances. And he doesn't really want to hurt his brother, but he has to be able to talk to someone who understands.

Dr. Laura Markham: So the first rule of discipline is connection. And that means we are guiding our child. That's what discipline means. We're guiding our child to be his best self, which means acting on his values. And a four-and-a-half-year-old does have the value inside himself. His values include not hurting other people and not hurting his younger sibling. If he has a chip on his shoulder, then you may have some sibling work to do, but you don't mention that. So if there is a sibling with a chip on the shoulder, then his values may **not** include not hurting his brother or sister. And at that point you may need to do some sibling work. For that I would recommend my sibling book.

Dr. Laura Markham: But let's just assume that's not the case here because you didn't mention it, and that it's really just a question of you being able to have a conversation with him after the fact that helps guide him to be his best self, to act on his value of not hurting his brother. Even in a tough situation, when his brother does something wrong or there's some other reason he "misbehaves" since it may have nothing to do with the brother. And if he feels heard, and you speak to the tears and fears under his anger -- His fear that his tower would be knocked down... or his sadness that he feels like he never gets what he wants or needs. --

Whatever those feelings are that are driving the misbehavior, that's what we need to acknowledge.

Dr. Laura Markham: So we would say something like, "Boy, sometimes it must feel like your brother gets into your things all the time or is always knocking down your things." So we aren't even just acknowledging his feelings in that moment, we're acknowledging the deeper tears and fears that might have driven him to this misbehavior.

Dr. Laura Markham: And when you're using the peaceful parenting tools, roughhousing, special time, 24/7 empathy, scheduled meltdowns that gives him a chance to cry when he needs to -- And you're also, in the moment when you're talking with him about what happened, doing this emotion coaching to help him work through his feelings about the interaction, and he feels heard and he works through those feelings -- When a child is lucky enough to have a parent who can do those things, that's a child who will work through the feelings and won't be driven by those emotions next time. And he'll be very open to your discussion with him about what he could do next time, because you're not going to frame it as a lecture or a reprimand. You're going to frame it as being his assistant to help him and to prevent the problem next time that he was having.

Dr. Laura Markham: In fact, you don't go into the discussion thinking it's about his behavior next time. You go into the discussion thinking, "My son exhibited off track behavior today, and I need to help him with the feelings that drove him to do that." That's your job. Not coming up with the alternatives. Once he's worked through the feelings, he'll want to do the right thing and it'll be easier for him to choose the right thing next time. And it will be easy to have a discussion about the alternatives.

Dr. Laura Markham: I hope you can see how different this is from the standard conventional approach where we have a lecture and shame and blame the child, and of course they have a hard time listening to us. And how you might talk to your child in such a way that they can't wait to have this discussion

with you so they can feel heard and validated and get their problem solved.

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:17:06 I just want to say one thing about repair. If you've been punishing your child, you're going to feel unfinished if your child breaks a rule and you don't punish him. So instead of punishment, train yourself to think in terms of repair. That means that after everyone has calmed down and is feeling reconnected, you have a private discussion with your child about what happened. Listen to his perspective, empathize, "Wow, you were pretty mad when your brother did that. I hear you." And be patient with his upset and really listen. That's what will help him get past it. Once he's able to reconnect with you, then you can point out the damage. Be careful not to shame or blame. "When you said that to your brother, it really hurt his feelings. I wonder if it made him feel not as close to you." Then ask your child what he might be able to do to repair that damage. "I wonder what you could do to make things better with your brother again," and then let your child talk and come up with ideas, but hold the expectation that of course he's going to make things better, just like you would always make things better when you and your child have had a difficult interaction.

Dr. Laura Markham: So resist the urge to punish or force an apology from your child. Instead, empower your child to see that he can repair his mistakes. "You know hun, we always clean up our own messes and this is just a different kind of mess. Spilled milk, you get the sponge and you clean it up, this is just an emotional cleanup. I know you'll think of just the right thing to make things better with your brother. I can't wait to see what that is." Just as with matter-of-factly cleaning up the spilled milk, the process of cleaning up his messes will teach your child that he doesn't want to cause those hurts to begin with. Just remember, this isn't a punishment, it's his choice. And if he resists, that means that he needs more help to resolve his upset before he can move on to healing.

Question 35:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:19:09 The next question is from a parent who says, "I'm really struggling with my daughter's response when I set a limit. For instance, she wants my phone or tablet to play games. I say, no, she throws a fit. Say she hates me, and then the whining gets terrible. I tried to connect to her, but I feel I'm making no headway and I'm also struggling with the emotion coaching. She can be angry and stubborn and disrespectful. She's five."

Dr. Laura Markham: I hear that in general, she can be angry and stubborn and disrespectful, and I'm hearing that she's having a hard time with limits. I'm also hearing this specific example that's about technology. So I just want to start by saying the technology, all bets are off. Kids get addictions, and a five-year-old should not be using technology. There's zero reason for her to use technology to play games. If you let a five-year-old play games, it will change their brain so that they want to play games more because it's so rewarding and their brain will say, "Where's my addictive substance? Please give some more of that to me."

Dr. Laura Markham: So I just want to say it's a bad idea to ever let a five-year-old play with your phone or your tablet. There's really no reason for them to do it ever. And you can expect them to whine or to have a hard time when you refuse technology. So I'm sorry about that. I know that's very bad news, not just for you, but for every parent listening because we have become used to using technology to babysit our children. But there is zero reason to give a five-year-old technology, or a four, or a three, or a six. I'm sorry, but that is true, and you can expect addictive behavior when you give an addictive substance to a child.

Dr. Laura Markham: But I don't want to just dismiss your question, because it does sound to me like your daughter is difficult, is

challenging, is angry, is stubborn, is disrespectful, whines, and has a hard time with your limits in general, not just the technology limit. So let's talk about that. When a kid is angry, it means there's some stuff under there. They have a chip on their shoulder if they're always angry and stubborn. They feel that no one cares about their needs, and sometimes they're being provocative because they really do need to cry and they can't get to that point without having a big fight with you. And you mentioned whining, I don't know what you really mean by whining, but I'm going to assume it's that the child pesters and pesters after you've said no to something. And that's pretty normal behavior for a five-year-old. So I think you're really saying, she doesn't accept my limits. So I want to say clearly, make sure you're not giving in on your limits, that you're not saying, "All right, you can use it for five minutes," or whatever, "All right, you can have one cookie." Because if you give in even once, then you're reinforcing her pestering you over and over again to get the thing.

Dr. Laura Markham: Even if you only give in once out of a thousand times, no skin off her back to ask you a thousand times, to nag you, whine or whatever, a thousand times to get whatever it is she's asking for. So make sure you're not giving into that. And if you're locking horns with her, if you're getting into a standoff and a power struggle about it, then she's being provocative and you need to take a deep breath, take a step back and start to empathize because this is the time to help her cry. Whining is showing you she can't handle something and probably that she feels powerless and all those tears and fears are ready to come out. So whining is a wonderful time to help kids cry. And your daughter is angry and stubborn. Stubborn could be a lot of things like determined, but angry means the child has some stuff stored up.

Dr. Laura Markham: Probably fear, probably also sadness. And disrespect means the child feels not heard, not listened to, not valued. So I'm going to suggest that you double down on the empathy and you double down on the respect that you offer to her. And that doesn't mean that you don't say

when she's disrespectful, "Excuse me, that voice sounded like you were attacking me. That's how it felt to me. Let's try that over again, Sweetie. You never need to attack me to get me to listen to you." And if she says, "But you're not listening to me, you won't let me get screen time," or a snack or whatever it is she wants, you can say, "Wow, I really hear how much you want it. I hear it. It must feel like I always say no to you and you want it so bad, right? I'm still going to say no, Sweetie. Here's my reason and I'm not going to reconsider this and I'm really sorry it's so hard for you." And if she slams out of the room, let her go. It's understandable that she's disappointed, but if she's rude to you and says, "I hate you, you're mean," you can say, "It feels like I'm pretty mean when I say no? I bet you wish I would just say yes to everything you wanted, but that wouldn't be being a very good mom, would it? I love you, so I say no sometimes because it's not what's best for you to you use a screen all the time," or whatever, right? Notice I have a sense of humor in my voice, notice I'm not attacking her back, notice I'm being respectful, notice I'm setting a clear expectation that she's respectful back, right? But I'm not fighting with her.

Dr. Laura Markham: I'm being respectful and being clear about my limit. I'm being understanding about the fact that she doesn't like it, she doesn't have to like my limit, children will never like our limits. That's okay. No child in their right mind wants to stop eating cookies, stop using a screen and brush their teeth. But they will do those things if we build enough connection with them. So if your daughter's angry, empathy is the fastest connection builder but you'll also need to use the other tools, the roughhousing and laughter, the special time. And if in response to your respectful limit setting, she escalates, then stop, take a deep breath, create safety so that she's able to cry because that's what she's doing. She's being provocative because she needs to cry. She's trying to create a showdown, right? And really, she's trying to create a fight because that feels better to her than crying.

Dr. Laura Markham: So your job is to create the safety for her to cry. So don't expect your daughter to like your limits, but do expect her

to want to be close to you. And the way you could do that is by creating connection and by melting away the anger by doing the emotion coaching. So when you said “I'm struggling with the emotion coaching,” see it from her point of view. You might want to take a look at my workbook, the whole last section of the workbook, it’s a big section, the whole last half really is about emotion coaching. So that might help you, but the most important thing to remember is to see it from her perspective. If you can do that and create enough safety for her to cry, I think her anger and disrespect will melt away and you'll see that her reaction to your limits will change. She'll become much more cooperative.

Question 36:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:27:13 Our next question is from a parent who says, “Our six-year-old seems to struggle with respecting other people's space. He'll come up behind us and jump on us when we're sitting down. We've tried dealing playfully with this, but he keeps coming back and does it again. We do lots of roughhousing and special time.” So it sounds like your son is being provocative. He knows this is against the rules and he does it anyway and that's partly an impulse control issue. It's not about respecting people's space so much unless he does with other people besides you. It's probably more that he wants to initiate with you at those moments, he needs something from you, he may just feel uncomfortable in his own skin at those moments, like some feelings are coming up that he doesn't know what to do with and therefore he's provocative with you because he needs to cry.

Dr. Laura Markham: Or it could be that he just really desperately wants your attention. He has three younger siblings after all. He's six, but there's a four-year-old, a two-year-old and a 10-month-old in the house. So when he wants your attention, what's he supposed to do? So he tries to initiate in a way that you can't avoid noticing that he's initiating with you.

The fact that you say it's often when he's feeling silly heading into the red zone and then he gets angry when you turn down his initiation, that says to me that there's some big feelings going on when this happens, that he has some feelings of maybe fear, he sees the other kids getting something he's not getting or he's not good enough in some way or he isn't good enough to merit your attention, whatever it is. Maybe it could be hurt also, fear or hurt usually, disappointment, vulnerability of some sort, some powerless feeling, something that feels uncomfortable to him. He doesn't know what to do with that feeling.

Dr. Laura Markham: And usually when kids have feelings they don't know what to do with, they have strategies to work them out. A very common one is to get very silly and clown around because the laughter actually helps them work out the feelings. Another thing they do is they start a fight so they cry and the tears help them work out those feelings. So I think that's what he's doing is, he's trying to start a fun interaction where he'll laugh but he's not doing it in an appropriate way, and then he gets angry when you say, "No, I'm not going to play with you right now," he gets angry and starts a fight with you because the best defense against those feelings is a good offense against you.

Dr. Laura Markham: So I'm delighted to hear that you're doing roughhousing with him regularly because that's the first thing I would suggest here. And the second thing I'd suggest is special time given that he needs that one-on-one time with you, especially with a bunch of little siblings. So those things are really important. I would say since that's not sufficient, that either there's a full backpack that really needs some crying -- If this is happening often, then I would say that's probably the case. And I would also say that feeling seen might be an issue for him. Here's an oldest child who's used to having been the center of attention and now he has to share the stage with three other children. Often when that happens, kids worry that they're not seen, that they're not noticed, that they're not good enough unless they perform. So they're always trying to hog the attention.

Dr. Laura Markham: If that also describes him, then I would start using empathy to help him feel seen on a regular basis. Just, “I noticed you're working hard at that,” or say things like, “I really appreciated how kind you were to the baby just now giving him what he was reaching for,” or “I love it when you sing as you walk around the house, it's so great to hear your beautiful voice, you sound so happy.” So all of those things are recognition of him. They don't take you any extra time to do. You can do them while you're doing something else, you're dealing with another child, but they will help him feel seen.

Dr. Laura Markham: I also wanted to acknowledge something that you said in your question. We always ask permission from him to hug him, touch him, move him, and I wanted to say, that's so encouraging to hear from you. It's so important for your child and especially a child who is continually invading other people's space, I would have asked you about that. So I'm delighted to hear you're doing that. And I just wanted other folks who are listening to this question to hear that. I think it's so important.

Dr. Laura Markham: So your next question is, what to do when this happens? You're sitting there, he comes up from behind you and jumps on you. Of course your instinct is to say, "No, no, no, don't do that. You know better. We've asked you to respect our personal space," and then he gets angry at you. So I think there's another way to handle it. When he does it, I would pull him to you, he's just jumped on you, right? Pull him to you and say, " Whoa, whoa, whoa. Stop wrestling now, stop wrestling. It looks to me like you're out of hugs again. Do you need a hug? Come here Sweetheart," and give him 10 hugs, big hugs, and say, "I'm so glad you came over for a hug. I really love hugging you and I needed a hug and you're such a great hugger. It makes me feel so loved and warm when you hug me." And then after hugging, you're looking into his eyes now, and you say, "And I love it when you initiate a hug, but jumping on me from behind scares me. It doesn't feel good to me. Next time you want to hug what could you do to signal me that you want to hug? Do you want to use a word or emotion? Let's invent something." And then you invent

something with him and you practice it and he gets that this is how to get the positive attention he needs.

Dr. Laura Markham: Now what if you do this with him and you come up with a signal and you practice it with him and 10 minutes later, half an hour later, half a day later, he comes in, jumps on you from behind? You do exactly the same thing (hugs) and then you say to him, "Sweetie, I really need you to use your signal. Let's do a redo on this. Go back out of the room and use your signal." And gradually, shorten the number of hugs you're giving him until he gives you the signal and then give a lot of hugs so that as he jumps on you, it's not a reprimand, it's a redirection where you say, "Whoa, Whoa, you're out of hugs again, quick, go back out of the room and come back in and use your signal." This probably will stop the behavior and will start a more positive way for him to get attention from you and absolutely give it to him and step up the attention verbally as we've described already.

Dr. Laura Markham: If it doesn't work, then there's something else going on, which is that he needs to cry. And at that point you'll need to set a limit, a calm kind limit where you're understanding. And then it's just like any other scheduled meltdown. You set a clear kind limit, he responds with anger, which is what you say he's doing and you understand. When your child gets angry, our job is to not join that fight, not be provoked into a power struggle or a fight, but instead to offer understanding. Rage only dissipates when it feels heard. And there's something behind that anger, right? And you want to find out what it is. It's some kind of tears and fears.

Question 37:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:35:11 This parent is asking, “When my son, who's almost five gets disappointed or angry, he runs away and hides. If we try to reconnect, he keeps crying and shouting aggressively, ‘Go away.’ Staying close and talking kindly makes him super mad so I stay outside and tell him when he feels better, he can come to me, and after a while he

does. He comes for a hug relieved and he smiles, but he doesn't let me talk through what happened. What's going on and how should we handle the situation?”

Dr. Laura Markham: Well, what's going on is shame and embarrassment. So the reason he doesn't want you to talk about it is that he thinks you're going to be revisiting how terrible he was. Imagine if you lost your temper and you said things that you regretted and then you calmed down and then your partner said, "Now let's look at this and look what you could have done differently." You would probably feel ashamed and want your partner to stop talking. Totally understandably.

Dr. Laura Markham: So it is hard to have the conversation about repair. I would say that when your son comes to you for the hug, what you do is you hug him and then you offer empathy. So the example you gave me in your question, he took his cousin's roller and she started crying loudly. You might say, "That was distressing, huh? All you wanted was to use the roller and you took it and your cousin started crying. And then I suggested you ask her first and you got so mad at me and you ran away and you cried. And then I came near you and it made you super mad, right?" But now you feel better, now you're having a big hug, I love you so much. See, we can always work these things out. And now what can we do to make things better with your cousin? Come on, I'll help."

Dr. Laura Markham: So he already knows he shouldn't have taken it, and you described the story of what happened in a nonjudgmental way where you understood that all he wanted was to use the roller so he didn't feel shamed in the way this was just described and now he'll feel ready to go and make things better with his cousin. It's when we insist on putting him on the spot and saying, "Don't you see what you did was wrong? What else could you do instead?" When we approach it that way, of course nobody wants to look at themselves that way and feel bad, but when we say, "No wonder you did that, you were feeling X, Y, Z, of course," then the person is willing to look at, "Well, yeah, I did that,

but I guess it didn't work out so well and I could try something else next time."

Question 38:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:37:52 This question is from a parent who asks, “What are some strategies for getting a five-year-old out of the house when she's obliterated our routine and an impending deadline prevents us from using stop, drop and breathe?” Well stop, drop and breathe, you can always use. You don't use it with her, you use it with you. Stop, drop and breathe means you stop, you take a deep breath, and then you act more calmly with her. You're right, you don't have time to drop your agenda for long, but you certainly are able to keep yourself calm even when your daughter's obliterated your routine. But at that point, you're in triage mode. So if you need to to get her out of the house, pick her up. It will cost you, there'll be pushback anytime you force a child with your superior strength to do what you want them to do, you will get push back later because you're making them feel powerless in this moment but you have no choice if you have to do this because there's something that you need to go do that's more important.

Dr. Laura Markham: You mentioned school, work or an event to get to. But you then want to promise yourself that connection is your top priority when you get home later and you'll do better tomorrow. So the reason she's obliterating your routine has to do with connection, right? So if you find yourself in this situation often, then something is wrong. If she's resistant and obliterating your routine, then you need to be more involved in each step of moving the routine along and she needs to feel more connected so that she's willing to follow your lead.

Question 39:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:39:25 This parent is asking, “I have trouble enforcing limits and getting my kids almost three and four to cooperate. When I ask them to brush, put on their shoes, stop doing something, they continue to play, engage in irrelevant conversation or ignore me. They tend to listen to my wife in similar situations. I feel asking them repeatedly is giving them the wrong message and I don't want to use force.” That must feel awful. You don't need force or coercion, and I'm not a big fan of repeating yourself incessantly. I actually think that trains them not to listen. But you may have to get in their face in a friendly way to enforce your limits kindly and calmly. Why do you think they listen to your wife but not to you? Somehow, you're not fully standing behind what you're asking, so I urge you to work on this issue. Watch your wife's conviction as she gives your children an instruction. Watch how the kids respond. Notice if you have the same conviction, just notice, experiment, play with this, but also take yourself seriously without being mean to your kids. I think your children will begin to take you seriously as well when you're more serious about backing up what you're saying. And it does mean you enforce your limits.

Dr. Laura Markham: So when your kids are ignoring you, you go get in their face in a friendly way and you say, "Excuse me, excuse me, can I have your attention please?" And then you repeat yourself. You don't repeat yourself from across the room. So there are techniques to make sure that when you're engaged with your kids, they're really hearing you. But I would never be repeating yourself from across the room. Good luck with this. I'll be interested to hear as you begin to believe that your children should listen to you, whether that makes a difference in how you speak or in how they respond. I'm rooting for you here.

Question 40:

Dr. Laura Markham: 02:41:18 The next question is from a parent who says, “What steps should be taken if I followed all the recommended strategies in the book and course, but my child is still very

defiant and says no whenever I ask him to do something, and he flat out refuses? Other than connecting more and special time, are there things I can do in the moment to help counter this if I've tried everything else?"

Dr. Laura Markham: So, if you've been faithfully following the entire course and your child is still reflexively defiant, that is totally frustrating and unexpected because usually the preventive maintenance tools strengthen the relationship, right? So if you're really doing daily special time and daily roughhousing and your child is laughing daily and crying often and you're working on being empathic as much as possible and you're doing routines and making sure your child gets enough sleep, then it's very surprising that your child is not cooperating. So I'm wondering if you've seen a change in your relationship. Because as I say, I have not seen those tools fail. They won't change a child's challenges, but they will improve the relationship so they're more likely to cooperate with you.

Dr. Laura Markham: Now I need to add just in case it isn't clear from what I've said, that sometimes kids do just need to cry, and until they do, they will be defiant. So in those cases, those are scheduled meltdowns, you set a calm kind, clear limit at a time when you can really attend to your child and you welcome their big emotions. And again, afterwards they're happier and more cooperative. So again, I'm wondering how often this has happened with your child. And I guess I would add, your child is only two. Two-year-olds are at the height of unreasonableness. Sometimes they just flat out refuse. But again, the tools that I've given you should work. And usually with two and three-year-olds, they change faster than older kids because they don't have a big chip on their shoulder from past parenting. So you're saying, what can I do in the moment? In the moment when your child is reflexively defiant, you can remember that defiance is a relationship problem. It's not a discipline problem. And you can try to reconnect.

Dr. Laura Markham: So you could say, "You're not taking a bath? Come here, we'll see about no bath for you. Maybe no bath, but we'll dump you in the lake!" And you pick him up and he's like,

"Oh my God, is mommy going to dump me in the lake? What is she talking about?" And you run around the house with him, say, "Where's the lake? Where's the lake? We have to dump him in the lake." And he's shrieking with laughter and you dump him on the couch, and he's laughing and you say, "You're not wet. Why aren't you wet? This isn't the lake. Oh my goodness, this isn't the lake at all, it's the couch. We have to dump you in the lake to get you clean. Come here, you no bath guy," and you run around the house again and you'd dump him on the couch.

Dr. Laura Markham: Eventually you'll start saying, "I can't find the lake, we have to dump you in the tub. Where's the tub? Where's the tub?" And he will show you where the tub is so you can dump him in the tub and he'll be laughing the whole time. So that's what you do in the moment when you have a defiant two-year-old. And I'm sure you can see how you can use those tools, the getting him laughing tool in this case, to get him to go along with you even when he says no. If I do say so myself, there's a really good post on the Aha! Parenting website about saying no. And it gives you 12 ways you can handle it when your toddler says no to you. Just put the word "no" into the search box and it should show up as one of your options. And you'll see that there are all kinds of ways to get a defiant child to do what you want. And the key of course is always connection.

Dr. Laura Markham: 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 and leave your question as a voice memo. This is Dr. Laura Markham, wishing you less drama and more love. Goodbye for now.