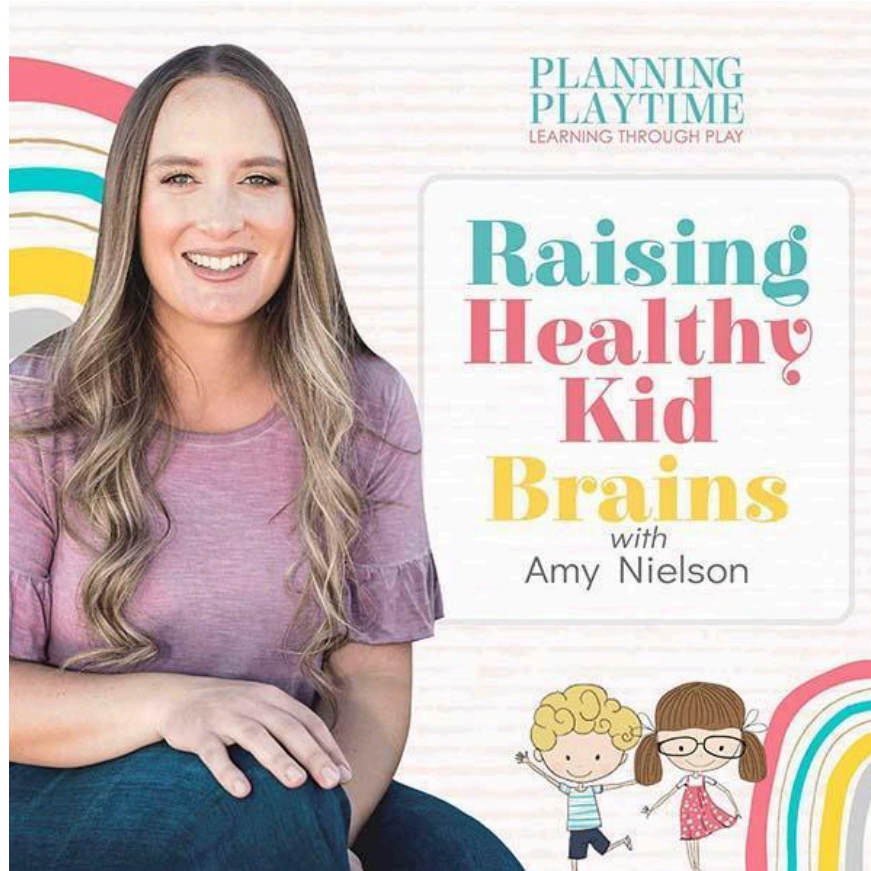


Ep #87: How to Stop Yelling at Your Kids: A Peaceful Parenting Approach with Kristina Manning



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Amy Nielson

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What is the best way to stop yelling at your kids? How common is it, right? It's something that I think most people have done at one point, right? And today my guest Kristina Manning is talking about what happens in a child's brain when you yell and why it doesn't work. She talks about the three R's and these are the things to help us not yell and also help our children get to a place where we can actually teach them something to help them make better choices in the future.

She talks about the difference between discipline and punishment and it was just a really comforting fascinating conversation about the brain and how we can help ourselves remain calm and help our children calm and help them learn how to work through things. It's a really practical, helpful conversation. It's coming up right after this.

It's a really practical, helpful conversation, and it's coming up right after this.

Welcome to the *Raising Healthy Kid Brains* podcast where moms and teachers come to learn all about kids' brains, how they work, how they learn, how they grow and simple tips and tricks for raising the most resilient, kind, smart, compassionate kids we can. All while having lots of grace and compassion for ourselves because you know what? We all really need and deserve that too. I am your host, Amy Nielson. Let's get ready to start the show.

Amy: Kristina, welcome to the show. I'm so excited to have you on today.

Kristina: Thank you so much for having me, Amy, I'm happy to be here.

Amy: I am so excited. Today we get to talk about peaceful parenting. And we get to talk about yelling at kids and how to do less of it and why that matters and give ourselves some grace but also work towards goals of doing what's best for our kiddos. So, I'm so excited to have this conversation with you, but before we get into it a little bit, can you tell me how you got to where you are and why this is such a passion for you?

Kristina: Absolutely. So, in my previous life, I was a classroom teacher for many years, and then I moved into school counseling, both in elementary school. And one of my favorite parts was the relationships that I built with families and

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parents were always reaching out to me like, “How do I support my child at home, behaviorally and emotionally?” And so that was pretty much the catalyst that made me want to start my business, which is *Calm Minds Parent Coaching* because I really, really am very passionate about helping educate parents about the principles of peaceful parenting and why yelling doesn’t work in the long run and what they can do instead.

Amy: Okay, so let’s talk about yelling, because it’s kind of a thing, how common is it just as a question from me to you, how common is it to yell at your kids?

Kristina: Very common. I mean, everyone yells. We’re all human. And I want parents to know that if they yell, they’re not a bad parent at all. Sometimes we feel it’s the only way we can get our kids’ attention. So, it’s very common and don’t beat yourself up if you have yelled in the past because we all have.

Amy: I think that’s probably comforting for people to know. And then let’s talk about, though, why it doesn’t work and why it’s a problem that we want to try to do something about it because if it is so common, why does it matter that we change it?

Kristina: Absolutely. So back in the day, I’m aging myself here, but probably, Amy, when you and I were kids, the big model was, it was all based around behaviorism and rewards and consequences. And it’s more, kids are seen but not heard type of thing. And that’s by no fault of our parents. We didn’t have the research that we have today that tells us that yelling may work in the moment just out of fear, you’re getting your kids’ attention because they may be scared.

But what the research is telling us now is that when we yell from a neuroscience perspective, the brain goes offline and kids can’t register anything that we’re saying once we yell. So, if they do comply with us, whatever demand we’re giving them, or request, it’s really because they’re scared. And it might work like, go pick that up right now.

They might do it out of fear, but the research tells us that in the long run, if we keep yelling and yelling and that’s our go to, then we’ll, one, like we said, the brain goes offline and they’re not going to be able to access their higher order

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thinking, decision making, emotional regulation, impulse control. But also, the research is showing us that it severs the relationship between the parent and the child. And so that's why I'm really passionate about helping parents just try to discover and learn about different things that they can try rather than yelling.

Amy: So good. It's hard. It's one of those tricky things where it looks like it's working except for it's really not working because if their brain is shutting down, I would assume they're not really learning. Which I think our goal would be, we're trying to not raise kids that we have to yell at for the rest of their lives to get them to do what we want them to do. We want them to be able to learn to make decisions and remain calm in moments of trying to figure out how to know what to do next, so that they can be successful adults. And so, if we're yelling, that's not working, but then also we're actually damaging our relationship with them.

Kristina: Absolutely. And we're modeling for them, yell, I'm yelling, because kids are like mirrors. They mirror what they see and so if we yell, they're going to yell and then we'll probably get upset with them for yelling. But what can we say when we're modeling that behavior?

Amy: And we did it too. Yes. Okay, so it's kind of a variety of problems that we're causing that are kind of the opposite of what we're trying to do, even if it looks like, well, I got them to go pick up their shoes or something like that.

Kristina: Absolutely.

Amy: Okay, so deep breaths. What should we be doing instead of yelling in that moment? And then maybe after that, we'll talk about how do we functionally do that when you're having your own emotional response to whatever's happening. So, let's talk about first, what should it look like instead of yelling?

Kristina: Absolutely. So, the very first part about all of this is regulating our own emotions. Because obviously, nobody wants to yell. Nobody wakes up and they're like, "I'm going to yell at my kids today." They don't plan on it. So, it's all about making sure that we're regulating our own emotions. And that's from a preventative measure, are you practicing mindfulness? Are you practicing

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self-care and taking care of yourself and pouring into you so that you can pour into your kid? So that's kind of the preventative.

But then on the spot, kid does something that's undesirable and your first thing is, I just want to yell. I don't want to yell, but I'm going to yell. It's just the first reflex that most of us have. So, in the moment, it would look like taking a pause. And the pause sounds cliché, but it's literally one of the most important parenting tools in any parenting toolkit. Any parent can just tap into pausing, but really it's just pausing, taking a deep breath. I mean, granted, everybody's safe.

If they're hitting and flailing and we need to intervene in that way, that's a different story. But if everyone's safe, we can just take a pause. And sometimes that looks like, if it's developmentally appropriate, walking away. A lot of parents that I work with, I just say, "Go to the bathroom." Because we all have to go to the bathroom anyway, so just go there. It's a natural thing, go to the bathroom, take some mindful breaths. Or I have one parent, she just walks into her room and she just punches a pillow and she takes some mindful breaths. And then it's not anything that needs to be long.

And then once you've grounded yourself and you can address the situation from a place of regulation rather than being really heated, then you're going to share your calm, which we call co-regulation. You're going to share your calm with your child because, again, those mirror neurons, kids, they do, what they see. And they don't do as we say, they do as we do. So, if I'm calm and regulated, a kid may be having a full on meltdown and they might not be able to calm themselves right away.

But the more that we're sharing our prefrontal cortex, with our emotional regulation and our impulse control and the ability to calm ourselves. Eventually the child will calm down. And when they are calm and again, I will say sometimes this doesn't happen even within an hour. Sometimes a kid needs a long time, but if we just co-regulate and co-regulate and just share our calm, they eventually will calm down. And then we can move into problem solving. But one thing I'd like to say about that is you never, ever want to go straight to problem solving.

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Never ever try to reason with a child that's completely dysregulated because it's like talking to a brick. Again, like we had mentioned before, the brain goes offline, they're not learning, they're not retaining anything. And so, we go through this process of the three R's, which is something that is coined by a neuroscientist named Dr. Bruce Perry and we regulate, relate and reason. So first we regulate so we calm ourselves first, then we share our calm. We start to relate with them. We don't use a whole lot of words. And then we move into reasoning.

Once they have a calm mind and body and they're ready to discuss the choices they made then we can move into problem solving and it really works. It takes a lot of patience and a lot of practice to try to say, "Okay, I'm not going to yell in this moment." But the more and more that we are pouring into ourselves and we're practicing this and sharing our calm with our kids, it does work so yeah.

Amy: I love that so much. So, I have given birth to five children, I now have eight children. And as I've kind of experienced over time, I've tried out several things. And I remember trying to reason with a child that was not in their brain at the moment because they were not regulated. And trying to reason with someone in that state, just, yeah, as you said, not functional, it does not work, not at all. So I love that and I love this idea, I wrote down, I'm over here typing, your three R's, regulate, which is such a big one.

And I'm just sitting here thinking through kind of what I do sometimes when a kid's telling me something and I'll just be sitting here having my pause. And I'll just be breathing and they'll kind of say their thing, and then they'll just kind of be, and now, they're just waiting for me to respond. So, I have teenagers and even young adults now. And I'll say, "I'm processing." And that's my words that I'll use with them, "I'm processing." And I love that because I feel it helps them recognize that they can take time to process. It's okay to have the pause.

And I love actually using the word because children are very visual, I think, saying, "I'm going to hit the pause button for just a minute to give me some time to process." It's almost like giving them that visual, let's hit the pause button for a second and just take a minute.

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Kristina: I love that. And you're modeling for them, like you said, it's okay, it's totally okay. We all have feelings. All feelings are okay, none are bad. We don't say any feelings are good and bad, it's just they're feelings. They're emotions, energy and motion, let it just flow through your body and process. So, I absolutely love that, that you create that visual for your kids, I'm going to take a pause. That's awesome.

Amy: This is the pause button, yeah, So, like I said, I've used the processing, but I like the visual of the pause button. And when we're talking about feelings, yeah, one of the things we talk about at our house and again, I'm doing this with teenagers, but I can do it with my little kids, too, my younger kids.

And we'll just say, "You know what? We hang out together a lot. And whenever you hang out with a person this much to have this good of a relationship, we're going to get irritated with each other sometimes. I'm going to get annoyed with you. You're going to get annoyed. That's awesome, because that means we're hanging out enough. So, we're going to get annoyed with each other. It's a thing, and it's okay, so let's just hit the pause button for a minute, take a deep breath. Remember, we love each other. We can work through this. We've worked through all the things. It's going to be fine, we'll get there. Let's get on the same team and solve this problem together."

So, I love that pause, let's just hit the pause button. Anyway, fabulous. And then we're getting to relating. And I feel this one is something I've learned so much more about later because I used to say things, "I feel so bad. Can we go back and rewind?" I feel I used to say things to my young kids where I'm like, "This is not worth crying over." Because, they didn't get the blue cup and I'm like, "It doesn't matter, you have a cup and you have food and you have a house. This is good. You have a good life."

But I've learned that maybe that's not the right way to relate to them. So, what would you say instead when they're so upset about something that you're like, "That's just not really important," but it is to them.

Kristina: Yeah. I would just say at this time we're still not using a whole lot of words when we're in the relate stage. They might still be coming down and

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trying to regulate. So, I would just, at that time just sometimes it's just rubbing their back and just validating. Again, you can validate their feelings without agreeing with the behavior. I can see you're really feeling mad right now. It's okay to be mad. It's okay to be mad. And again, we wouldn't start talking about, what could we do instead until we move into the reasoning part.

But just while we're relating, we're just maybe trying to reduce stimulation, if we can, turning down the lights if you have the option to do that, if you're not in public, turning down the lights, reducing noise. Depending on their age and you might do a little pat or rub them on the back to try to soothe them. And again, it's just really just validating those emotions.

Amy: So just I can tell that you're so upset right now, it feels this one's big and you're feeling really upset and it's okay, I'm here with you.

Kristina: Absolutely. Exactly. Because really at that point, if they're still dysregulated which most kids are when we're moving into relate. Like we had said before, they're not really able to retain information, their brains are offline. And so, the best thing we can do is just keep modeling our calm. And then if you have little kids, one thing I recommend to a lot of parents I work with is having a feelings poster or a feelings wheel displayed as a visual somewhere so that maybe they don't have to talk during this time.

But if they're ready to express and say, "I'm feeling mad," they can. If not, we're modeling that for them. We might have the feelings poster around and just say, "It looks like you're feeling mad like she is in this picture and it's okay to feel mad. You feel mad that you didn't get the green cup." Yeah, so it's just about really just validating the emotion.

Amy: And so, then we move into three, which is reason with them. How can you tell when they're ready to go from relate to reason, what is the visual sign for us that that's where we've hit the reasoning stage, we can now use words?

Kristina: Yes. So, it's really just reading their body language. You can really tell by looking at your child if they're ready to have a conversation and use logic. Just look at their body language. Are they still crying or sometimes kids, they get

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really worked up and they're shivering or their hands are folded. And you would know, we need a little bit more time, we're not going to move into that. But if you can see that they're relaxed, maybe their tears are starting to fade away and they have open body language. They're not crossing their arms. Then you can tell then they're ready to have that conversation.

I will mention though, Amy, one thing with parents that I've worked with is there are times when sometimes we don't get to reason until the next day because they need more time. And I think that that's okay, I really do because say your child hit their brother and they're just really, really, really heated and they believe that they hit their brother for a reason. They totally, totally believe, well, it wasn't fair, he hit me for, whatever it made me. Again, it's not going to make sense to have a conversation with someone even with an adult who's heated and dysregulated.

We need to just give them their space, hold space for emotions., And this doesn't mean that we are not holding boundaries and limits. Peaceful parenting is not a free for all. It's not permissive parenting where it's do whatever you want, I don't care. We're going to still have those boundaries and limits but we're going to do it at the right time. And we're going to use our knowledge of neuroscience to know when is a good time to have that conversation.

Amy: So, when you have this conversation, because I've had this conversation, I guess I would consider myself, yeah, I didn't know that I had a specific word for it. I call it relationship parenting, but I don't know what exactly what category it would fit into technically. But I've had people say, "Well this looks like permissive parenting. Do you just let kids do whatever?" And I feel that doesn't feel like what I do at all. I just don't need to yell. I feel I have a relationship of respect with my children, where I show them to respect me by respecting them.

And we have a respect relationship and that's how I feel I like to parent and then I we can work through all kinds of things. It's kind of great. But what would you say when you're kind of describing the difference for people that are doing peaceful parenting versus permissive parenting, what would you say?

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Kristina: Absolutely. So, here's an example. Let's say that you're at the playground, your kid is having the time of his life. He's swinging, he's playing with all of his friends, but it's time to go. And he does not want to go. And he starts having a tantrum, "No, I'm not going," whatever, they're just not ready.

So, a permissive parent in this example would probably just say, "Okay, sure, we can stay as long as you want. I just want to keep the child happy. I don't want him to have a tantrum. We'll stay as long as you want, and then afterwards we'll go get ice cream and popcorn and whatever. And then we'll never have the conversation about, I asked you, it was time to go." And it's just pretty much a free for all.

Now, if I was practicing peaceful parenting or mindful, they have so many different names for peaceful parenting now. Let's say his name's Johnny. I would validate Johnny's feelings and then say, "You feel really frustrated, I can tell, you feel mad and you feel frustrated that we have to go. It's okay to feel that way." And I would hold space for his emotions. Let him just express himself and then I would say, "But it's time to go." And then we would go. I'm validating his feelings, I'm listening, but I'm not giving in. So hopefully that kind of deciphers between permissive and peaceful.

Amy: I love it so much. I feel it's not trying to force control, it's requiring boundaries and sticking with what we believe and doing our job, which is parenting and having boundaries. But it's also allowing them to have their own response to that and have their own experience around that and then working together. So yeah, I love it, thank you, that was very helpful. I just want to give that to parents when they're thinking through this, what does this look like because I've had these exact conversations before.

So, tell me about, one of the things that we kind of had to talk about is the difference between discipline and punishment. If you were going to explain the difference between those things, what would you say?

Kristina: Yeah. And I will say a lot of parents believe that they're synonymous. I'm disappointing, I'm punishing, but really, they're not. We think of the word, discipline, it comes from the word disciple, which means to teach. So, when

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we're disciplining, we are being intentional and we are trying to teach a lesson. But when we're punishing we are shaming. Punishment is more about shaming, suffering, causing pain. And we want to move away from that, shaming, blaming, which brings me to, let's just think about timeouts.

Timeouts, I mean, I've used timeouts before and I don't want to say all of us, but many parents that I've talked to can relate to using a timeout. Now we know that with timeouts that's considered a punishment because it's shameful. You're isolating the child, you're blaming. But learning doesn't take place when kids are isolated and by themselves. How are they supposed to solve a problem when they're just being shamed and isolated to another spot?

So now we use time-ins. So, a time-in would be where we're sitting with the child and in time out essentially. It would be a calming corner or someplace of your house where there's mindfulness tools, maybe breathing cards to show them to take a deep breath. There might be emotions cards so that they can identify their feelings. And we're really just sitting with them and helping them and holding space in that moment. So, we're not shaming, we're modeling for them how to calm themselves essentially.

So, I talk to a lot of parents about this topic of discipline versus punishment. And the reason why we don't use this is because the research shows again, that punishments don't work long term, they sever the relationship. And again, if kids comply when we are punishing them and saying, "Go to your room." Or sometimes parents can get physical with their punishments too, and obviously that severs the relationship as well. If they do listen and they're complying, it's because it's out of fear and we don't want to instill fear in our kids. We want to be able to teach them a lesson, and that's really what discipline is.

Amy: Yeah, I love that you bring to the actual word of discipline which is to teach. It's so beautiful. And I remember someone showing me a pyramid one time of discipline or something. And it was the very biggest part down at the bottom where we spend the most time is in building our relationship with them. Well, I think the very bottom piece was getting safe in ourselves. And then the

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next was building a relationship with the child, that comes up. The very tiny, tiny smallest piece at the top is disciplining.? It's the very last step.

We spend the least time there because we're doing all these other things and we don't have to spend so much time and I loved that concept. We are almost out of time. This has been so good. Just if you had one last thing to share with parents to be helpful to them, what would that message be?

Kristina: It would be, we can't expect our kids to be able to manage their emotions and their behaviors if we can't do that ourselves. Modeling is going to be your best friend. It's going to be your best parenting tool, so to speak. So, let's model what we want to see because a lot of times when I work with parents, they come to me and they're like, "Well, what do I do? My kid isn't listening and I tried this, this and this." And so, a lot of it comes down to having unrealistic expectations of kids. So, I would really encourage parents, don't expect kids to do what you're not modeling.

And another part is, educate yourself about child brain development, just the basics. One statistic that's very striking is that the latest research says that a child, or I should say human, rather, their brain isn't fully developed until 28. I mean, think about that, we have all these expectations of our little kids and even teenagers but they don't even have a fully developed brain. We are not going to be so scientific about this.

But the prefrontal cortex, which is in charge of the impulse control and the emotional regulation and the learning and all of that. Kids don't have that. So, when we expect them to be calm and be able to regulate themselves, it's unrealistic so just educate yourself about the neuroscience. And the last thing I want to say to parents is, if you yell, which I'm sure you do because you're human, don't beat yourself up, give yourself some grace and just be proud that you are open to learning a new way.

Amy: So good. And I love that even though our kids, their brains aren't fully developed yet, they can borrow from us. So, the better we get at regulating ourselves, the more regulated our children will be because so much of that regulation that they have while they're developing their own is what they are

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able to get from us. And I remember this quote that I heard that has just been so impactful for me, that anxiety is contagious, but so is calm.

And so, if we are the calm, that's what we can just spread around the house. Where if we allow ourselves to take up our children's anxiety or we're passing anxiety to them then we're continuing that pattern instead of making the calm, the contagious. And I feel it is so impactful when the parent is able to be the calm, it just kind of permeates through everyone else. And then the kids learn it so well, they kind of take it out to their friends and where they go and it's kind of this beautiful, amazing thing. Thank you so much for coming on today and tell us where people can find you.

Kristina: So, I have a private Facebook group and it's called Calm Minds Parent Coaching and you'll find the link. And then I am also on Instagram and on Instagram I'm just calm__minds. But those are the two places that I hang out the most.

And I just wanted to mention one last thing. I have a signature Calm Parent Coaching program where I work one-on-one with parents and I'm opening a few more spots for the summer. So sometimes those summer months can be a little difficult in the house when everybody's home and there's some extra noise going on. So, I would love to hop on a call and see how I can support any parent that's looking for, yeah, some parenting support.

Amy: Some support because parents need support too sometimes when we're trying to support everyone else, I love it, yes, we do. Thank you so, so much for coming on and sharing with us and we will get those links into the show notes for sure. And thank you so much for your time and sharing your knowledge and your wisdom with us. We appreciate it.

Kristina: Thank you, Amy. And lastly, I do have a gift for the listeners. It's a Calm Parent bundle. I did send you the link, but yeah, I would love for the parents to have that because it comes with tips to help kids manage emotions, calming strategies for parents, and then a couple of bonuses.

Amy: Perfect. Amazing. Thank you so much.

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Kristina: Thank you so much, Amy, I really enjoyed this. I appreciate the opportunity.

Don't you just love all the fun things we're learning on the show together? Well, we wanted to give you a chance to practice a little bit of it at home. And so, we made you a special freebie just for being a listener here and you can grab it at planningplaytime.com/special-freebie. That is planningplaytime.com/special-freebie. So, what this freebie is, I'll tell you, is an amazing alphabet activity that you can start using with your kiddos and it is based in play and is so fun.

You can use dot markers with it, you can use Q-tip painting, you could use circle cereal. There's all kinds of options, but you can print it out today and get started. Just head over to planningplaytime.com/special-freebie and we'll send that to you right away.

Thank you for hanging out with me today for this fun chat on *Raising Healthy Kid Brains*. If you want to see more of what we're doing to support kiddos and their amazing brains, come visit us on our website planningplaytime.com. See you next week.