

Vivek podcast 2

Speaker 2: [00:00:00] Welcome to the Peaceful Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, Sarah Rosenzweig, mom of three young people, Peaceful Parenting coach, and your cheerleader and guide on all things parenting. Each week we'll cover the tools, strategies, and support you need to end the yelling and power struggles and encourage your kids to listen and cooperate so that you can enjoy your family time.

Speaker 2: I'm happy to say we have a great relationship with our three kids. The teen years have been easy and joyful, not because we're special unicorns, but because my kids were raised with peaceful parenting. I've also helped so many parents just like you. Stop struggling and enjoy their kids again. I'm excited to be here with you today and bring you the insight and information you need to make your parenting journey a little more peaceful.

Speaker 2: Let's dive into this week's conversation.

Hey, all welcome back to another episode of the peaceful parenting podcast. Today's episode is a little bit different and it's special for quite a few reasons. . It's special. First of all, because this is actually from my membership in July, we had my friend. The vague [00:01:00] Patel, who you can find him under meaningful ideas across all the social platforms and on YouTube, he's a fellow parenting coach and he came in to talk to us about. Parenting strong-willed kids in a non-coercive collaborative way. And you might think strong-willed kids need more discipline. Quote, discipline than other kids.

When in fact it's actually more important to be. Collaborative. And non-coercive with strong-willed kids. So the Vic talks for a little while in this episode about his ideas about parenting strong-willed kids. And then we've got a couple of questions. That members asked. This call actually went two hours.

Don't worry. I did shorten it down and just kept in a couple of the questions. So we're not going to hear the full two hours that the VA spent in my membership. This is also special because well, first of all, Vache is an incredibly special. He is an inspiration for us in terms of peaceful parenting. And the spirit. Behind peaceful parenting the [00:02:00] spirit in which we want to relate with our children.

You'll hear him talk about. Being a guide and a friend. And I forget what the third thing is he talks about, but you'll have to listen to the podcast to find out.

But Vape is really just incredibly inspirational to listen to how he talks about relationship with children. And then the third reason, this is a special episode. Is because Vivek is going to be a guest in my flourish with your complex child summit. Which starts on October 15th. Registration is open now. So I just wanted to give you a little taste of Vedic. He's going to be in the summit talking about. Challenging behavior and non-coercive collaborative parenting. It's a great interview.

We've already recorded it. I think you're going to love it. There are some other fantastic. Guests we've got 25 experts who are all talking about. Parenting complex kids supporting our kids, supporting ourselves. And I've said complex kids a couple of times. If you [00:03:00] wonder what a complex kid is as Elaine Taylor Klaus, who is one of the guests.

She's wonderful. She says, if you have a complex kid, then you know what it is, but however, I will say. A complex kid is a kid who is. Sensitive or strong-willed or spirited and, or neurodivergent parenting complex kids might not look like the book.

Say it's going to, if you use all of the strategies that the experts tell you. And you know what that doesn't mean? You're doing it wrong. That's the whole point. And this summit is for you to feel supported. For you to feel, not alone on your journey and for you to know that even a peaceful parenting, isn't looking like it's quote, supposed to look, you're still doing the right things for your kids. It's always the answer. It's not always the only answer, but it's always the answer. Please sign up for your free ticket to the flourish with your complex child summit.

We'll put the link in the show notes in this podcast. Or you can go to re-imagine peaceful parenting.com. [00:04:00] Four slash summit. That's re-imagined peaceful parenting. Slash summit. To sign up for free. For our amazing. Event. That's coming up shortly. I hope to see you there.

Sarah: So I have with me my friend Vivek Patel I'm very excited to be talking for him to be talking with us about strong willed kids and non coercive parenting, because I think a lot of people think, oh, yeah, great non coercive parenting that can work really well with kids who are More compliant and don't have such big feelings and like their own ideas.

Sarah: And I believe it can work with all kids. And strong willed kids are a particular flavor. And they're wonderful. And I honestly think they're the best

kind of kids. I don't know if I'm just biased because those are my kids and that's also me. But. Anyways, welcome Vivek to the membership.

Vivek: Thank you so much. I appreciate you inviting [00:05:00] me.

Sarah: I'm glad to have you. Vivek, if you want to introduce yourself and then share with us your thoughts and then we'll open it up to Q& A and thanks for being here.

Vivek: Sounds great. My pleasure. I'll talk for a bit and then we'll and then we'll do the Q& A.

Sarah: Awesome. Hi,

Vivek: everybody. My name is Vivek Patel from Meaningful Ideas and I have a 27 year old daughter and we have been on this parenting journey, parent child. Journey for decades. And from the time my kid was born, my wife and I both decided that we wanted to do things differently.

Vivek: I was raised in a very mainstream, traditional, coercive punishments and spanking and rules and boundaries and consequences home. And and I, often say that I was bullied at school too. So I often say I was bullied at school and bullied at home. I, grew up without a lot of structure I know it's there's a lot of external structure, but not a lot of structure in the sense of learning life skills, learning about myself, learning about how my mind works, how my emotions [00:06:00] work, how my body works, how communication works, how inter interpersonal dynamics work for me, parenting, so much of parenting is helping kids learn.

Vivek: The skills needed to manage themselves, and to manage their relationships with others, and to manage their relationships with the world. I call it three relationships, actually. Relationship with self, relationship with parent, and relationship with the environment, which is other people and other systems.

Vivek: And so much of parenting really is focused on behavior management, and when that happens, we lose out on looking at what the cause of behavior is, because we're always hammering at trying to fix the behavior. And so when we go underneath the behavior and look at the cause, we're always more effective, in general, with anything that we're working at, we're always more effective when we're looking at the cause than when we're looking at the effect.

Vivek: If we try and hammer away at the effects, we're always going to be chasing the effects. When we start to look at the causes of things more, the human cause, especially in human relationships, the human causes things are, things always work so much so much better, so much more [00:07:00] aligned. So when our kid was, when our kid was, and my wife grew up very similar.

Vivek: Both of us come from, families where a lot of traditional parenting was, being done. And we thought, Oh, let's do things differently. Let's, figure out how we can have a relationship with our kids where they don't grow up feeling like the parents were the adversaries and the obstacles that they had to work over work around.

Vivek: But the partner in learning about life and navigating life together. So we decided that we didn't want to coerce our kid. And coercion means. The way I use the word, it means to force someone, to do something they don't want to do, or to stop someone from doing something they do want to do, specifically using our power that we have over them.

Vivek: It's different than it's different than when we have a conversation and we learn about the thing together and we learn about how to how to work with it. But when we're forcing, it always causes problems. And part of the reason for that is, I think, I talk about the three responses to coercion, the three responses to force.[00:08:00]

Vivek: And they are resistance, compliance, and distance. Resistance is when kids feel that imposition on their autonomy, on their consent, on their humanity. They feel the authoritative top down power over feelings that come from being pushed and forced and controlled and then they resist it and they fight back.

Vivek: I did a lot of that when I was young. But also the second one is compliance. And compliance is where the kid sublimates or represses their own sense of self, their own autonomy, their own desires, their own needs, their own feelings, their own perceptions, all of that stuff. And they, repress it because for many different reasons.

Vivek: Partially because they don't want to lose connection with the parent. Partially because they're afraid. Sometimes it gets beaten out of them. They get enough painful experiences that they know this isn't safe, so I have to bury it. For some kids it's just [00:09:00] it's just temperament as well. Same with the resist.

Vivek: For a lot of kids it goes back and forth between the two, resistance and compliance. Compliance isn't the same as cooperation. Compliance isn't the same as collaboration. Compliance is it, losing your own will and following the will of the other one who has more power. And so in both of those, in both of those cases, compliance and resistance, both of them create distance between parent and child.

Vivek: And when we have that, when we have that distance, it becomes so much harder to guide our kids because they tune us out so regularly. And they have to tune us out regularly for their own internal sense of internal survival, their sense of themselves. And we all develop survival mechanisms in Riyadh.

Vivek: And then those survival mechanisms, they last all into our adulthood and they, they screw with our relationships and with our relationship with ourselves and with our, and in our work and in our setting goals and trying to achieve the goals in our lives and in so many different [00:10:00] ways.

Vivek: That's why one of my sayings is update your survival mechanisms. As an adult, I realized so many of my survival mechanisms came from just trying to manage the coercive oppressive system that I was part of both at home and at school. And that stuff got wired so deeply into my nervous system, into the way I see the world, my paradigm, my understanding of how things work.

Vivek: And and I had to change them because all those survival mechanisms weren't suiting suit, not suiting me, helping me. They weren't serving me, is the word I was looking for. They weren't serving me and I needed to do something different. Part of the reason for that, of course, is I was, I realized I was passing on my ineffective.

Vivek: Survival mechanisms to my kid, and I didn't want to do that either. So, much of the work of conscious parenting is rewiring our own, patterns, right? Our mental, emotional reaction patterns, our survival mechanism patterns. So many of the things that get wired into us early on, they're not really healthy for [00:11:00] us, healthy for our relationships.

Vivek: They were valid then because that's what helped us survive. And so I celebrate those things. I celebrate my, survival mechanisms, but I also want to I also want to change them. So as parents, we didn't want to coerce our kid. We didn't want to hold power over them. We didn't want to hold authority over them because all those things cause cause that disconnection.

Vivek: Whenever you have to, whenever you're having to look up at someone they have the power to harm you and you know that they'll use that power when they, when it seems fit, it's very difficult to be open and have a vulnerable relationship with them. And when things get difficult, having a really trusting, vulnerable harmonious relationship is such a powerful such a powerful thing to have with our, kids and with our partners and with our friends and in our work that's why communication, learning about communication is so important.

Vivek: And that's why learning about, interpersonal dynamics is so important. Emotional intelligence is so important because we can learn so much about these [00:12:00] things. And it helps us in our relationships. So since we decided to give up all of that stuff and not do that stuff, we had to figure out what are we going to do?

Vivek: Because we knew what we didn't want to do. But what are we going to do? How are we going to navigate daily life if we're not going to force?

Vivek: But we didn't necessarily know what to do, right? I call it the don't do and the do That's why the parenting style that I that I, teach I call non coercive collaborative parenting. So the non coercive is what we don't do. The collaborative is what we do. The don't do and the do. And I think it's equally important, equally to pay attention to the don't do, as it is the do.

Vivek: The don't do is the things that cause us cause resistance and cause disconnection, and and are from the surface, a surface level, from the outside in, not from the inside out. And the do, the collaborative, is working together, learning together, connecting finding joy in each other's lives, and helping our kids learn the skills inner, and outer skills [00:13:00] that are going to serve them best as they navigate this world, which is so complex and challenging at the best of times and and and yeah, so we had to figure that out, right?

Vivek: So what I was thinking was, I was watching so many parents struggle, struggle, struggle with their kids because the methods that they were using were not in harmony with how their kids were learning. operate, how their minds operate, how their emotions operate, how their body operates, their sensory their neurology, their understanding.

Vivek: It wasn't taking into account how their kids operate. And so they would end up, they would end up, butting heads with their kids all the time. And I wanted my approaches to work with How the human operates. I wanted it to work in harmony with how it operates. I didn't exactly know what that was at the time and I still, I'm still figuring, I'm still learning that.

Vivek: I'm 55 now, my kid's 27 and I'm still learning that every day. And that's a beautiful thing about learning and about human development is that we can learn more and more every day. [00:14:00] And but I did, one of the things I did notice was That I would pay attention to the resistance, because when the resistance would come up, I and I, had such a tendency to push into that resistance.

Vivek: And that's one of the things that I think was one of my survival mechanisms, was when the resistance came, I would resist the resistance. But like I said before, when you have resisting the resistance, you've got you're, butting heads, and you're it's, force on force. I did martial arts for many years, and one of the principles of martial arts is not, doing force on force, but when force comes in at you, you guide the force, right?

Vivek: That's why one of my sayings is guide your kids. Like the banks of a river, guiding the flow, not like a dam stopping the flow. And this is something that that can be so beautiful. And and but when we have those, when we have those approaches that are half and half, where they're partially partially trying to be connecting with our kids and and respectful, but partially not.

Vivek: And it's out [00:15:00] of alignment with how, kids operate and with how humans operate, that's when we get what I call transition philosophies, where they have one foot in the old mindset of control and another foot in the new mindset of cooperation and connection and collaboration. And it causes, always causes problems.

Vivek: This is why when they're, when the parenting approach is not aligned with how our kids operate, we get that resistance, right? And so this is the origin of the loving limit, for example. I don't know if you've heard the phrase loving limits. Loving limits is when our kids, we impose a limit on our kids that they don't agree with and they resist and we empathize with them for their feelings.

Vivek: It's very natural for you to have your feelings. It's hard not to get what you want. And you're allowed all your feelings and that's, fine. But the reason that they're doing it is because I'm imposing my will on them. Of course, empathizing with our kids is super important. And actually one of the primary things that I do with young people is is empathize with them, help them feel that I'm really on their side [00:16:00] and that I really accept them.

Vivek: And I really embrace them in their whole humanity, not just the good parts, but their whole humanity, because all of us have all different parts, right?

I have good parts. I have loving parts. I have beautiful parts. I'm a beautiful man. I really am. I have terrible parts. I have angry parts. I have vengeful parts.

Vivek: I'm human. I have the whole thing, right? Learning to accept all of our feelings so that we can also hold a space so we learn to accept our kids feelings.

Vivek: Because when our kids have big feelings, they're not like doing it to inconvenience us or harm us. They're not doing it to challenge us. It's part of how they operate. It's part of how they respond to the world. And a lot of the time the message that we give young people is that their feelings are not acceptable, that they're not, we, that they're, that as long as they're having challenging feelings or big behaviors, they're not acceptable, they're not, they don't have a sense of belonging, so, this is why I wanted to do things differently. I think [00:17:00] a good example of connecting with kids before they let me give an example of resistance because this is one of my favorite examples. One of my daughter's friends came over one day when she was in high school.

Vivek: He used to come to our place a lot of the time because he, again, was in a very traditional mainstream family and there's a lot of coercion and a lot of harshness a lot of control. And when he would come over to our place, he would be celebrated and embraced and it was just such a different experience for him.

Vivek: And he would often tell me about his parents and talk about his struggles. And he was telling me the story of one day he was in the shower and he was getting out of the shower already on his own, he was done. He didn't want to shower anymore. He was done. And his mom knocked on the door, I said, okay, get out of the shower now.

Vivek: And immediately he went back in the shower, turned it on, and kept doing the shower because he didn't want to get out when he was told to get out. Even though he himself was done, he actually denied his own desire, his own needs, his own sense [00:18:00] of his body, his own sense of what was right for him, because he was being told what to do.

Vivek: It would have been a whole lot different if his parent had said, Oh, how much longer do you think you'll be? I'm not rushing you, of course, because I want you to take as much time as you need, but I'm just curious how much more time you might need. I also want to shower and also we need to go soon.

Vivek: And is there any way I can support you? Something like, I don't know, something like that, right? But that reaction is not uncommon, right? I still feel that I'm 55 and if someone tells me what to do, I immediately. My shoulders tense up and I immediately want to fight.

Vivek: I'm like, no! And then I'm like, wait Vivek, is that actually, I have to stop myself. I'm like, wait Vivek, is that actually good for you? Is that something that you actually want to do? And, so a lot of the time when we slow down and connect with our kids, it can make such a difference. There was this time I was working with a family, it was like a decade ago now I was working with this family, and this, and the, and we went to the park the [00:19:00] mom and the little boy and I, was maybe seven at the time,

Vivek: and we were playing at, and we were just playing on the park and playing on the climb climber and all this stuff. And at one point we started playing Frisbee, but the three of us, and and I was told the Frisbee to him and he was told the Frisbee to mom, and the mom was told the Frisbee for me.

Vivek: We were going back and forth and he was up on a, big climber and we were on the ground, and at one point. He started whipping that frisbee. Every time it would come to him throwing it to his mom, he would start whipping that frisbee at his mom's head.

Vivek: Hard! And he had good aim too, so he was like, she was having to protect herself. And it was, and it hit her a couple of times. And and every time she would say it, Oh, we do it gently, that's not how we throw the frisbee. I don't want to get hurt, I'm enjoying playing with you, all that stuff.

Vivek: And she was trying really hard, especially because I was there, I think, she was trying really hard to be gentle So after a little while of him whipping this frisbee at his mom, I went up to him and I said, hey kiddo, you know what? I love throwing frisbee with you.

Vivek: And I love how hard you throw that frisbee. [00:20:00] I've loved playing with you this whole time that we're in the park. I love how hard you throw that frisbee and how accurate, oh my gosh You like hit your target every single time and so much strength and so much power the way you throw it.

Vivek: I think that's so incredible. I love this game we're playing and I love playing frisbee with you. I just want to make sure that nobody gets hurt while we're doing it. I really appreciate how much joy and how much enthusiasm you

have for it. So I mentioned that hurt might be happening, right? But I did it in a way that wasn't focused on wrongness, on telling the kid what to do.

Vivek: This kid, Suddenly he goes like this, Did I hurt you mama? It was like it never occurred to him before. And I didn't say don't hurt your mother. I didn't do that. Because then what happens there is again, you're telling the kid that they're wrong and you're telling them from the outside in and and that closes and creates the shield, but this open and this kid's this kid client down.

Vivek: The climber went over to his mom and hugged his mom. It's like he didn't, he [00:21:00] saw his mom as a human, same as him all of a sudden. Oh, wait, I have, I get hurt and she gets hurt and that's not pleasant. And the hug and then the Frisbee game changed

Vivek: and the thing about that is. I didn't impose my values on the kid. I created a condition where the kid was able to tune into their own values. I tell you, I worked with kids so many times over the decades. So, many hundreds of kids over the decades. And I have so many stories like this. And, and when we make the focus our relationship like non coercive parenting isn't traditional parenting done more gently.

Vivek: That's not the idea behind it. It's a different way of looking at things. It's looking at, like I said before, from cause to effect from needs and feelings, to behave, to behavior. And it's what I call iceberg consciousness, where we look underneath the surface at the much vaster array of influences that are happening than just the, at the top, just the behavior.

Vivek: So it's noncoercive. It's about sharing power. So our kids feel like they're an equal part of the [00:22:00] family community that's why some I grew up hearing, wait, as long as you're in my house, you're going to follow my rules.

Vivek: And then I realized, okay I guess this isn't my house then. I grew up without, without feeling like my home was my home because of that and treating kids with true respect for their their humanity and their process, we focus on relationship. We focus on guiding from the inside out, there was this I'll tell I'll tell one more story, because we want to focus on that sense of unconditional acceptance and deep guidance deep connection and no wrongness and and fostering a lifelong learning relationship with our kids, because it really is, it's learning to manage our mind and our emotions and our bodies and our reactions, that's a long term process, it doesn't happen quickly.

Vivek: And so when we can help our kids learn those those skills over time it's really powerful. My daughter and I used to [00:23:00] volunteer with a youth organization we would volunteer and they had this annual conference with 200 kids from all over the city, more challenging areas of the city.

Vivek: One of my workshops was called leadership through movement, where I would play, I'm a martial artist. Like I said, I'm also a dancer, so I would do a bunch of different Games with the kids and then we would discuss how it applies to relationships and leadership and working in schools and things like managing school and relationships and The kids always had such amazing ideas such incredible ideas So one point my, my, my daughter comes in, and she said, dad, there's this kid, because she goes around to all the different groups. There's this kid that's causing trouble in every single group. He's causing trouble. He's riling the other people up. He's not letting anyone participate. And he's causing so much trouble and he's, everyone's calling him a troublemaker.

Vivek: Now my kid knows. So she said, dad, he needs your empathy. That was her. That was her response. Oh, my heart. Let me tell you. And, but I actually wouldn't have needed her to point him out because he came in and I had a big open space in the room, but there were chairs along the side. He immediately took [00:24:00] three chairs and pulled them out from against the wall and lay down on these three chairs.

Vivek: He immediately started trying to get under my skin, right? So I went over to him and I sat down next to him and I said, hey, listen, I'm really glad you're here in this workshop. And I'm especially glad that you took out these three chairs and you're laying down on them. You know why I'm glad about that?

Vivek: And it looked at me like, you're glad about that? And I said, yeah, I'm glad because it means you're taking care of yourself. Your body your needs you need to rest and you don't feel like doing this workshop. That's fantastic. I'm so glad you're doing that. I said, I really want you to spend this entire hour taking care of yourself like that.

Vivek: It'll mean so much to me. Even if you need to lay down in the middle of the floor and disrupt everything. I still want you to do that if that's really what you want to do. Now, what I did by saying that was it sounded like I give him permission to sit on the, to go on the floor, but also what I did was I set a boundary.

Vivek: I made it clear to him that one of the most disruptive things he could do was [00:25:00] lay on the floor in the middle of the space while I'm trying to do the thing. And obviously I would prefer him not to, even though I was saying that he, should do it if he wanted to. Anyway, so I, that whole conversation took maybe 30 seconds to a minute.

Vivek: And and he was still shaking his head having never been talked to by an adult like that before. So when I went and I started the, thing and I said, Hey, everybody find a partner and we're going to do these movements. Actually do solo things first where you're like tapping your thing and rubbing your head and getting your nervous system activated and running around the room.

Vivek: And within, not even five minutes, this kid got up, came over to me and said, when we started the partner work, can I be your partner?

Vivek: I want to try this too. I said, sure, I would love you to be my partner. So we do this one thing where it's a finger dance and you touch finger to finger and one person leads and the other person follows. And then you switch and you learn about following and leading and co creating. And he was doing this with me and then he was like playing with the other kids and getting in there and excited about everyone and laughing like a child.

Vivek: And I don't remember the last time this kid [00:26:00] probably had just be able to carefree laugh like a child and participated the whole time. If any of those other workshop leaders that were using Boundaries, To try and make this kid behave and come in, they wouldn't have believed it was the same kid, and so for me, working with young, people, who are struggling with their behavior, really understanding that they're doing so for valid reasons makes a big difference and then approaching them in non coercive ways that help them feel we're really on their side.

Vivek: Makes such a big difference and it's different for every kid and it's different in every situation and it's different with every parent because we're also different too. We have our own needs and feelings and preferences and trauma and patterns and triggers and and our own sensory stuff and our own the way our brains work and where our bodies work.

Vivek: But still, it doesn't mean we abandon the principles of. Of collaboration and connection and iceberg consciousness. It means we have to apply them differently and and we need different supports and we need different [00:27:00] systems in order to do that.

Vivek: And that's the basic the basic idea of how I work with young people. Iceberg consciousness. Connecting with their deeper needs. Learning about the impact of our actions, but not imposing my value judgment on it so that kids can learn. And also helping them manage the, all the different things that are going on inside of them and outside of them in ways that help them, increase their own quality of life and skills in managing their own lives.

Vivek: Their own relationships.

Sarah: Thank you so much. Does anyone have a question for the vague?

Jessica: I have a question. My name is Jessica. I have a seven year old daughter and a three year old son and I've listened to you speak several times with Sarah's podcast and then just being in the membership.

Jessica: So I always try to come to your. Your things because I really enjoy listening to you. So one thing I've heard you say before is like you just allow the children to go with what their body feels how their natural instincts. [00:28:00] Like what their natural instincts take them and correct me if I'm wrong.

Jessica: Like one thing I've always questioned was like, my kids Okay. I, try to do that. I guess my thing is around like food, like they, they just love junk food and candy and stuff like that. Like, how do I allow them to if their body says it, and I've said to my daughter and I'm I've let her eat it and she's been like, Oh, my stomach really hurts.

Jessica: And I said, Oh, your stomach must really hurt because you've had so much junk food. What do you think? Should maybe we limit it next time? And she's just no, I think I'm fine. And so like how do I what do I do in those situations because I feel like my kids would just eat candy and chocolate just junk all the time and

Jessica: Yeah, so I don't know.

Vivek: For sure, and you're on the right track by pointing that stuff out, right?

Jessica: I

Vivek: think, I think for me when I think about food and sleep and hygiene and all, that kind of stuff for me the, when I engage with kids around food, what I want is I'm thinking about how [00:29:00] can I empower their relationship with

their bodies? And their and their attunement to their bodies and their decision making around their bodies.

Vivek: Which is what you're trying to do, right? You're trying to help them understand, Oh, the sugar had this effect. Maybe we should limit it next time.

Jessica: Yeah.

Vivek: and and so you're not saying I'm going to limit this with force because of how you acted. You're not doing that, right? You're it's so much more gentle than that, which I appreciate.

Vivek: And your kid still resists, right? I remember when my kid would would stay up really late and the next day she would be really tired. I said, Oh, you're really tired. It's because you stayed up late. No, I'm not tired. And after two or three times, I was like, okay, Vivek, stop pointing that out.

Vivek: Because this is what I did, right? Every time I would notice resistance, I would try something different because I didn't want to keep pushing into that resistance. So I say, okay, Vivek, clearly that's not working. Don't point that out anymore. You're going to keep pushing her away. Because every time I did that, a little, she would go a little further away, a little further away, a little further

Vivek: away.

Vivek: But at the same time, I still want to share the information about sleep. So I like to talk about the [00:30:00] food and the body and the impact without saying, therefore, you should limit because the therefore you should limit still feels oh, the parent is going to create a condition where I don't have freedom.

Vivek: I also want to talk about limits like I am so against limits. I always talk about being against limits, but I'm not actually against limits. I'm against. hierarchically power over imposed limits that the kid doesn't have a choice. That's what I'm against.

Vivek: I actually think limits are such an important part of life. Like I, we when, we have trouble setting limits for ourselves, as adults, life is so much more difficult, but when we know ourselves and we know what limits to place on ourselves and we make those decisions consciously in alignment with how we operate, it gives us so much more.

Vivek: Freedom in life and so much more capacity in life. I love limits. I love them and my kid loves them She's 27 and she loves limits because I always worked with limits in such a way That she saw how they were empowering for her. [00:31:00] And again, that's what you're doing So just but the thing is what you like I said before every kid is different Some kids will be like, yeah you're right I have parents who've told me that they said they let they finally stopped Forcing and they let their kid to do the thing And then the kid goes, you're right, that I do feel worse thing.

Vivek: Let me, try it differently next time. So there's a couple of different things you can do. What you can do is you can say, Hey, let's you can, say, Hey, let's let's try an experiment. Let's try different kinds of foods. And see how it affects our bodies, and then we can think about the different decisions that we want to make around that.

Vivek: That's one way. Do an exp do take a take an experiment, mindset. I always treated our home like a laboratory. We were experimenting with everything all the time. Anything that would come up, it was an opportunity to experiment. What are the results, right? We talk about consequences, but consequences is such a heavy word, so I talk about results.

Vivek: What are the results? If we do this, what are the results? If we do that, what are the results? And how do we feel about those results? Thanks. [00:32:00] And then what can we do about it? For example, if you had said, maybe if you had said, Oh, I noticed that you're that you're feeling this way, sometimes what we eat has that effect on us, what do you think about and just just Pulling back that last little bit of imposing or or suggesting at first.

Vivek: But that suggestion is, can still be in there. It can be in there as one of the many things that we can do. Now, sometimes kids don't know what to do. Sometimes they don't have all they don't have all the approaches and all the information. So another thing I like to do is offer a lot of different options to kids.

Vivek: For example it's a, slightly different thing, but for example, when my kid. was like six or seven, she stole 20 from her uncle. And and she came home and she told me about it. Which, first of all, for a seven year old who stole to come straight to their parent and tell them, I was so happy because because I felt like the trust was really there.

Vivek: And and so when we were discussing how to, I, [00:33:00] the first thing I said was, How do you feel about it, kiddo? Not, How do you feel about it? As

if I'm predetermining how she should feel about it. But I asked her, genuinely, how do you feel about it? Because I wanted her to tune in to her own feeling about it, without feeling like I was trying to impose a value on her.

Vivek: And she said it doesn't really feel great. Excellent, I totally understand that. Now, she said it does feel great and I'm really happy to have the money. I'm like I'm glad you told me. And then I would file it away in my head. Okay, here's something to explore. We're going to explore the concept of stealing.

Vivek: We're going to explore the concept of ownership. We're going to explore the concept of how that might impact relationships, but I'm not going to do it at this moment telling her she's wrong at this moment.

Vivek: I'm going to

Vivek: find other ways to bring it up, other ways to explore it, so that she can start to think about it as her own value.

Vivek: But in this case she said, it doesn't feel great. I think I want to return it. But I'm not really sure what I want to do. I said what I don't know. I said, what do you want to do? She said, I'm not really sure. So then I came up with a bunch of options. I said we can, let's look at all the different [00:34:00] options that we can think of.

Vivek: On the one hand, you could just keep the money and we can go out for ice cream. And that's fine. I said, on the other extreme, you can go and apologize and. In person and hand it back and tell him I said or we could give it back to him in a We can give him 20 on his next birthday and his birthday card and then you'll overturned it and he won't know I said or We can go over there and I can distract him if you want and then you can put the money away and then we can Come back and we came with it We'll come up with a but and then suddenly we were brainstorming all these different things And I said why don't you just go away and think about it and think about which one feels best to you and she came Back and she said oh, I'd like to I'd like to return it, but I don't want him to know so let's go over there You And you can distract him and and we'll return the money.

Vivek: And I went over there and I said, Hey, uncle, I have something I want to ask you about your computer. And we went into the back and she put it back and we went back and then we left. And we walked down that street celebrating and laughing. And the connection between us having done this caper together was so beautiful.

Vivek: And she developed a real sense of her own value around [00:35:00] money and ownership. Similar with food. I want to always be looking for, how can I help kids have a deep relationship with their body? So I want to really empower them to love their body. Like one of my sayings is the question isn't, how do I get my kid to brush their teeth?

Vivek: The question is, how do I get my kid to love their teeth? And when they love their team and they feel a sense of how powerful they are and how important they are for themselves, then they'll want to take care of them. And then if there's then. We can brainstorm why it's difficult, why it might be, why they might be struggling to brush their teeth, and we can brainstorm that together and work on it together and figure out obstacles, but if they're resisting, we never get to that brainstorm problem solving part, right?

Vivek: The beautiful thing that you did, Jessica, was you noticed the resistance, which I love, and as soon as that resistance happens, you don't want to keep pushing into that. You want to take a step back and think, okay why are they resisting? They're maybe they're feeling imposed. Maybe they're afraid I'm going to set a limit against their will.

Vivek: So then even if [00:36:00] you set the limit, you might say I, really don't, I really don't set limits on you because I don't think that it makes sense for me to try and control you. And also I think sometimes we eat this and it's good. Sometimes we eat that and it's good. I always used to tell my kid that junk food was a beautiful, fun part of food.

Vivek: And what are all the different parts of food? There's these things do this for our body and these things do that for our body but food is also a social thing. And food is also the preparation and food is also the elimination. And we can get, have fun talking about the elimination because that's always fun.

Vivek: And and then the, and the whole process of food from the, from buying the vegetable. Providing the, food, preparing it, having the social experience, having the personal experience of eliminating, eliminating and connecting all of that together in a sense with a sense of empowerment and joy over the course of a few years working on that in a way that we're working the coercive boundary doesn't help, but it doesn't mean that we, don't have to help our kids learn [00:37:00] to set some, boundaries at the same time for themselves.

Vivek: Yeah, so that's, what I would say, navigate away from the resistance, but don't give up guiding. Guiding is still vitally important. They, rely on us for to

be wise guides and wise guides is the important part, not coercive guides, but wise guides wise connected trusting guides.

Sarah: Thank you so much, Vivek. Jessica said in the chat, thank you, so helpful. I know Stephanie has a question,

Stephanie: So just like Jessica, I want to start by saying that I've listened to quite a bit of content from, you and with Sarah.

Stephanie: And I really enjoy I think about you every time I struggle with my toddler and his car seat

Vivek: thank you. I appreciate that.

Stephanie: I see the questions that are just asked was part of my question. So I just add on to that, like the, I really the idea of wanting them to follow their body, their instincts and [00:38:00] tune into their needs and us being respectful of that.

Vivek: I

Stephanie: think what I find really hard is like when. It's like he, they don't have any concern for other's needs. When it's things like we need to get out of the house to start the day or like he's wanting to continue to play rough with his little brother and the little brother is clearly showing signs that I'm, I, like his needs are not being respected. He wants his body to not be touched anymore, and yeah, I find that really hard to not impose and like step in a way that is not respectful of his needs.

Vivek: Yeah.

Stephanie: I was wondering what would be your take on that?

Vivek: Yeah so beautiful. So many adults don't respect other people's boundaries and tune into their needs either,

Vivek: And care about other people's experiences.[00:39:00]

Vivek: You just have to spend five minutes in any comment section on any post online and you can see that, right? And so a lot of people never did learn that, never did learn that value growing up.

Stephanie: And it's a fear that I have, and I try not to parent from a place of fear, but those moments are hard.

Vivek: Yes when you have those fears, though, I think I think it's really wise not to parent from a place of fear. And our fear gives us information of where there's something to pay attention to.

Vivek: Yeah.

Vivek: And I think that's really valid. I love my fear. My fear and I have got a really good relationship.

Vivek: growing, always growing, but have a really good working relationship. Because I'm like, Oh, okay, there's something here, right? Okay. Let me pay attention to it, but I don't let the fear make the decision on the strategy and the approach. That's the thing. And I say you can feel the feeling without operating from it.

Vivek: When I let go of the old relationship, I knew I had to replace it with something. Otherwise there's a, it's a vacuum, right? And that's not healthy. So I replaced the old parenting relationship with three parenting relationships. [00:40:00] And and it's the relationship of model, guide, and friend. We're their model, we're their guide, and we're their friend.

Vivek: Model relationship is where they're always watching how we engage. And they're learning from lived experience with us. They watch how we treat them. They watch how we treat ourselves. And they watch how we treat others and engage with the systems of the world. Those are the three main areas of modeling.

Vivek: How we treat them, how we treat ourselves, and how we treat others and the other systems of the world. And that's the same, earlier when I was talking about relationship with self, relationship with parent, and relationship with environment it, dovetails with that, it connects with that. And so that's the model.

Vivek: The guide is where we share our wisdom with them. We help them learn about values. We help them gain skills. We help them learn about themselves. Self knowledge is like, when I was thinking about what I could give my kid to help them empower them growing forward, self knowledge and self awareness [00:41:00] was one of the biggest tools that I felt like I could offer my kid.

Vivek: So as a guide, I really wanted to make sure I was always focused on how am I Nurturing this human's relationship with themselves in every action, I would ask that how is this nurturing their relationship with themselves? How is this nurturing their relationship with themselves? And if it wasn't doing that, I would have to think of a different strategy, a different approach because that was one of my main priorities.

Vivek: And so guiding is a very deep topic. I like, I said, I have over 200 videos on my YouTube channel At least half of them are about how to be effective, safe guides to our kids, because it's so important. People always think, oh, non coercive parenting, you're not guiding.

Vivek: But the opposite is true, coercive parenting isn't really guiding. It's controlling. It's imposing a set of expectations from the outside in. It's not really guiding. A guide, says, hey, if you put your foot there, it's slippery. And if you're climbing, I think of climbing a waterfall or something, and the guide is telling you where it's safe and where it's not.

Vivek: And they've done it many times, so they have a good sense of it. But you're the one living the adventure of climbing the [00:42:00] waterfall. And that's the main thing, right? And their job is to help you have the best adventure possible as you climb that waterfall. I think of that as myself as a guide with my kid too.

Vivek: And the last one is friend, right? The friend is, People say, I'm not your friend I'm your parent . And I understand why they say that, because they're not also adding model and guide to compensate for what might be lacking in just a friend relationship. But the friend relationship is the human relationship.

Vivek: The relationship of fun and celebration in each other's lives. Friends generally are have a non hierarchical power relationship. In friendship, one person might be leading, another person might be leading another time. If I know more about one thing, my friends defer to me, usually about parenting but also martial arts.

Vivek: But I'm also a dancer and I have some friends that are much better dancers than me. So I asked them for that and who knows more about what? And sometimes it's very similar and we share information. And so the friend relationship is something to really deeply, [00:43:00] with. The, but this one is about the guide relationship, right?

Vivek: When my kid came along, I was 28, I had 28 years of mistakes that I had reflected on. I wanted to pass some of those, that information onto my kids. So they didn't make the same mistakes. I wanted her to make her own glorious mistakes, but not to repeat the same exact mistakes if she could avoid them. But in order to do that, I had to create a relationship where she would accept the guidance because if she would resist it.

Vivek: Then I couldn't get that information across, right? In answer to your question, there's two parts to it. One is the modeling. The first one is the model, right? How are we modeling to our kids? The values that we want to inspire, that we want to explore with them. I don't say teach values so much, although I do sometimes because it also is that, but I like to think of inspiring values and exploring values and nurturing and fostering.

Vivek: Doing, working with values is such an important thing. Values is one of those things that's under the surface and leads to behavior, it leads to choices. One of my [00:44:00] sayings is I didn't want to teach my kid to respect boundaries. I wanted to teach them to want to respect boundary because that's the value.

Vivek: Respecting boundaries is the behavior that comes from the value, but wanting to respect boundaries because we understand. That caring for other people's needs and caring for their experience and caring about our impact on them is meaningful to me as a person, not because I'm afraid of what will happen if they, if I do it, that they'll, they won't be my friend or whatever.

Vivek: No, that's not, that doesn't have sustainability. It's because of the kind of person I want to be. Who am I? What are my values, right? This is why, that saying is so important. I didn't want to teach my kid to respect. Boundaries, I want to teach them to want to respect that. And this is what you want, right?

Vivek: You want your kid to want to notice their impact and care about their impact. You cannot force someone to care. You cannot consequence someone to care. Wrongness and shame never make someone care. Force never makes someone care. These things don't make someone care. A deeply connected relationship. [00:45:00] Help someone care.

Vivek: Tuning into one's own ethical sense. Help someone care. And a lot of parents are afraid that if we turn kids towards their own ethical sense, they won't be, they won't be kind people. Which means they're seeing their kid's essence as not kind. I always want to see my kid and all kids I interact with as kind, loving beings.

Vivek: And then if I point them to their dearest, Their truest self, their truest nature, their most authentic nature, that kindness will come, compassion will come, and that anything that isn't kind is compassion and love, is an error born of whatever we're dealing, right? And and so that's one thing, is I always want to help a kid nourish their own their own relationship with that.

Vivek: So that comes from exploring it comes from talking about values, not about if one kid hits another, for example. I don't like to say you shouldn't hit that kid because it hurts. Hit the other kid because it hurts. Because again, [00:46:00] that's wrongness and that's blame and that's shame, even if we do it nicely.

Vivek: But it's really hard. The kid just did the hit. They didn't, very unlikely, the kid was sitting there thinking I want that blog, and they're not giving me that blog. What is a good strategy for me to use right now? I'm going to hit them, and then they'll give me the blog. That kind of reasoning is not happening, right?

Vivek: And and in general, even with adults, that kind of reasoning is not happening. When they, when we, when, like, when you see fight videos on on Instagram or whatever they're not thinking about, logically, they end up in their nervous system, and the punch just comes out. And let me tell it, let me tell a story.

Vivek: So a number of years ago, I was at a dance workshop. Excuse me, a dance camp. It was a weekend long dance camp. And I arrived on the Friday afternoon and it was in like, this nature area, there was tons of families and lots of kids and it was real, [00:47:00] a hippie dance thing. It was really fun.

Vivek: And I got there around Friday afternoon and there were already a bunch of families there. And as I got out of the car, These two like seven year old boys came up to me, ran up to me like with this glee in their eye, and they punched me in the stomach. Both of them came up to me and punched me in the stomach.

Vivek: And and I found out later that they were going around punching everybody in the stomach. This was their thing because they wanted to get reactions out of the adults. They came out now knowing what I know, knowing how things operate. As soon as they punched me in the stomach, I went,

Vivek: thank you.

Vivek: Oh, that was great. You're so powerful. I can't believe how powerful you are. And you guys just came up with so much energy and so much excitement. That was amazing. I love it.

Vivek: They both. They both were in shock. They were like, what? Everyone. It wasn't, it was a hippie camp anyway. So everybody was saying gentle hands.

Vivek: That's not what we do. That's not what hands are for that hurt. And we don't want to hurt each other and all that stuff, which wasn't affecting their behavior at all. Still kind, but still [00:48:00] wrongness and setting a boundary and setting a limit, which wasn't having any effect on them. So they were, their whole week, their whole thing was running around punching people.

Vivek: So then every 20 minutes or so, they would fight me again and come and punch me. Every single time, I kept thanking them for it. I said, even though that hurt, sometimes I would say that, even though that hurt, I still love you guys. It was amazing that you punched so hard. I hope you'll come back and punch me again soon.

Vivek: I kept saying those kind of things to them. Now, I'm not saying you necessarily have to let a kid hit someone or even yourself. I'm not saying that. But I'm a martial artist. I could take a few punches in the stomach. It was fine. But the energy of it, of no wrongness, of embracing them, even if you say, Oh, that really hurt.

Vivek: Wow. You guys are amazing. So love it. I love that. Even that. So what happened was one time one of the kids hit me a little too hard. And it hurt. I was like, Ooh, that was a little bit much. I

Vivek: love how you guys are hitting, but Ooh, that was a hard one. Sometimes maybe you could hit my hands instead and just really hit them [00:49:00] hard.

Vivek: So then they were like, okay, that, that seems okay. Cause that wasn't really telling them they were wrong and they were broken. They need to be fixed. That's why they're doing it. They already knew, Hey, this guy celebrates me as I am, which is weird, but they're doing it. And they started hitting my hands 50 percent of the time.

Vivek: This was by the end of Friday. So then,

Vivek: When was the first thing? Saturday afternoon, so it's not even 24 hours yet. Saturday afternoon, I had one of the kids I had just finished lunch, I came

out of the lunchroom, my stomach was full. One of the kids came up and punched me in the stomach. Not on purpose, I fell to the ground, because my stomach was so full, it hurt.

Vivek: And cause a bunch of rumbling in there. And even as I fell, I still said, thank

Stephanie: you. Oh my God. You're a saint. I don't know how you stay regulated.

Vivek: It's 20 years of practice. My friend, honestly, it's 20 years of dedicated practice. And I really believe in these principles. So I practice and I practice and I practice It's not easy. It didn't come [00:50:00] easy.

Vivek: But what happened was I got up after being punched in the stomach. I said, listen, kiddo, I love how powerful you are with those punches. And I just ate lunch. And as you saw, it was hard on me to get punched. How about just for a little while? You don't punch me because I got to go to the I got to go clean up the, dance tent.

Vivek: Why don't you come help me clean up the dance tent and we'll have a good time. And just for, a little while until my food digests, just don't punch me. He said, I can do that because I wasn't telling him no, right? Again, I wasn't an authority figure. It wasn't coming from wrongness. I wasn't telling him no.

Vivek: And it's less than 24 hours. This kid spent a half hour with me. He didn't do any cleaning, he was just playing. But he spent, I did all the cleaning, but he spent a half hour with me. And I could see he's, with

Vivek: all of his fists, getting ready to punt. And he would look at me

Vivek: and he would relax. He wouldn't put all his fists ready

Vivek: to punt.

Vivek: And then he would look at me, and he would remember, and he would remember. I asked, I told his mom about this later, [00:51:00] and she said, oh, his nickname is The Hitter. That's how much he hits, that he has a, he actually has that as his nickname. And he had self motivated, self regulated, self control that I did not have to impose.

Vivek: People always say, oh, he has no self control. He has no impulse control. It wasn't true. It wasn't true because it meant something to him in that moment, to control that impulse. I couldn't, I myself I still have butterflies thinking of that moment, watching him do that. I was like, what the hell is happening?

Vivek: And and then and then that evening there's two more things that happen. There's two kids, right? That evening, the other kid, We're all sitting around the campfire. He walks by me and punches me in the neck, punches me in the neck right here. And and I said, thank you.

Vivek: Thank you.

Vivek: I love you. You're amazing.

Vivek: And and as he walked away, another adult grabbed his arm and said, what was that, what are you doing? Why would you hit someone like that? I don't understand. And he said no, wait, it's okay. Cause he's smiling and he thanked me. That means he doesn't mind. [00:52:00] So already this kid is now starting to tune in to the, people have been telling him for years to tune into the responses of the other person.

Vivek: Never did it. But now it meant something to him to tune into my response. He's Oh, he doesn't mind because of these reactions. And, he actually noticed me as a person and cared about my reactions. And if the adults in his life saw that happen, they could start to build on that, right? Do I try and find any little thing that a kid notices?

Vivek: And then I build and I build in a way that makes them feel empowered about it. I was like, Oh, you noticed that? That's so observant. What else do you notice about people's faces and their reactions?

Vivek: Oh, really?

Vivek: Oh let's, see if we can see more of those things. That's so interesting.

Vivek: I'm so glad you pointed that out. Hey let's watch, the, hey, we're going to watch that show later on. Let's see if we can notice people's reactions to things. So that's the second one. The third one, at night, same kid, at night we were having a big dance party and there were these, by the way, on my Facebook page, I have a [00:53:00] video called a revolutionary approach to working with kids to hit where I tell this story.

Vivek: If you type in a revolutionary, it'll come up in meaningful ideas, Facebook page, and there's also a long article that goes with it that talks about other kids that were hitting me that I talked about as well. John won't go into that right now. But I tell the story like two or three days after, and I'm so passionate about it, so this is a few years later, I'm telling the story now.

Vivek: I'm still dazed when I tell that story. But the third one was, we were at this dance party, and they had these glow in the dark, you know the glow in the dark necklaces, the plastic ones? Those make really good whips. If you're the kind of person that wants to whip someone, they make really good whips.

Vivek: So these two kids They got these necklaces and they were running around whipping everybody. And it was funny because you see people jumping and yelping throughout the dance floor. It's 50 people on the dance floor and they're all jumping and yelping. And all of them were saying gentle hands.

Vivek: Some of them took it away, but they're, everywhere. So they got another one. This kid comes to me after, this is Saturday night. So it's been just over 24 hours that I've been [00:54:00] deeply humanizing them. Giving them a solid message of no wrongness. Also letting them know occasionally that the hitting hurt and how we could look at it differently, but not in a way that made them feel that there was any, that they were doing something wrong and broken, but I celebrated the hitting.

Vivek: So this kid comes up to me with this thing and I see him from across the room and I'm sitting on the side cause I was taking a break. So I'm sitting cross legged on the side and he's running up to me to hit me with this thing. And inside I'm thinking, okay, Vivek, this is your moment because you just spent 24 hours working with these kids and you can already see them changing.

Vivek: Because I know this stuff changes people love always changes people more than control. And and I said, he's going to hit you and it's going to hurt like hell, open yourself to it. And I took a deep breath and I opened my arms and I said, I receive it, And I just stayed in this really calm, relaxed state because I didn't want him to feel the tension that everyone else was doing.

Vivek: And he came over to me, Stephanie, I'm telling you, and he went like this [00:55:00] and he couldn't do it. He's like some invisible force stopped his hand. He couldn't hit me. And his whole body shook like he was having a bit of a, a spasm. He couldn't stop. He couldn't do it. And then he stopped and he reached out and he caressed me with employers.

Vivek: And we had this moment of just looking into each other's eyes, and then suddenly he realized what was going on, he wasn't sure, and he just ran off like the awkwardness of it, he ran off. And when I remember that moment of him caressing my face, after 24 hours, I just think if this kid had been given this kind of deep acceptance and explored values without, All of the wrongness that usually happens, if that had been their consistent experience.

Vivek: And one of the kids I have had a chance to work with, one of the two, those two kids I've had a chance to work with a number of times over the years. And we've had some amazing experiences. One of them I don't see, I don't, I rarely ever see [00:56:00] but if they had been treated that way and guided that way over the long term, what amazing things would have happened for their self awareness and their awareness of other people I don't, know if you remember, but adults were like a different species to me when I was a kid, they weren't human, they were things I had to manage and a system I had to manage but when we really humanize ourselves to our kids, so they feel us, The same as them.

Vivek: It's a whole different, it's a whole different thing. So I didn't wanna teach my kid to respect boundaries. I wanted to teach them to want to respect boundaries was the first part of that. Teaching the values underneath the iceberg consciousness, going to the, going to the the cause rather than the effect.

Vivek: And then and then teaching values through exploration, through watching things and examining things, through telling stories, through modeling. There's something I call modeling out loud as well, where I model something and then I say why I did it. Oh, for example, if the kids spilled water. [00:57:00] And I start to clean it up.

Vivek: I said, would you like to join me in cleaning it up? I said, that's so great. I'm glad that you don't, you told me no. I really want you to honour that. I'm glad you told me no. Definitely don't clean it up if you don't want to clean it up. I'm going to clean it up because I love doing things for you. And if you don't feel like it, I'm going to do it.

Vivek: I love that. That's what we do as a family. When one of us doesn't want to do something, the rest of us chip in. So you go chill and relax. So I still shared a value. And the value didn't have a lot of resistance because I'm not telling them, therefore, you should come and clean. I said, go watch TV. But here's the value.

Vivek: That's being presented, modeling out loud, right? And doing that non coercively in a way that the kids don't feel we're controlling them, we're telling them they're wrong. They start to swim in these values after a while, right? And then it becomes a beautiful we create a more harmonious patterns in our family that, yeah, that help.

Vivek: Help us through the, especially through the hard times when you have really solid patterns. It helps through when, things get things get hard.

Stephanie: And if it's, thank you, it's really helpful. [00:58:00] And then like in the heat of the moment, when you have to intervene and limit their power or whatever, do you, Talk about it again after you say like I wish I didn't have to do that but like for example, it happened with My two boys last night and my oldest came back from being away at camp and he missed His little brother a lot and he missed me and so he's seeking connection and he's disregulated from being away from the routine Sure, you know all of that.

Stephanie: So I get it. So a lot of You Being understanding and telling him, Oh, like I understand you still want to play with Felix and you want it, but he needs sleep too at this point. And so we need to move on with story and, but like playing rough and throwing stuffies at his brother's face and [00:59:00] and at some point, like I just lost it.

Stephanie: And I was like, I get it. You want connection with your brother. You want connection with me. He needs sleep and I need him to sleep so I can go and connect with you. So if you're not able to chill with us until he sleeps, I would like you to leave. And if you can't leave by yourself I really need to, everybody needs to be met.

Stephanie: So I might have to help you leave. That felt pretty coercive. And he like, And I don't know what else I could have done.

Vivek: I'm with you completely. I'll share a couple of thoughts with you. Also,

Sarah: you didn't say the ages of your kids, which I think is true because they're two and 10.

Vivek: Ah

Sarah: Quite a big, like size difference.

Sarah: Yeah,

Vivek: Yeah.

Vivek: that's I had that picture in my head from [01:00:00] how you're describing it. So I'm glad that I was I'm glad that I was right about that. Yeah that is, important. So yeah, I feel you completely on that. One of the things, so a bunch of things are coming to me at once.

Vivek: One of the things is knowing that your kid would be dysregulated one of the things that could help is when you know that kind of thing is going to happen when they come home, have a bunch of activities already ready to help them work some of that stuff out of their nervous system. That can really help like maybe when they walk in the door, the first thing they do is they have to navigate an obstacle course.

Vivek: So right off the bat, the transition isn't from all this activity to stillness at home so that all that energy has to be projected onto the brother, for example. Or maybe you notice that you didn't do that, and then you notice that all that energy is being projected, and then you create the obstacle course, right?

Vivek: So you know there's something, maybe this particular day, the other kid, Ends up sleeping two hours late [01:01:00] because you want to manage this kid and the other kid in a way that doesn't cause the resistance in the fight. So then there's some negotiating with yourself that happens, which is hard when you're activated, right?

Vivek: So that's why I would go back to what I mentioned and you can watch the recording later and watch it. But when I talked about working with our own triggers and working with our own responses and and how those might get wired and our own perceptions about it. Thank you. You switched from seeing it as a beautiful connection to seeing it as a problem at some point.

Vivek: And that's when you, lost the capacity to be in tune and to and to problem solve and to, even if you did have to lift the kid out of the room, even if you did doing it from, I'm frustrated. It's totally different from doing it from, I'm helping,

Vivek: right?

Vivek: From, I see this as a beautiful thing they're doing.

Vivek: Because if, genuinely, if one kid's hurting another, I always say, don't let them hurt each [01:02:00] other. But don't approach it with wrongness. Don't

think of one kid as an aggressor and one kid as a victim. See two struggling kids that need the guidance of a wise, emotionally centered adult. And this is a total mindset shift again.

Vivek: But the thing is. It can feel like an attack on us, especially little Stephanie and little Vivek, right? We can feel that attack coming to us. And if we don't yet have, how can I word this? I don't know. I don't want to word it. I don't know. I was about to word it with a little bit of wrongness. And I, don't want to change that.

Vivek: So as we increase our capacity to hold our little self, we increase our capacity to stay centered. With our kids in those difficult moments, right? Getting frustrated didn't help you or anyone, right? What I was gonna, by the way, what I was gonna say was, until if we haven't developed the capacity to hold our little ones, we won't [01:03:00] have the capacity to help our kids and stay centered.

Vivek: But that's wrongness and you're not good enough yet. Maybe you'll get it. That's that's why I stopped. I don't want to say it that way. Instead I say it, as we increase our capacity, we also increase our capacity to do this. And this is one of the things, like I'm watching, I'm always, I call it my shame radar.

Vivek: I say, I have my shame radar turned up to 11. And I, even just as I'm talking to you that there's like that filter there and I stop myself, right? Partially selfishly too. I don't want to talk about myself that way. I don't want to talk to you that way and put those negative ideas in your head. But I don't want to, I don't want that how I respond to myself.

Vivek: So I rewire it for myself too. So one thing is watching that as soon as your kid starts to behave in ways that are challenging for you, immediately say, okay, in 30 seconds from now, I'm going to be upset. I know it now, right? I know I'm going to be upset. So let me put my hands over my face for a moment, right?

Vivek: I want to do some breathing. [01:04:00] Let me do some slapping or tapping. Let me do some pattern interruption. I'm going to start singing before anything, before it gets out of hand, and and and do something to notice the patterns. Once we start to notice our patterns, it's amazing how we can notice them earlier and earlier Like, for me, I sometimes suffer with depression and, And when I was younger, it would hit me all of a sudden and I would be on the couch for for days and I would be it would be like a shock. And then I started to notice the signs a little earlier when it would be coming and I could do a little

bit more and then I noticed it earlier and now I can notice just this again, decades of practice, I can notice just like a vague sense in my solar plexus when I know what's coming. And now I'm like, Oh, I know that feeling. [01:05:00] And so we can, and then I can, put things into play much earlier now with that. So I don't end up on the couch for days and days.

Vivek: It doesn't mean I don't get depressed, but it has a whole different effect on me. So similar you can start to learn your patterns earlier and earlier as soon as the kid was throwing the stuffies at the two year old You're like, okay, this is gonna be a situation where normally I lose it. Let me see this throwing as a beautiful thing It's not beautiful for the kid getting thrown at

Vivek: But this kid is expressing joy. And like you said, a need for connection that can never be wrong. Yes. The, method Mark, are you familiar with nonviolent communication? So Marshall Rosenberg is the creator of it. And he says that we most of what we're doing in our lives. Is working with trying to get our needs met and dealing with our feelings.

Vivek: And feelings often come from our experience of whether our needs are met or not. [01:06:00] And he said that a lot what a lot of the time people confuse needs with the strategies for meeting those needs. And the strategy is separate from the need itself. Just like I said, you can feel the emotion without operating from it, right?

Vivek: The emotion is separate from the strategy itself. So here, your kid was expressing a need the strategy they were using for getting the Dean Med wasn't the best. They were throwing, things at a two year old, right? But we can, and you saw it yourself, we can see that deep, beautiful, wonderful need and keep ourself focused on no wrongness.

Vivek: Oh, you, and then we can come in with that. Oh, you love your

Vivek: brother so much. No wonder you're playing with him so Is it a brother? I assume the you love your brother so much. No one. Oh, you get all this stuffies. Oh these you're throwing these

Vivek: stuffies with so much energy because you just got home.

Vivek: How wonderful. Let's throw them in the, let's see how many we can throw in the basket.

Vivek: And we'll get two points for each one and and and, then brother can watch us do it and cheer us on and and find different ways [01:07:00] to, take that energy and, move it in a way that's more conducive to what you want to be happening, which is very different than saying, look, this kid needs sleep.

Vivek: You got to stop. Guarantee that's going to escalate every time, right?

Stephanie: But to be honest, I feel like I did a lot of that. I, the little one was, smiling and laughing at first. And it was rough, but I was like, Oh they're bonding and it's cute. And, but then I started saying, Oh, I'm picking up on clues that Felix is.

Stephanie: He's had enough and you're not going to cry baby now, but it's because he's tired and so he wind down and, but then he's I don't care because I still want to play. So it's hard. So at that

Vivek: moment, at that moment, I would have said, you want to play? Of course you want to play. I love that you want to play.

Vivek: You want to play with your brother. He's awesome. And you're awesome. That's great. I love that kiddo. We definitely should keep playing for a little while. What can we play? And then you can say, we could [01:08:00] play with, we could play this, so we could play that. Maybe we could build a little fort out of pillows.

Vivek: And then, you're still taking the thing that he wants to do and redirecting the play and redirecting it. So it's not wrong. It's still not wrong. As soon as you said, I understand that you want to do that, but You're saying you're wrong, and that's going to cause resistance. It's hard, my friend.

Vivek: I'm not saying it's easy. But human relationships are hard. They are. When we do boundaries, we're trying to make them easy. When we do like coercive boundaries, we're trying to make them easy, right? But they aren't easy. Learning emotional regulation isn't easy. And relationships aren't easy.

Vivek: It's supposed to be hard. I feel like when

Stephanie: it comes to keeping somebody healthy I'm not saying that they should have to be safe

Vivek: or

Stephanie: respecting their bodies. Yeah, probably that's my work, right? Because it's like it's a trigger for me. So I would be able to use playfulness and use a bunch of tools and no wrongness up until that point.

Stephanie: And then I didn't have any more patience and he touched that trigger for me.

Sarah: Right,

Stephanie: I don't care about other [01:09:00] people's needs because my own are more important. I, that was it. I couldn't. Yeah,

Vivek: for sure. That's exactly, that's where the inner work comes in. Because another part of that is refusing to believe that your kid doesn't care about other people's feelings.

Vivek: It can't possibly be true. Your kid is a loving, compassionate being. It can't possibly be true. That is a statement. That was made to deal with what they're experiencing at the moment. To protect themselves, to assert their autonomy, to fight the wrongness, to fight the authority. Like having that, dedication to seeing your kid, they, it's clearly, it's not true that they don't care.

Vivek: I'm refusing to believe that.

Stephanie: That's why I said. Another moment, he can show that he cares.

Vivek: Exactly. Exactly. That's the thing. Sorry, I don't

Stephanie: want to take too much time, but it's been really helpful and thank you for It's my

Vivek: pleasure, friend.

Vivek: Thank you so

Sarah: much for your time. You're super, super generous to spend this much time with us. And I've gotten a lot of notes in the chat about how [01:10:00] inspiring it was to listen to you talk and how affirming it has been to listen to you talk and you are a real champion of children.

Sarah: And I'm grateful to be your colleague and and friend, I hope I can say, and thank you so much for coming on and talking to us.

Vivek: That's wonderful, Sarah. I feel the same way. Thank you so much. And thank you everybody for your openness and your vulnerability. So meaningful to me that y'all are trying to break cycles and work with young people in a way that really respects their humanity.

Vivek: I really believe that it's the best thing for them, but also it's, one of the prime ingredients for healing the world. That we send out kids who they, they have A value system that they've discovered for themselves and they, their model of relationships is primarily one of respect and compassion and care.

Vivek: I think that is something that can change change the world. Even, in 97, when I was parenting my kid, the late 90s, early 2000s. Even when we, every time [01:11:00] we would make a different decision or we make, a mistake and then repair it. Both those things. I would think I'm changing the world.

Vivek: I could feel it even then I knew that

Sarah: I agree. And so you were talking about hitting when you were answering Stephanie's question. I was thinking to myself so his suggestion for solving hitting is radical humanity. And I thought that's like such a we can take that analogy out into the world, Right. Yeah,

Sarah: I mean it sounds cheesy if everybody had this like radical humanity outlook on each other, then we wouldn't have wars, right?

Vivek: Beautiful. I've been doing with my mother, I've been doing workshops in prisons for a decade. And and we use the same principles in our self empowerment workshop there.

Vivek: And it's the same thing that happens using that radical humanity rather than telling them they're wrong and they need to change or giving them consequences like prison and whatever, and hoping they'll be afraid enough of getting it again, that they'll change. [01:12:00] But once they're in touch with. Their own sense of their humanity and they can see their own light, which has been blocked from them for their whole lives.

Vivek: For most of them, the spontaneous desire to do good in the world just arises in them. My, it was really my mom's workshop and I was her assistant and and and helper and guest speaker. But when she would go in there, those

guys would come out of the six week session so transformed that the entire prison was buzzing with her workshop and it became the most, She had a waiting line, waiting list of 50 prisoners in there, but it became the most prescribed and suggested by the clinicians and the caseworkers and the psychologists.

Vivek: And none of them knew what she was doing. If they actually knew, they probably wouldn't do it but cause it's everything else is based on some kind of wrongness, right? But her approach is the same as mine. It's tuning people into their own. To their [01:13:00] own ethical sense, to their own deep relationship with themselves.

Vivek: And and she turned some we, I'll say we, we turned so many lives around and the most coercive, the most shaming, the most violent of. Of, environments and this principle still hold true.

Sarah: Yeah. You can't get much more coercive and shaming than prison.

Vivek: Yeah.

Sarah: Yeah. We are changing things. Thank you so much. Been really great. And, I just really appreciate being here. Thank you. Thank you. It was my

Vivek: pleasure.

Vivek: My pleasure.

Speaker: Thanks for listening to this week's episode. I hope you found this conversation insightful and exactly what you needed in this moment. Be sure to subscribe to the show on your favorite podcast platform, and leave us a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. Remember that I'm rooting for you. I see you out there showing up for your kids and doing the best you can.

Speaker: Sending hugs over the airwaves today. Hang in there. You've got this.