

Are parenting scripts good or bad?

[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.

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.

Let's dive into this week's conversation.

Sarah: Hey everyone, welcome back to another episode of the peaceful parenting podcast today I have cory with me cory is the peaceful parenting coach that I trained Who works with me and coaches parents and works with me inside the peaceful parenting membership? [00:01:00] And also really, helps me run my business and I appreciate her every day welcome cory.

Corey: Thanks for having me

Sarah: We are going to be talking today about P, about parenting scripts on this is kind of, a bit of a controversial topic. But those parenting scripts, and it's something that you know, We hear a lot about like, Oh, I, you know, I said this and it didn't work or you know, people complain that either people either love scripts or hate scripts.

And I have to admit, I think we have a little bit of a love hate relationship with them ourselves.

Corey: We definitely do because we do recommend some scripts and we often provide lines to families,

Sarah: right? You can just say blah blah blah. Yeah, so and I think that it's tricky The reason why it's tricky is that you know, even though this kind of parenting is totally backed by science I think one of my favorite podcast guests

that I had on was Dr. Stuart Shanker. And one of my favorite [00:02:00] moments was when he, so he was such a gracious guest. He actually had clearly done a lot of like looking at my website and reading stuff that I had written before we came on the call.

And he said, and he's you know, he's a scientist, yes. You know, really head of this research center at York University into the brain and parenting and Children. And he said, you know, Sarah, the best thing about this approach is it's totally backed by science. And I just love that. And I always quote him, but it is backed by science.

And it's also backed by research. If you look up research on parenting styles, you'll see that they recommend the authoritative parenting style, which is adjacent to what we teach. Yeah. However, it is so complicated and nuanced in so many ways. Like, right. It's like you can read stuff, but then it's kind of an art that you have to practice.

I mean, it's not. It's not like, you know, it's not like you have to train for a million years to do it, but you do have to practice and it does take some sort [00:03:00] of some nuance and an art to it. So it's so hard to say, like, just say this and get it right. Because if you're not actually in the spirit. Of peaceful parenting, then the scripts don't work, or they're being used wrong.

Corey: Exactly. It's so funny listening to you say it that way. I've often found myself saying, Well, you see, this is kind of an art. Well, I mean, but it is a science. But it's also an art. It's like you're in the Stacy territory, because it is backed by science, but the way you apply it is an art, so it is both.

Sarah: Yeah, I mean, I can't tell you how many times I've had a parent say to me, I said what you told me to say when my child was having a meltdown, and I said, It looks like you're feeling really upset right now, you know, giving empathy, right? And it, you know, they just got more mad at me and it, you know, it didn't work, didn't quote work.

And I was like, well, how were you feeling when you said that? [00:04:00] And they're like, I was really angry and annoyed. I'm like, well, you actually weren't doing empathy. Then if you were feeling angry and annoyed, you weren't actually, you said the words of empathy, but empathy is not about. The words, it can be about what you say, but empathy is about joining with another person and how they're feeling, right?

It's trying to understand how they're feeling. So if you're feeling angry, you're not going to be able to empathize with your child. You need to take some time, you know, take a minute, a few seconds, whatever. The time that you need to calm yourself down before you can empathize. So in that case, the script of empathizing with your child, I mean, we could give you a page of things that you could say that would be words of empathy, but if you're not actually feeling empathy, then the script is useless.

Corey: And in fact,

Sarah: probably harmful in a certain way because your child is going to sense that your words are not matching your feelings. So better to say nothing at all and, you know, take the time. [00:05:00] I need to take a few minutes here, darling to calm myself down. Then try to empathize when you're not feeling it.

Corey: Exactly. I, at the same time, I do think it's important to acknowledge why people want scripts. It really makes sense why so many people want us to just tell me what to say, is what so many people say to us. And we get that. So many of us were not raised with peaceful parenting. And so you find yourself in these situations and your instinct is telling you to react to whoever you were parented.

And you've learning all this science is telling you, let's not react that way. And then you're left with like, what now? What do I do? How do, what do I say? And there are some really great resources that tell you what to say, including one of my favorite books is called, what do you say?

Sarah: Yeah. The Ned Johnson and Bill Stixred book, which is a, it's a great book.

Corey: Yes. And we'll link that in our show notes. And then there's other great books that do help you with what you say, like Declarative Language.

Sarah: Yeah, the [00:06:00] Declarative Language Handbook. And you know, just as a little sidebar, when I was interviewing Linda, so Linda, what's her last name?

Corey: Murphy.

Sarah: Linda Murphy.

When I was interviewing, she wrote the Declarative Language Handbook. When I was interviewing her for the summit, I realized once again, this is not about what you're saying, it's about the underlying principle. Underneath what you're saying, right? Like it's, you can say declarative language, but it's, you can, or you can say the words, but if you don't, if it's not backing that you're really trying to deepen your relationship, the conversation to try to learn more, you know, about your child or about the situation, then it's not that it's just surface.

Corey: Exactly. Exactly. And one of the big reasons why we're talking about this today is I kept on leaving voice notes for Sarah over the holidays because I saw so many friends and family over the holidays and many people know what I do for a living. And there [00:07:00] was so many funny interactions that happened as a result of this with parents and children.

Do you want me to tell my story? Yeah, totally. Go for it. Okay. So I had a friend we were all kind of in a house and I had a friend feeding her child and she pulled out sort of like a peaceful parenting script and said, you know, to her child, when you eat these vegetables, then you can have some noodles.

The when then. The when then. Huh. And then yelled over to me like, hear that Corey, I'm using your line. I felt so uncomfortable. Aw. I, right away, it was just like, I didn't even know, have the words in the moment to Why that wasn't how I would use it just that I knew in my heart That's not how I would have used that phrase And I realize we don't

Sarah: use it to try to control kids to get them to do things Yeah, we don't even actually use it that much.

That's more. I think that's a something that Is out there on Instagram world. But it's not something that you [00:08:00] and I use really that much and we can go on after and say when we might Use it.

Corey: Yeah. Yeah. So it's funny as a result of this I was sitting there beside my husband and we looked at each other.

I'm like, do we use that word with food? Like we found ourselves kind of confused and we later had some discussions around it and we realized actually we actually say the words When then with food all the time we have this one line that we find ourselves saying we'll say When you've eaten what you have then you can have more And if you took that out of context, it could sound really controlling.

But in the background of that, there's so much collaboration that has gotten us to that moment, that out of context, it could sound like conventional parenting, but actually is peaceful parenting. Now this isn't a food podcast, and maybe we need to do another food one, I'm always talking about food and food goals.

We should, yeah. But in the background of this, my kids and I have lists. that we create about food. And we have red foods, which are foods they never want to touch right now. We have yellow foods, which [00:09:00] are sometimes they might, depends on the situation. And green foods are always foods. And we regularly update this.

And we regularly have lists of foods that they're interested in exploring. We have lots of other cool things happening at the table around food, so I won't get into all of it. But we also have regular discussions about food waste and how we can reduce it. So when I say that, I'm saying it over, they have green foods on their, green as in always foods, on their plate.

They're not foods that I'm like trying to force on them. They're foods that they've agreed they're always happy to eat. And we're saying it as a like, let's just eat what we have so that we're not wasting food. We don't want to bring more to the table until we've already eaten what we have.

Sarah: Or even it could be like, your kid really wants to go to the park, but you know, you got to have lunch first.

So like, you know, when we're done lunch, then we'll go to the park, right? Like the natural order of things. Yeah. Yeah. And it's not like a controlling thing. You know, when you've done this thing that I'm trying to get you to do, [00:10:00] then I'll do the thing that you want me to do. And I guess like there could be certain circumstances and again, it's the art thing, right?

Like there could be certain circumstances where you are using the, when then in a totally non. Coercive way, but it sounds like your friend was using it in a very coercive way and using dangling dessert as the way to get her child to finish eating their food.

Corey: It wasn't even dessert. It was when they ate their vegetables, then they could have noodles.

Oh,

Sarah: okay. Noodles. Yeah,

Corey: we were really, they really were very specific. So, so we, like, that's where this is a great example of. You can take any script and it can be used to control your child, or it can be used to be collaborative and to be a peaceful parent. And you really have to sort of, in your heart, hold the why am I doing this when you're interacting with your kids.

Sarah: Yeah, it's like I'm always talking about like, okay, say that you're, you know, out in the [00:11:00] grocery store and you're, your kids totally melting down and you've tried, you know, all the strategies that you can to distract them and get them to help you and like, you know, all of the things that you might do to continue the grocery store visit or grocery store trip and they're, and you're just like, oh my gosh, we just got to get out of here and you're like, you know what?

We got to go, honey. Well, you know, we're going to leave the groceries. We're going to leave. We'll try this another day. You know, that is, you're doing that because you've judged the situation. Your child just can't cope. And this is I mean, I guess you could call it a limit that you're just like, we're going to leave.

And you say it with kindness and compassion versus. Like you're not regulated, you're super angry and annoyed at your child because they're not managing. And you're like, that's it, we're leaving, you know, we're going to leave the groceries here. So like you're in essence doing the same thing or saying the same thing.

It's looking at, you know what I'm going to say, your tone and your intent, right? So you could take a script that you've seen. And if your [00:12:00] tone is dysregulated and angry and your intent is to Make your child feel bad, then you know you've strayed into, you know, dangerous waters, basically.

Corey: Exactly. Exactly. And I, it's so funny because this can happen with almost every peaceful parenting words that we could give you. It's the really funny one that you said too, but empathy, I feel like that comes up the most often. And when people critique kind of peaceful parenting, that whole when you're sort of just like, Oh, I can see you're having such a hard time.

They're like, Oh, it's so condescending, you know, the way we're talking to our children. And it's like, well, if I'm saying that with, in my heart, I really feel for them, it's actually not condescending because they're feeling my regulation and from my body coming to them in my heart saying like, Oh my gosh, this is so hard right now versus being like, Oh.

You're having such a hard time, you know, like, how you're saying this really makes a big difference on how the kids are [00:13:00] gonna, how it's gonna land and how they feel.

Sarah: Yeah, I remember once I had this client who was middle aged man happened to be a high school football coach and I was coaching him and his partner and he was saying like how he was trying to, you know, empathize with his kids when they were, you know, struggling.

Feeling upset. And I was like, so what are you saying? And he said, I'm saying like, oh, Sweetheart, you must be having such a hard time right now. And I was like, that doesn't sound like you at all. And he's like, he was trying to empathize. I was trying to emulate somebody else who was like a, you know, older woman with a very sweet voice saying that these words, right?

And I was like, you have to be yourself. Like you are a Middle aged man football coach. That's not what you're gonna sound like to your kids, right? Like you're not being yourself So we also have to like think about like who am I like, what's my voice? I don't know I feel like we're making this sound harder than then it actually [00:14:00] is but like you have to be yourself and sometimes when you're Doing scripts, you're not yourself because you're trying to copy what somebody else says that you should and I, again, to go back to why they're helpful.

I think that can be very helpful when you're just starting out and you're learning, but it's like you have to take it and make it yours and like, what's my voice? What do I sound like? You know, who am I? What kind of relationship do I have with my child? And like really the scripts are just kind of like a jumping off point.

Corey: Exactly. I've heard my husband do this so well. We're really good in that we have different moments when we each get a little dysregulated and we do a good like, all right, tapping in and tapping out when we're having moments. And he just has this real simple, like, like, Oh buddy. Just that's, and then he'll be quiet.

He's really good at just saying like one thing and then being quiet with the kids. And I've noticed now that my older son will do it with my younger son. He'll just look at like, Oh buddy, if he's having a hard time. And it was, he found [00:15:00] his own way of just like simple line and then silence. And that really works well for him, which is probably another interesting part of this is.

We often coach parents to say less.

Sarah: Yeah, totally. Yeah, I mean, I think that I think that the bottom line is that it's really about trying to understand, like, what's your, you know, I mentioned before, your intention. If you're, you can take anything, any script that you read, and if your intention is to control your child, stop the meltdown.

You know, whatever it is, you could use that. You could use that script to do that. Right. But if your intention, you really have to go back to like, what's the intention and peaceful parenting is welcoming the feelings, making kids feel connected, like they're not alone. And maybe the way that you do that isn't through.

You know, those words, maybe it's something else. And as you said, maybe it's saying nothing. And the, you know, the other goal of peaceful parenting is that [00:16:00] collaboration, right? Not control and coercion. And so any script, you know, it might be a helpful way to, you know, get through the day. Like when we've done, when we finished lunch, then we'll go to the park.

It's just like, these are the things as your grownup guide, then I know we're not going to go to the park before we've eaten. Cause everyone's starving. You know, even I'm thinking of collaboration though. Maybe we bring lunch to the park. Like once you start thinking about collaboration you can think of all sorts of new ideas, but it's really about like, how can I be more collaborative?

And if the scripts help you think of ways to do that's great, but just always be checking with yourself. Like what's my, what is my, when I'm using these scripts, what is my intention?

Corey: Yes, what is my intention? I was talking about this podcast with my cousin who's she's worked in the business world for her whole career and she kind of laughed and she's like, I love that.

Basically what you're saying is what's important is intent and context. And she's like, that's what it always comes down to, whether you're working with adults or whether you're [00:17:00] working with children is intent and context. And so I think moving forward, we're asking parents to just hold that intent really close to their heart.

And if you need a script, it's absolutely fine, but just make sure you're using it for that intent of being peaceful, not to control your children.

Sarah: Yeah. One other thing that I hear that I, well, I've heard people say this before and I had my own version of it, but they're so different in their application is have you ever heard parents say, or teachers say, like asked and answered?

Oh yes. Like when kid's asking something that asked and answered, oh my gosh. I just think that's so mean sounding. But I used to say something very similar to my kids. But it was, you know what, you could ask me as many times as you want, and the answer is still no. I mean, that's basically asked and answered, right?

It's just a different, it's just a completely different intent behind it. It's like, you know, oh, honey, you know, I know how much you want. It's basically saying like, [00:18:00] you can keep asking me, I'm not going to change my mind, which is another way of sort of saying like, stop asking me a certain way, right? But like, like completely different.

You know different. It's not trying to shut them down. It's trying to make them feel understood

Corey: and I've even used a version of that lately where I've heard you say many times like you need to pause and think about your answer sometimes, right? We don't want our default answer to be no, we don't want our default answer to be no And so what I've been doing is I'll say to them they're kind of coming at me like but what about this?

What about this like coming at me with something? I've already given them answer I'll say to them, you know what? I need a minute to think about This, I can hear that you're not happy with my response and maybe we can come up with a solution together, but I can't do that until I've had a chance to think about it.

So let's all take a minute and then we'll come back to it. And that's the same thing. I could do that in a really mean way or I can just say, Hey, I need a minute. And I think a lot of peaceful parenting is actually [00:19:00] giving yourself space to think about how we can hold that intent and how we can collaborate.

Sometimes you need a minute in order to parent like that and that's okay.

Sarah: Yeah. No, I think this is, I think this is a really helpful conversation. You know, we were talking before about seeing social media, you know, on social

media, people almost like making fun of peaceful parenting or like the bad examples of when that's like peaceful parenting gone awry and you see like a kid who's totally out of control and the parent is just like gently saying, Oh honey.

We, you know, we don't hit or, Oh honey, I can see you're having very big feelings right now. Like that's actually you and I never say we don't hit, but anyways, that like, we'll just say, Oh honey, you're having some very big feelings right now. While the child is like throwing things and hitting and you know, whatever.

And it's like one danger of the scripts is that people think that. Your words are enough. And it's like, okay, well, you might say, I can see you're having a really hard time right now, but you have to [00:20:00] combine the words with something else. Like the words are not enough. Like if your kids are fighting, saying, you know, physically fighting, saying like, stop fighting is not going to be enough.

You know, sometimes you have to go in there with the scaffolding and be more of a guide of like, okay, you know, I can see you're having a really hard time right now is, and you might even genuinely mean it. It's not going to be enough to scaffold your child in that situation where they're out of control, right?

You might have to. you might have to, you know, pick them up, hold them, bring, remove them from the situation, of course, in a gentle way. And I'll just say here, I'll never touch a child if you're angry. But you might have to actually do something. And I think that's where also, you know, people make fun of peaceful parenting because they see the words or the scripts without the action, without the scaffolding that we coach people on.

Corey: Exactly.

Sarah: So the scripts by themselves our, you know, [00:21:00] words are not enough sometimes, basically. You have to do something. Sometimes you have to do something.

Corey: And so much in the background. So they're just really one part of a complex puzzle.

Sarah: Yeah, totally. Well, I think this has been really helpful, hopefully.

Let us know if you're not already in our Facebook group, we have a great free Facebook group that's full of supportive parents. You can find it I think it's Reimagine Peaceful Parenting. With sarah rosensweet and team on facebook and we also have tons of free resources for folks on [reimaginedpeacefulparenting.com](#).

[reimaginedpeacefulparenting.com](#) slash resources including our how to stop yelling at your kids course that's free that anyone can sign up for and it's a really great course about that. You know, that's sort of the first big pillar of peaceful parenting of self regulation. So check out our resources. Again, [reimaginedpeacefulparenting.com](#).

[reimaginedpeacefulparenting.com](#) slash resources. And don't forget to follow our podcast rate. And I have been giving you so many [00:22:00] instructions right now. But follow our podcast rate and review us on Apple podcasts, rate us on Spotify. Everything that you do helps to Get our podcasts in front of more families and more listeners, which is going to help make the world a more peaceful place.

And we definitely need that right now. So thanks Corey. And thanks for this great conversation about scripts.

Corey: Thanks for having me. And one last thing, I know we've given you so much to do. If you still find this hard, we do one on one coaching both Sarah and I, and Sarah does do coaching on this podcast.

So if you're interested in either of those things, you can reach out.

Sarah: Yeah, you can DM me on Instagram or Facebook or shoot us an email. Shoot me an email, sarah at sarah.rosensweet.com. And thanks for mentioning that, Corey, because I can't tell you how many times, I don't think we do a good enough job of saying that we do one on one coaching, because I can't tell you how many times I get emails from people who say, do you do one on one coaching?

And I was like, wait, what? So anyhow, we both do one on one coaching and we would love to [00:23:00] support you. Thanks everyone.

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.

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