

Help! My Child is Violent! | Ep. 64

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SUMMARY

In this episode of the Connected Families podcast, hosts Stacy Belward, Jim Jackson, and Lynn Jackson address the challenging topic of children's aggression and violence towards parents. They emphasize the importance of understanding the underlying emotions driving such behavior and provide practical strategies for parents to respond with empathy and grace.

- Aggression in children often stems from underlying anxiety and a lack of emotional language, leading to physical outbursts.*
- Parents should focus on receiving God's grace to foster peace in their homes and avoid feelings of shame or discouragement.*
- Immediate intervention is crucial for safety, but parents should also prepare themselves emotionally to respond with calmness and empathy.*
- Developing "truth phrases" can help parents express compassion and validate their child's feelings during moments of aggression.*
- It's essential for parents to recognize that their responses can either reinforce a child's feelings of being loved or create a perception of being against them.*
- Building a compassionate connection with children requires ongoing effort and may involve seeking professional help when needed.*
- Parents are encouraged to lean into their faith for wisdom and support while navigating challenging parenting situations.*

[Music] hi friends welcome to the connected families podcast I'm Stacy belward your host happy to be here with you again today you know before we get started have you heard that connected families is having live conversations with people in our community on a new social media app called Clubhouse we are loving connecting with people like you answering questions talking about what's real and celebrating with each other we would love you to join us there is more

information in the show notes about how you can be a part of that well today Jim and Lynn Jackson co-founders of connected families are going to join me at the mic to tackle a topic that we get lots of questions about this topic comes from parents of very small kids through middle school and even older together we are going to talk about when kids get violent and especially when kids start to physically hurt their parents well hi

Jim and Lynn welcome to the mic hello Stacy hi Stacy we're a little we're a little timid about this topic already we're timid because we get a lot of questions and it's hard to sort out how to best help parents because there's a big picture in play and a little picture in play right and there's a lot of emotion around it the number of

questions we get mean that there's a lot of really discouraged parents about this

topic they don't know what to do when they see this kind of aggression in their homes it's all ages of kids and so we really feel like the connected family framework and what we have to speak about in terms of violence in the home with their kids we have something to offer today don't we yeah I hope absolutely I sure hope so we absolutely do let's just get started with kind of the big picture that connected families

brings to really all conversations so Lynn why don't you start off you know with what is the big picture approach that a parent can take when they see these things happening in their home it has to start with our foundation because it is so anxiety producing shame producing sometimes for parents when they feel like I've got this aggressive child what did I do wrong or what's wrong with my child and beliefs about ourselves as parents and about our kids

can just spin off in really unhelpful directions and sometimes I think our spiritual enemy Satan takes those and and jumps on them and and fills us with discouragement about this and so to start with really receiving God's grace for us as parents in this is vital so that we can trust him in this challenge to gradually grow peace in our homes and to bring his grace and mercy into the worst situations is the healing source

that can begin to change that big picture momentum so that's a starter and we've seen parents who have been able to get a hold of that Grace and Truth with their kids and it is such a game Cher in helping these it's really really struggling kiddos yeah I love that and I don't think it's in the new version of the online course I say that even though the new version's been around a few years now but the way back when Jim and

Lyn the first one back when I wasn't even working here I remember you saying something like this it was the image of Jesus doesn't leave us when we're sinning mhm mhm yeah and so as you talk about grabbing on to God's grace in those moments that's what I think about like I have to almost have a picture in my mind it's that Jesus is right here in the middle of the room you know even if there's shoes flying even if there's

toys you know coming towards my head Jesus is right here with us and that's the picture that I grab on to when I need to grab on to God's grace and you know unfortunately as it relates to the conversation of what should I do when my child is you know about to swing a baseball bat at the front door or something you know getting a hold of that truth is a tough thing if we haven't done our preparation if we

haven't OD that this kind of thing is happening and I need to do some work privately with the Lord so that I can be more ready to be a dispenser of God's grace wisdom and Truth at times like this certainly if your child is about to raise a baseball bat to break something or hit you with their fists or you know there's imminent harm to be done yeah we just have to do what we need to do to

stop that this time yeah because protecting your child from that harm protecting whatever is going to get harmed from that harm yourself including yourself is really important but what we see parents do is they get

into a habit of stopping it now and even getting effective tools for stopping it now without doing this deeper layer thinking that we're going to invite parents to do some of today that then prepares a parent to come into that next situation

with a new ability to stay graceful to stay calm to empathize with and connect with their child maybe even step back a little bit if they can if it's not such a dangerous situation a lot of the violence that parents intervene with sort of with their own form of violence doesn't need to be stopped immediately you know words when words are flying we don't have to deal with that this second okay even if we're afraid that it could

30 seconds from now go into being physical what do we do to get some sense of presence so that we can step in with a new sense of something that our kids recognize and understand is more for them than against them because that's what most of our interventions tend to communicate to our kids is that I'm against you you're a pain you're a problem I got an email from a parent this morning who wants to send the child

to boarding school because of the difficulties of the child's outbursts and and the message the child gets even with that language is is that I'm not worthy I'm not loved I don't matter you just want to get rid of me and so often the efforts that we put into stopping violence without us thinking about it communicate these messages if we don't start thinking more broadly about what's going on and get more proactive and that's what we want

to help with Lynn I have to ask question right there I want to deal with it immediately in a way that communicates I'm for you but you've just said I need to stop the violence I need the baseball bat to stop getting you know doing damage but Jim you said something about I react with my own form of violence okay so I need to know right off the bat like what's a framework good way to stop

the violence right away well I had my first experience with this working with high-risk teens who frequently would threaten one another who would position themselves to be violent I dealt with violence on occasion and I was prepared for that so I knew what I was getting into and so if child A you know if teenager A was ramping up and getting ready to go after teenager B and I was there to see it I would get big hey hey

hey hey I got to match that energy but can I calm back down immediately cuz that's you know that's critical so hey hey hey who you you already have a calm heart when you're doing that you have big calm but I'm prepared I've trained myself in my mind and even in conversations with others for this moment and it's hey hey hey now whoa whoa I move slowly arms at my side start to smile a little whoa no oh if there's

more movement then I move a little quicker to get in the middle of it you know many times I was in the middle of two young people who were about to swing at each other and I was willing to take one for the team if I had to With This Heart of for you Grace calm presence most of the time these teenagers would recognize right in my initial big but then back down right now approach to

this number one I was strong I was confident I could manage what was about to happen but then they would

settle and then I literally would move in and if it was about people I would stand between people I can really only think about one incident when it was with things and it was Rock throwing and it was a little hard to explain at all but I I did the same thing who wow big feelings right

here breathe with me man and so with this work with small kids too and when they're coming at the parent like with you know some toy and they want to smash it against your face and you know so Lynn like I'm thinking about little kids right and I and you know like the grabbing of the wrist too tight maybe you know that's maybe a little bit anger where's the balance between I'm calm you know I'm safe and loved but I'm trying

to keep you safe it doesn't feel safe to have to grab them andh take the toy away CU they're going to hurt me with it right just a little trick about grabbing instead of grabbing something out of a child's hand you can bend their wrist and that releases their grip and it's easy than to get something dangerous Bend It Forward down naturally loosens the fingers OT lessons for violence prevention yes right so just bend that wrist down not cocked up and that can

help but that's just a little side tangent the basics is to try to wrap the child in your arms facing away from you so they can't bite or pull your hair or whatever and in a hugging type hold with their arms across their chest and then just you know be repeating calming words you're so angry you are so angry I understand and just holding them in you know really praying for God to communicate love to you and I have seen

parents do it it is not easy but I've seen them hold kids in ways that the kids do feel loved there's an example right here that I just I have a story from a parent the only effective way we've seen so far in these situations of physical aggression and throwing things when he will not stop is to sit on the floor with him in our lap and hold him which still leads to him trying to Punch

Kick bite spit scream and pull hair until he eventually calms enough we try to reassure that we love him and we were trying to keep him safe from hurting his relationships with others in the family I want to add a thing here because I still have this question lingering in my mind that you asked a minute ago Stacy or two is how do we not do our own violence it's so much of this is about kids' perception so what ly is described

could be done in a gentle and a graceful way that is a for you sort of a way and it could be perceived by the child to be violent if I'm angry if I'm anxious if I'm frustrated how many times do I have to tell you if we get that urgency in our voice then the child all of a sudden switches in their brain I'm in trouble I'm in danger as opposed to I'm being protected and it's our job to train

their kids at times like this that they're being protected that God's protective presence never leaves us mommy or Daddy's protective presence won't leave you I'm here I'm with you I'm for you it's going to be okay I'm hugging you I'm squeezing you in a way that gives you Freedom as you can use it well I've found out ahead of time maybe some things that might help you calm where do I rub your back how do I stroke

your hair if I can you know some kids are very aversive especially light touch at times like that so it's got to be deep pressure touch what's the deep pressure touch grabbing a wrist is a threatening violent sort of an act most of the time unless it's to help a child release something that's of danger and then you you grab the wrist you're still firm you look at the child it's okay it's going to be okay you're going to

get through this this time you'll gently bend the fist forward and take the fork out or whatever is in it that that hand it's going to be okay this time I'm going to set this over here it's okay oh oh oh oh oh oh come here to me come on back you're not ready yet are you it's okay breathe with me oh that's it breathe with me again oh this is so hard I love you so much honey

it's going to be okay we're going to get through this I know we can you've gotten through it before I know you can there was a mom of a young child I think she was actually getting like up under the six to seven year old range though so still would have really explosive outbursts and she said to her mom one time it's like Mom I'm so glad that you're my mom because not very many

other parents would know to hold me when I get really upset so her mom was able to do these restraints in a way that communicated that I really do love you I understand how hard this is for you and that was like a connective thing for that daughter that taught her security my parent is strong enough to take my anger without responding in kind and that's Jesus' strength oh that's really good my parent is strong enough to take

my anger without responding in kind responding the same way same way I love that well I knew that the way that you would answer this as our is our foundation is coming at this in a safe way and so I have so appreciated this start of our podcast we're going to move into a commercial right now but what I'm hearing in my parent role all of the people in our community that are listening is it's got to be so hard when all you

did was ask your child to do something they don't want to do and then it's violent and this happens every day or multiple days that feels really manipulative and so we just need to address that after the break okay are you ready to parent more peacefully do you find yourself feeling angry a lot well we have a new five session online course that will encourage you even in tough times the course is called Grace and Truth for moms and it is a Core

teaching that comes out of the foundation for our parenting Grace and Truth are essential for us to be safe parents the course is presented by Lynn Jackson co-founder of connected families and covers these topics what is real truth the real truth about me the real truth about my kids holding on to truth even in hard times and fighting the accuser and actually lots more grayson tooth for moms was made for small groups whether that's you and a friend or a

larger group that you are leading when you register for the group you have immediate access to all the online videos this course takes little to no preparation on your part no extra materials are needed your group members will be given forever access to the online material at no extra cost just press play and feel God's grace Lori Mama of three said this after she went through the course God spoke to my heart showing me how I have

subconsciously

been believing lies about myself and my parenting I realized that I've had a goal of becoming some sort of perfect parent I needed to let go of that goal and just rest in the truth that I'm doing my best and I will never be perfect but Jesus is perfect I hope you registered today all the information about the Grace and Truth for Mom's online course is in our show notes or go to Connectedfamilies.org

okay Jim and Lynn we're back after the break and as I promised I'm thinking from the standpoint of all the parents and I'm thinking about the parent who you know it was just normal routine of the day and the child doesn't want to do it and the reaction of that child then is big big big big even violent and then they you know they might come after the parent or sibling and it's just for normal things yeah mhm how am I to

understand that and deal with that as a parent there's usually a lot going on in those situations it's probably a sensitive intense child that is more internally anxious and he's sort of he or she is barely holding it together in life in general lot of anxiety under the surface anger is a lot more comfortable safe feeling emotion than anxiety and so kids will quickly default and shift from this underlying pool of anxiety and stress to an anger response because they

feel more in control so it helps parents to understand that so they can start to just pray about Lord what might be so stressful for my child right now that small requests are so difficult there can also be a dynamic of the parent is tired and as soon as the child gets upset they get what they want and then that can perpetuate a cycle as well so it's complex it's multifaceted another key piece is if kids don't have the language skills to

Express their frustrations then they just default to physical aggression because they just can't pull together those thoughts and they may be pretty articulate when they're calm but that in some kids their language capacity can just go offline when they start to get frustrated and so that's another real piece that can complicate this but it's very important to ask what does my child really need to grow Beyond this response which requires a new lens for parents parents mhm so our work is to develop a

lens of compassion versus a lens of anxiety a lens of resentment we've talked about this a thousand times how many times no no don't you R you know it's like what do we the parent need to do to get to a place of understanding all of this child's issues so that we can be compassionate for this child's struggle that's a spiritual work that's a difficult work that doesn't happen today for most parents that happens over time as we keep working on asking

ourselves the right question when this sort of is going on did I act out of compassion or did I act out of frustration because if I act out of frustration then my child perceives that as a I'm against you sort of an action if I can act in compassion the more that my actions out of compassion can land on my child the more they're going to start to believe like that Mom in the first half Lynn talked about mom you know how

to calm me down you're a mom who knows how to hold me that was a mom who didn't just decide one day oh I'm going to hold him different I'm going to try harder that was a mom who did the work away from the violence to come to a place of compassion a place of having a new lens for how she was going to deal with this and it's really a lens of how might the very Spirit presence and power of Jesus

engage with this struggling child right now and how can I put skin on that for this moment that's hard work that doesn't happen in a day or a week most of the time we need help with that but what you're saying Lynn is so right on it's like what is that anxiety about anxiety blows into anger quickly for young kids especially and being compassionate is just so critical probably every parent has had a time when they responded in a way that they

really didn't like it and I say this in my grace and truth for Mom's talk two different times where I whacked a child in the face because I was so exasperated I was a bubbling pile of need under the surface when I chose to do that so there's a double element of I made a choice to do something aggressive but also I was just stressed exhausted frustrated overwhelmed anxious all those things I was a bubbling pile of need

that lashed out in aggression so we can put our focus on trying to put some consequence in place for the aggression which often makes things worse because it discourages kids more or we can try to sort out what is in this bubbling pile of need in my child and how can I begin to work with that and begin to give them the skills that they need maybe skills of flexibility or understanding their feelings when they're upset or problem solving or

empathy for others we've got lots of resources on these to help parents but that's when I see the shift begin to happen in families all of those things make me feel a little overwhelmed as a parent where do we start empathy emotions you know what are all these underlying issues you know um I'm already a parent who has a lot probably too much going on you know and that's why I just need you to get to bed or I

just need you to pick your toys and I can't I don't have time for this you know big Outburst right now so you know breaking it down where would you suggest a parent to start I think in dealing on an emotional level with their kiddo and really working on the feelings awareness peace because you know the research scientists that have studied aggression they pretty much agree that when parents can come in with strong empathy sincere empathy not I know you're frustrated but

you need to put these Legos away that's not sincere empathy when parents can come in with sincere empathy and begin to help the child verbalize what's going on for them that is probably the best starting place so do we need to do a tiny role play what would that empathy look like if we had a seven-year-old who had a you know a coffee cup he had a hot chocolate or something and he was ready to whip it at

mom so before we do the role play I want to even narrow what you just said a little bit further cuz I think in concept it's right on but so very pragmatically where do we start it's by finding some phrase Lynn you call these truth phrases a truth phrase of compassion for my child what is true about this child in this struggle that would be true to God as well as it is to me that could feel like a compassionate

sort of a thing what is that phrase and can I work that phrase in my mind and in my spirit so that I'm Ready the next time there's a blowout of some kind Lynn if you've done that as a parent you know I'm little Jimmy who's how old did you say I am like eight seven or eight and I'm going to throw a mug of hot chocolate cuz I'm mad so so clearly if by 7 or 8 I'm at a place where throwing

a mug of hot chocolate in the house is something that's in my repertoire there's a lot going on MH and there's a lot of heaviness there's a lot of anxiety there's a lot of stuff going on in me for me and you know ly's been you know all the things you said overwhelmed exasperated it's hard but you've done some things to start to try to come to me different so that you're for me not against me what's a phrase that you

might have rehearsed that you can say out loud to me at a time like this with big energy if needed I think probably just what you were saying if you have such big Angry feelings right now you are so angry and that's so hard to be that angry yeah we don't need to role play so she's affirming acknowledging my anger is real yeah that's huge for children to know that you're validated even if the feeling that you feel is a

feeling that's too much for a situation or unwarranted or whatever I get it Mom you think I shouldn't feel this way but I do help me understand that you know what I feel is huge so parents identify what is that big strong feeling can you say it out loud in a compassionate empathetic sort of a way toward your child rehearse it when you're not in the Heat of the Moment because you'll probably need it in the Heat of the

Moment your child is not going to magically build new Pathways in their brain for this by you starting to learn some things and that's how you build new Pathways a leading neuroscientist has said that the amygdala which is the heart of the fight ORF flight center the amygdala's job is to immediately discern am I dealing with a friend or a foe and if we come in with an agenda to try to dominate or control our child we're

immediately in the foe Camp if we come in with an agenda to understand my child that can put us in the friend camp and can deescalate and there's so many different people that have researched this and written about it but that starting place of really stepping in into the child's shoes even if you think they're irrational right now what is it like to be that child and to be overwhelmed with life and maybe to have a perfectly behaved sibling that makes

them feel terrible about themselves or whatever it is so I'm thinking triggers and I'm thinking taking a step back and that whole idea of control so was it that the child was told to do something they didn't want to and that felt controlling to them so then they launch into you know violent activity violent Behavior or reactions is that kind of control bad the parent telling the child to do something well if you know that that child is going to quickly go into

aggression yeah and you do the same thing that you did yesterday that triggered them to do that then it's time for some fresh thinking okay right you know that's what I was going to say is it bad is it wrong that's a binary way to think about it I don't know the truth is I don't know if it's bad or it's wrong the question is what's your experience tell you if your experience tells you that that's not helpful then

it might be time to discover and try something different right until you land on a new Effectiveness and here's what happens is that a certain set of parents will hear this teaching and they'll say I tried that compassionate stuff and it didn't work the goal of compassion is not to get it to work if it is your kids will smell that a mile away as manipulation the goal of compassion is to develop a new heart of compassion for

your child that's it yeah and when you do that you can speak out of it out of the abundance of our hearts our mouth speak and if I develop a heartfelt compassion for my child and some phrases that can go with it it can become more natural for those phrases to be come into play when they're needed most I can also use those same phrases when I'm tucking my child in or when we're dropping them off at the school or the

child care or when I'm leaving for the day you know we can use those same phrases all over so that we can convince the child that their love that they're valued that they matter that we are working to understand them but you know then there's that group of parents who do this and their kids are still struggling for us I think the answer is then keep trying something different a new phrase a new way and honestly every

professional talk to including Lyn and I will say if it's too hard and you've got this heart of compassion and you know you're doing the best you know how to do you're not alone there's people who can help you we're here to help parents through this stuff there are pastors There Are Spiritual directors there are therapists that are available the younger the kids and you know maybe even I would take that qualifier off when our kids are struggling it always helps us

to get some help we want to send our kids off to stuff and have them get the help but if they get the help and then they come back into the same environment and the same sort of practice it's not going to help them make the progress unless we're learning and growing in new things ourselves but sometimes professional help is needed and it's okay and that's part of what community is here for that's good we're coming to the end of our podcast today I

wonder Lynn if you could just do a wrap up or a summary of what we've talked about today for parents yeah I think you know certainly it so starts with what's going on with us and refusing the shame that can come the shame and discouragement that can come with having an aggressive child and leaning into Jesus' love for that child and for you and leaning into hope May the God of Peace fill you with all hope as you

trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit to have hope in the face of a situation like this requires that we lean into our heavenly father and the Holy Spirit and that he is at work in our family and then to make sure that your heart is really really connected to your child so often aggression is a cry for help and for connection and so leaning forward in Connection in those

times and then helping your child to verbalize those difficult feelings outside of that time in that time walking in empathy because that's what represents Jesus and then equipping them with the skills that they need to begin to choose different responses and to have wiser choices than aggression with skills of flexibility and problem solving and the things that they need to begin to overcome this cuz I don't think your child wants to spend their

life being an aggressive kid all good any

final words Jim I agree with Lynn the work that Lynn just mentioned is so important you may need to develop a truth phrase for yourself too you know what my child is not a reflection of my value before God God your presence hasn't left us because of this you are with me you won't forsake me and literally commit those ideas to memory and repeat them throughout your day so that you're ready when you need them and

we love producing these podcasts that I just know are just filled with practical tips for parents but I would just like to add in James when it says that we can ask for wisdom and he will give it to us and so for all the parents listening who are feeling exasperated and we know that you've gotten help from this podcast but Jesus has so much more and he can give you ideas and wisdom for what's going on

in your home and in your child thanks jimin hey friends if this topic struck a chord for you we have a lot of free resources on our website including an anger ebook that you might want to go and find well we want to hear from you what did you find helpful from today's episode let us know by sharing a comment we work hard to make these podcasts practical and relevant to what parents are facing facing today please subscribe

and leave a review so other families can find us and learn how to parent with peace and connection next month we will be hearing from Jim Jackson and Chad H as they celebrate fathers and discuss topics relevant to dads for more information about connected families go to Connectedfamilies.org see you next [Music] time