

Pursuing Kids Who Push Away

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SUMMARY

In this episode of the Connected Families podcast, hosts Jim Jackson and Chad H discuss the painful experience of feeling distant from one's children. They explore the reasons behind this disconnect and offer practical strategies for parents to reconnect with their kids, emphasizing the importance of understanding children's perspectives and engaging with them on their terms.

- *Parents often feel hurt and rejected when children pull away, leading to resentment.*
- *Understanding the reasons for a child's reluctance to connect can help parents approach the situation with empathy.*
- *Engaging with children on their terms—whether through shared interests or simply being present—can foster connection.*
- *Observing and commenting on children's activities without judgment can enhance communication.*
- *Parents should focus on affirming their children and recognizing their unique qualities.*
- *It's crucial to let go of high expectations for connection and embrace small steps toward rebuilding relationships.*
- *Seeking God's guidance and reflecting on personal feelings can help parents navigate challenges in their relationships with their children.*
- *The podcast encourages parents to remain hopeful and persistent in their efforts to connect, highlighting that every small effort counts.*

[Music] hi friends welcome to the connected families podcast I'm your host Stacy belward our purpose in this podcast is to guide you to receive God's grace and truth and then to equip you to pass that Grace and Truth on to your children I'm so glad that you hit play today well today's episode is going to be a little bit different I turned the mic over to Jim Jackson and Chad H to have a conversation about a question that is

getting a lot of traction in our search engine the question is something like what do I do about the distance between my child and I or my kids are pulling away now what this is a hard thing when parents feel the distance between themselves and their kids at any age it's painful well Jim Jackson is the co-founder of connected families with his wife Lynn and Chad H has been part of connected families nearly from the start Chad's the director of the

coaching certification program he's a speaker and co- author with me actually of the power of questions online course well let's listen in as Jim and Chad talk about this topic of distance between parents and kids well it's good to be back on the podcast I'm Chad H and I'm here with my good friend co-founder connected fam is Jim Jackson and we are talking about a topic that is a struggle for some parents and is there's just no

quick and easy answers to it but we want to discuss it flush it out a little bit and see if we can offer some encouragement and the topic is my child wants nothing to do with me what a difficult oftentimes exasperating place to be when we come to a place where our kids don't want to do anything with us and so Jim I'm glad that you're here with me and we're talking about this topic what do you have to say about that

I don't want to talk about it Jim just leave me alone Jim we need to talk about things like this I'm busy I've got nothing I don't just leave me alone you're always badgering me to talk to about everything I don't want to talk this time you never want to do anything that I want to do we're supposed to be connecting here Jim it's cuz you're trying to talk to me through headphones and microphones and I just want to go

dig around in the backyard and do stuff there you go I couldn't resist I don't want to make light of this on the one hand but you know on the other hand I think bringing lightness to the difficulties that can be so heavy and discouraging is sometimes part of the grace of God that that helps us through and helps us find new ways but I by no means want to minimize the reality of the hurt and the and the challenge that

this can be for some parents so should we start over again should we over no I think we can keep I think we can press forward I think there's some sense of you know it is difficult but also sometimes just having a little bit of a sense of humor about it and saying okay this is not an end product kind of telling myself some things here as well like like There's Hope and we're g to hopefully unpack some of that a little

bit today but I think maybe just asking that initial question you know like what causes it like what what are some possible causes of of a child not wanting to do anything yeah with a parent yeah and I think it's interesting you know whenever I sort of put on this this roleplay mindset I really do kind of enter into what might be some of the real feelings of kiddos and even in this little roleplay I was just like I I kind

of just for for those little moments just literally didn't want to be bothered right now it was it was not about I don't like you it was not about it was just like I had some things that I was thinking about some stuff that I wanted to move toward and what you wanted to move toward and the things that you were thinking about was different and the way that I sort of cope is to just shut down be quiet I

don't want to argue arguing hasn't gotten me anywhere I just want you to leave me alone I think each of us probably relates at some point to being invited to do stuff that we prefer not to do and we know how that feels grown-ups whose frontal lobes are fully developed we know how to make decisions about that and how to get over maybe some of those impulses but our kids may not and we get to help them we get to

help them learn how to be who they are who God made them to be even if the way that they want to engage might not be the way that we want to engage yeah I think there are a lot of reasons that uh our kids may not want to do anything with us and some of it is just that we don't want to be interrupted I also think that sometimes there's just some past hurts or wounds and uh we recognize

as parents that we want to do some things differently and yet our kids perhaps haven't gotten on board with that yet or they're still kind of thinking about things in terms of how they used to be and even as parents if we've made a switch our kids are often times lagging behind in terms of coming to a place of recognizing that change or embracing that change yeah I think of my kids and times when they didn't want to

respond or engage and you know really that was probably in part because of how they're wired it was in part because of what they were focused on at the time I've got a couple of kids who really hyperfocus on stuff and just almost can't let in any external inputs except for the thing that they're concentrating on and you know I would have to say too that there been times where there's just been some avoidance because of

wounds you know I have a tendency as a dad to come on pretty strong and be pretty dominant about how I want things done and I've done that at the expense of my children sometimes so there's some woundedness and so when I engage them the next time you know they just kind of ignore me because they don't like being told or pushed or shoved around and maybe even harboring some resentment and I would know that

there was resentment going on if I continued to push and then all of a sudden the kids just snapped that's usually telling that there's something more going on than meets the eye than is present just in this single interaction so it could be any number of these things and I think to be parents who find ways into lightness in our discovery of all of this and prayerful about this so that we can be Discerning even with Holy Spirit eyes is an

important skill to learn as parents one of the things that I noted over time was when I had similar interests with my kids then it was pretty easy to connect but it was challenging for me sometimes when it was about connection or engagement that I didn't really feel very good about myself around or just wasn't very interested in you know I wanted to do the things that I wanted to do so if you wanted to go outside you

wanted to play ball or you wanted to you know just be active or something like that but certain things would just be like I don't want to do that so yeah you know I think that lack of similar interest with a particular child can also be a driver there for sure especially when you have other kids who are maybe wired more like you which in our household you know I had two kids that were quite similar to me in wiring

as an extrovert and I mean they all could play silently in certain respects but if there was people around I got two kids who are high people people I've got one who can be and sometimes not so much but I remember thinking something's wrong he doesn't want to connect with me he won't do it and I kept trying the things that I do to connect naturally on my terms conversations verbal lots of verbal invitations humor laughter and I

just remember one day he came to me he's like I just want to connect and I was like well I've been trying trying trying what are you talking about what do you mean he I just want to go do a thing and be quiet and build a thing so I mean it was like I don't like building things I can't follow instructions I don't do sequences well I can't and I was like we went out and built stuff and had the

time of our lives and we never shared really any words and so part of it was you know my expectations about what connection looked like needed to shift to be more aligned to what his expectations for connection looked like and that can be hard work sometimes yeah I think that's right I think the personality I think the introvert extrovert I remember you know driving in the car and I was thinking I was doing the the great parent thing here where

I'm like okay we're trying to have a conversation and I'd get one-word answers and it just be like yep no shoulder shrug and it just started to really build up even like a resentment in me when I'm feeling resentful it's really hard to communicate you know I love you I'm with you I'm for you it's kind of like a you're a burden to me or you're kind of getting in the way of what I know I'm supposed to be doing

here at least I think I'm supposed to be doing and I've seen this be so subtle in me and in others where we've got just this little Burr that's in us and so when we do our work to try to connect even if it's on the child's terms there's something about it that the child reads you know and our kids are Master students of our facial expressions and of our body language and of our tone of voice and you know if

there's just a hint of something in there the kids recognize it and they're repelled from connection rather than drawn to Connection by it so I just think that and we talk about this pretty much every podcast really in some shape or form it's our work work to drive inside and to look Inward and to and to take thoughts captive to Christ's obedience and to confess the sin of resentment of Judgment of unresolved issues that we might have or unresolved

hurt that we might have from our kids even if we don't go to them with it necessarily we might we might decide to do that but we might just go Lord I recognize in me this thing and I I'm just going to invite you to bring a lightness that can overcome that and be fully present for my child and then listen and attuned to and responsive to the way that the child might want to go rather than the way that I want to go

and I think that what's the cause here then reflecting back for parents and inviting us as parents to look inward to that what what am I believing about myself or my child when connection is difficult when I'm feeling rejected in a lot of ways which my child wants nothing to do with me really feels like it's a rejection of me and then what am I telling myself about me what am I tell in myself about the child because you

know our beliefs and our thoughts will lead to our feelings and actions so what we believe and think and you're referencing 2 Corinthians 10:5 we take every thought captive and we place it under the Obedience of Christ that's where the work I think begins before we get to what are we going to do it's like what's going on is such a an important question yeah I think this issue of feeling rejected is actually a big one

especially as the kids get a little older and we are working harder for their benefit and then they and then they act towards us in ways that don't feel affirming or accepting or appreciative and we tend to what what some people would say take it personally how I think of that is we tend to allow feelings to build of hurt of resentment of even of fear of you know where's this Dynamic going to lead us and and when

those emotions drive us we're rarely at our holy spirit filled fruit of the spirit love joy peace patience goodness kindness faithfulness gentleness self-control I think kindness is in there somewhere too like we can't access that stuff if we're harboring these roots of bitterness in our hearts what ended up happening for me is that I would kind of have like this this Instagram effect of sorts where I would see all of the other parents really connected strongly with their kids and

all the you know just just start to compare and think through that lens of oh I wish this and kind of wishing things were different and again thinking through maybe maybe some thoughts like this is just too difficult or you know this child just doesn't love me or kind of dismissing it even with you know some kids are just easier to love and this one really doesn't want to be around me so I guess I'll be around the the others

that do yeah and we get clues about what we might be thinking because sometimes this stuff is hard to access yeah and even be aware of but but we get clues about what's going on inside of US based on the conversations we have about this child with other people yes as we talk about this struggle or this challenge you know when we listen to ourselves or we saying things like oh this kid just never appreciates me versus oh my child

is just so introverted it's hard for me to find that connected place and then is the help that we're getting from the people around us a fashion of help that just gives us formulas to try to do this without Reckoning with what's going on inside of us or are people asking us questions like wow that that must be hard what's it like to be you at times like that to help us sort of start to flesh this out and become more aware of

these resentments that we Harbor yeah I think that's right I mean Matthew 12:34 says that from the Overflow of the heart the mouth speaks and that's a really good indicator for me and I think for for other parents to just kind of keep that in check how am I talking about my child to other people how am I even complaining to God sometimes and not that we can't speak those things to the Lord and hears and can can help direct

our thoughts but it's a really important aspect to understanding what's going on inside of us and then I just appreciate so much it's like what are people saying are they saying things like yeah you know some kids are just that way you know it's like that that's just the way it is or yeah that child is you know just kind of reinforcing that or I mean if you've got a friend who will say well I wonder what's going on inside of you

what a gift that that is and then I think I mean we could talk a long time about this this Dynamic of what's going on inside of us and we talk about it often at Connected families because you know we' found over the years that when parents can do this hard work of looking Inward and and taking their thoughts their feelings their actions captive to Christ obedience examining themselves there's just so much insight to be had

which has so much impact on how we then engage with those around us but you know I just would invite one more thing which is to to just if if you're a parent that's resonating with some of what we're saying and you know that you need to look inward just ask God this question how how do you see my struggling child how do you see me as your child and see what kinds of Truth might come to you from God's word out of

the voice of the holy spirit inside of you I know when I do that kind of work for any variety of reasons when I'm struggling Lord how are you seeing me right now and maybe even the question what do I need from you the kind of answers I get are answers like I see a precious child who's still still working to figure it out at age 62 I see a man with the Heart of Jesus who still

sometimes gives in to lies and to discouragement but who has learned where life comes from and where value comes from you know those kinds of things then refresh me to take a deep breath to begin to feel more of God's lightness and then engage with whatever the situation might be with with more of an eye of God's presence in the midst rather than just my own angst about what's happening yeah I love that it's practical something that all of us as

parents can do to just lean into the Lord ask some questions of the Lord about that and then bring scripture in like if you read Ephesians chapter 1 chapter 2 Colossians 3 right you start to find all sorts of UR messages that will help Define who we are even when our kids are not wanting to connect with us like we would like to connect with them so I think we'll pause here and take a quick break and uh we'll come

back and talk a little bit about what we can do on the other side of the break hey friends I'm going to pause the conversation for just a quick moment did you know that connected families began 20 years ago it's exciting this year is our anniversary well Jim andn Jackson stepped out in faith with an idea a handful of committed supporters and God's calling on their life over the years the team continues to pray that God would multiply our efforts that

prayer has been answered over and over again where we've been reaching hundreds of parents in the Upper Midwest of the United States each year we are now impacting thousands of parents worldwide if that's you it's because someone before you donated to this ministry about 40% of our Revenue comes from products and services and the balance is from parents just like you who choose to donate to the ministry we invite you to join the team of families who are

supporting connected families as we celebrate God's faithfulness from generation to generation \$25 will cover your own equipping for the year \$50 will pay it forward to another family all the information to donate is on our show notes or on our website connectedfamilies.org thank you in advance [Music]

well we are back and looking for practical application of the the things we've talked about thus far really having this conversation around my child wants nothing to do with me and we've talked a little bit about what might be behind that kind of what we can do as parents to look inward but here we are thinking through maybe the lens of now what what what can we do yeah and Chad you were you were telling that story

about being in the car with your daughter and sort of the way that wasn't working for you but I am kind of curious you know how did that end up and how did you think your way through that through the lens of you know being aware of what was going on inside of you finding a way to connect on on your child's terms if there was any connection to be had at all how did that turn out so you know

thinking building resentment thinking W this this child doesn't want to be with me or you know this is supposed to be my time to connect and and really kind of backing up a little bit it's like okay so what's going on here what's going on with me but then but then also through the lens of like what's going on with my child and um and so at one point I just asked I said well when we're going from

point A to point B and we're in the car together what's most beneficial for you because I ask you some questions and it doesn't seem like you're really all that interested in in answering those questions I mean are there other things other things you want me to ask you or whatever and this is a fairly introverted child and and she just said you know I I just need to be quiet right I'm just coming from this thing where

there's all these people and I'm going to this next thing where there's all these people and I I just I don't want to talk I just needed to be quiet and I'm an extrovert and I'm like come on this is come on let's talk I want to hear and so I think that that helped me at least understand like what was the need here and then I came to a place where we would go from point A to point

B I was dropping my child off and I would just say something like it's just so good to be with you I love spending time with you and I think that narrative was a big switch for me to just recognize that I was kind of grumpy over here like my child blaming my child and then switching The Narrative to I sure enjoy being with you I think that was a helpful piece kind of brought some peace

to my kids and calm as well there well and the defining principle I hear in that chat is is that you learn to get comfortable being with your children on their terms not on yours and that it turns out that that had high meaning even though it didn't seem like it did to you because because you get your meaning from doing it on your terms but when you did it on your child's terms that was meaningful and it mattered and

they learned to appreciate that and you learned to Value it in a new way it it was a gift and then I I knew even as I was driving like I could be praying for them just uh you know soaking in a little bit of like I know they're stressed going from here to here so how do we just even cover them in in that silence yeah I know I've heard a number of parents talk about the power of

Simply observing their children in their state and then and then from time to time I'm making comments about it you know it could be that in the car ride it was like I I noticed in the car ride you just had your eyes closed and your breathing slowed and I noticed and you don't have to go and what was that like for you and how was it and do you want to unpack that for it just like no

here's this thing I I I I I observed I noticed I'm given voice to it if the child says oh huh then you just leave it you don't the goal isn't to get them to talk to you the way you want them to the goal is to let them know you're paying attention yeah I think another thing and I know there's number of folks in our Network that just talk so much about and have experienced so much the value of

learning to play with our children in the way that they love to play so I talked earlier about how I wanted my child or really all of my like I wanted my kids to play baseball with me I wanted them to fish with me I wanted them to golf with me turns out none of my kids really enjoyed any of those things very much and that was really hard for me at first and I was tempted

to think of that as rejection and tempted to think that there was something wrong with me and but I just like just let it go and then pay attention what are the things these kids love to do and is there some ways I could just join them in that or even facilitate that so I mean as much as I hate to say this because we talk so much about some of the ill effects of video

games you know one of the things I noticed was that I had two kids in particular that loved gaming and I'm really bad at gaming my hands don't work good in opposition to each other I got some got some reversal issues and so when I want to turn left with the joystick I turn right and we laugh but anyway I finally just decided let's play some video games with the kids and they laughed at me but they were so amazed

that I would take time to play video games with them that was meaningful to them even to the point that one day one of the kids after I made that effort went to Lynn and just said you know I notice dad did this thing and I know he doesn't love doing that what could I do with him that he would love yes the power of playing with our kids just joining them in their play if if

connection is hard in most of the Arenas after school during transitions and car rides whatever every child loves to play with something and most parents if we can get our hearts in the place where we can just enter into that with lightness and without strings attached and without high expectations on how our kids are supposed to return the favor we can just join our kids and play with them and that becomes an Avenue to learn

to listen to observe and and we can take it from there a little curiosity can sometimes go a long way as well when I do uh you know parent coaching and we'll walk through this is not a super uncommon scenario where parent is struggling to connect with a child and the child is kind of rejecting them in some ways I'll do role plays and we'll you know around video games or about music maybe that a child's listening to

that the parent doesn't really understand or it's just not their style about being curious like what do you like without the Judgment around that because our kids typically are going to shut down when they feel judged by us but if there's a true curiosity and there's not a well you shouldn't be whatever this or that's not okay or we you know the music we listen to is better or you know there just like these little Cuts or slights it's like it just

shuts down the the communication but if we can be curious and oftentimes what that means is we don't respond like with a judgment statement as much as thanks for sharing that yeah yeah what was that thing you were doing that you loved so much even if it's something that I didn't love so much I'm the parent and I'm thinking man that's a lot of coloring and the coloring went onto the table and so often we tend to use

like the affirmation of that oh I noticed you were really loving your coloring but you know you got over the lines and you made a mess on the table so now we got to do something about that connection lost we just used connection as a ramp to correction and uh our kids figure that out in a hurry so so that's not to say we don't address the drawing on the table we just do that later or in

a different way when we're playing along with our kids to just narrate our process out loud I'm coloring and I love the color you picked and I'm going to use it over here on here and I'm going to work real hard to keep my color cray on the paper why don't you help me out and let me know if I'm getting too close to the edge of the paper so we can address you know the issue of coloring

wildly without being corrective about it I I think this question can I tell you something special about you kids are Longing To Hear words of affirmation special things about them it's a powerful potent question if we can tell it without putting those little caveat butts on there yes you know one of the things that I would occasionally do with my kids is i' sit down at bedtime and I'd say I noticed something about you today and just that little framing it's

like what did I notice requires us to notice but then that little affirmation really really important especially if bedtime is is a little bit more relaxed and kids are willing to receive that and oftentimes my kids that didn't really want to connect were all over wanting to connect at bedtime because for whatever for whatever reason that might be another thing that I I think about as well is allowing our kids to teach us something something that that they know

that we maybe we know some things about it or maybe we're not all that interested in it but wow when they're able to teach you what they already know tends to build some Connection in relationship as well well we never know their perspective about what they know so we we always get to learn something from our kids even if if I'm asking them to teach me how to bake cookies which I've done a thousand times well tell me

what you know about baking cookies and and if we're able able to listen and give our kids the space to explore we might just learn even some new ways about baking that we hadn't known before but certainly we're going to learn their perspective about baking cookies and why they think it's important to not put the eggs in sooner or you know whatever yeah I know I really like that and I like this question to go back to

it Chad or this statement that you made like I I noticed something about you today and I think you know kids when they hear a statement like that are usually conditioned for some sort of corrective something I noticed something about you today you did this thing and you did this part well but you didn't do this part well you know I don't want to presume that my kids care what I notice so I just used to throw a question like

that out there or or a statement like that out there hey I noticed something today and then it was quiet and then usually the Curiosity of what I noticed got to be too much for the kids what did you notice what did you notice now they're asking me to talk to them rather than me just saying well don't you want to know yeah now if what I render right after that is something that again feels corrective shaming in any way sort of

missive or condescending toward them then they're not going to be curious about what I noticed anymore but if what I noticed is always something unique special I noticed that you watched Grandma tell that story with wonder even though she interrupted a couple of times I'm not I'm not gonna I don't care about that you watched grandma with wonder when she was telling that story you seemed so interested and then we can stop and it's like well what did what

else did you notice mhm oh well we better you know are we ready to answer that like have we been noticing and are we students of our children this way so that when the time is right we can we can render these observations and maybe ask some questions I noticed your eyes were just open so wide and I wonder what you were thinking the words of blessing that we can speak or write over our kids I think

the Matthew 3:17 Jesus is being baptized God speaks you are my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased you're beloved and I'm well pleased with you like those words they need to be said and spoken in ways that kids can receive that or written you know with older kids text I was confident that my kids received every text I sent they got all the information they they were checking their phones and you know as they got older but I think

that what are the things that we're going to say to our kids that we believe about them regardless of their behavior I I think it's important to as as parents and we'll wrap this up but I think it's important to not go to that place of just giving up discouragement there's an underlying belief that that I would have that this child is in my Care on purpose right is not a mistake it is not an accident that this child is here

and that I am going to prayerfully seek the Lord and just ask him like what how do I connect here what does that look like and we've got stories lots of stories of connected families of parents who were just kind of hopeless and feeling so frustrated about the lack of connection and the child kind of pushing them away who had some creative ideas that we didn't come up with through prayer and seeking were motivated to to

find some unique ways of connection and so I just encourage parents to not give up to hang in there and just even small small steps of connection is a progress so I don't Jim what what would you say as a as a wrap up or maybe a final word of encouragement that that you have I think that when kids don't seem to want to connect with us there's a riddle there's a puzzle before us it's

that's not about us and if we can learn to sort of figure out what's that riddle what's that puzzle with Wonder with expectancy with true curiosity as you spoke about it I think that opens a whole new door of possibility for parents and I think that getting to a place where we can let go of the hurt the resentment that we've felt it's very real feelings probably not because our kids intend for us to have those

feelings but just as a result of how things have gone when when we can acknowledge those take those before the Lord be set free from whatever grip they might have on us even get some help from other counselors or coaches about those sorts of things that's when the whole door of possibility opens I just remember our work Chad with high-risk kids most of whom hated being with adults and when they would come to us they were almost always wey there was a

treasure hunt here for us to embark on where's the means of connection for this unique young person and I think that's true of our own children too if we can get to a place a heart place where we're eager about that excited about that we can be patient about that we can let go of high expectations for it to meet our needs but just be present to meet our kids' needs there's going to be an open

door there's going to your there's going to be some rich learning and so we invite parents into that learning and if you need help beyond what you've heard from us today there's going to be I know there's blog posts Stacy will talk about here in in the program wrapup we're here to provide coaching to help parents on this wonderful journey of Discovery even when it's difficult so I think the Lord desires for us to know our kids and

desires for our kids to be known and like you said has chosen us for the task we're here for you yeah so thanks Jim for for joining me in this podcast episode always appreciate your wisdom and it's lots of fun to to engage with you in uh in this journey as well you too Chad I love just bantering with you in order for us to be together these days we have to schedule recording a podcast so that's good yes exactly and

thanks to our audience we love to hear from you as well and get feedback from you we just appreciate you're listening in and we'll look forward to seeing you next time thanks for tuning in today friends you know I often end the podcast mentioning a free resource but today I wanted to end with an invitation if you've been inspired by today's podcast or other connected families resources we invite you to join the team of families who are paying it forward a gift of \$25

will cover your own equipping for the year and a gift of \$50 will pay it forward to another family thank you for tuning in and for considering a year-end gift to connected families well for more about connected families follow us on Instagram or Facebook or go to [Connected families.org](https://connectedfamilies.org) I will see you next [Music] time