

My Child Freaks Out Easily | Ep. 106

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SUMMARY

The Connected Families podcast episode features hosts Stacy Belward, Lynn Jackson, and Lydia Rex discussing the challenges and insights related to raising sensitive and intense children. They emphasize the importance of understanding these children's unique needs and the potential for growth and healing within families.

- Sensitive and intense children exhibit heightened emotional and sensory reactions, often leading to misbehavior that can overwhelm parents.*
- The term "sensitive and intense" is not a medical label but describes children who are more reactive and have strong feelings.*
- Parents often struggle with feelings of frustration and helplessness, believing their child is a "problem" rather than recognizing their unique gifts.*
- Early signs of sensitivity can manifest in behaviors like extreme reactions to sensory stimuli or difficulty with routine activities like meal times and potty training.*
- The podcast encourages parents to adjust their expectations and embrace the journey, recognizing that these children can develop into compassionate and creative individuals.*
- Practical strategies, such as sensory activities, can help calm and connect with sensitive children, fostering a nurturing environment.*
- The hosts highlight the importance of shifting perspectives from viewing children as burdens to seeing them as gifts that can lead to personal and familial healing.*
- Overall, the conversation emphasizes hope, grace, and the potential for deep connection between parents and their sensitive, intense children.*

[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're here today well today will be a sensitive and intense conversation I say that with a little bit of humor the topic that I will be discussing with Lydia Rex and Lynn

Jackson will be about this sensitive and intense kiddos in our homes many homes have at least one these are kiddos who are intense who don't appreciate loud noises well we're going to talk a lot more about that Lynn Jackson co-founder of connected families is joining me as well as another of our staff coaches Lydia Rex well before we get started I want to be sure that you're aware that we just released a short free online course called seven practical calming

strategies for kids you can get all the information in our show notes well Lynn welcome to the podcast again you joined me for for more than half of our episodes and they're just so much fun it is great to be here thanks we

learn a lot Lynn we often cry together don't we but we are always grounding ourselves in just the Lord's love his love in the midst of our struggle and we have good times together

for sure we do Lydia Rex is here with us too Lydia welcome to the podcast again hey Stacy excited to be here with you today yeah so you are on staff as a parent coach you are also co-hosting the Deep dive course that Lynn is writing right now that's called sensitive and intense kids and you've joined me on the podcast many times few times now it's been a few times I know that in episode 93 we talked about when homeschooling is

overwhelming and episode 89 is powerful New Perspectives on parenting we just always appreciate your voice Lydia well thanks Stacy well Lynn and Lydia we are going to hear both of your stories today about why you're uniquely able to speak about sensitive intense kiddos um but I want to just start off with kind of laying the groundwork a little bit and ask you the question what do we mean by the term sensitive and intense is that

an official label is it a medical term is it an IEP that schools give Lynn could you start off by just explaining the term no it is not an official term or medical one or IEP or anything and that's on purpose just because we want parents to be able to Think Through just a neutral way of looking at these kiddos that are struggling more and often times it just describes it well to say there they're sensitive they're a little more

sensory sensitive they may think more deeply and you just have a sensitive awareness of emotions and people around them and more reactivity and then just that intensity too of big feelings and big struggles and just strong reactions and so those aren't bad things they just are neutral character qualities that we can develop over time so it's a catchall for these kids that are just sort of bigger than life bger than life yeah

Lydia what would you add to that yeah I love how you describe that bigger than life I describe my sensitive intense youngest as he is just the most incredible wonderful little person in the spiciest package I ever met day-to-day life is spicy it's just intense there's big feelings and just kind of those extra layers of complexity to a lot of so I know that parents are like H they're always wondering is my child sensitive and intense and how do I know

so I wonder if you could just talk more about what that looks like you said spicy but let's get really specific and practical what does that mean in daily life well oftentimes you know meal times are tough bedtime is tough potty training is more difficult you look at you know other parents and other kids and then you look at your child and you think why is this so hard for us is what I was thinking a lot you know the

sensory sensitivities that Lynn talked a little bit about you know they their clothes are uncomfortable they don't like to be touched or they're touching everything they're bouncing off the walls high energy level are some of the things that I think we commonly see sure just bigger reactions to anything you know like auditory things big reactions to what we would perceive as small sounds over or under reactive to hot cold or pain you know it's like the bath

temperature has to be perfect they overreact if someone bumps into them because they feel like they've just been assaulted you know just lots of things like that that they're just wound more tightly than other kids and they react in bigger ways and we look at and we call it oh that's an overreaction but actually that's may be a pretty appropriate reaction based on how things felt to them because our sensory processing system has a lot of work to

do it's very complicated we have to dial down or ignore what's unimportant dial up and focus on what's important we have to coordinate that between different sensory systems so that it makes sense and then we have to label it with emotional tags and decide if it's something to remember so it's very complicated and easy for these kids to just be bombarded by sensory sensations that are overwhelming and they can't adjust those dials well and what it

often looks like is a lot of misbehavior I had a family that started coaching recently and their belief that they struggled with was this kid is ruining our family the big Outburst the anger the aggression and and that can often be a way that it feels as well is this behavior is just too much it's way out of proportion this child is all our energy the others aren't getting any they're ruining my vacation because the transition and the

change M right if there's conflict in our family it's usually this child and someone else yes well I know that Lydia you've already mentioned you have a sensitive and intense spicy child in in your family and Lynn you and Jim do too and so I wonder like how did you know that you had a sensitive and intense child that's another you know this is a question that parents are asking like is this a spectrum like how do I know

this is a thing and it's something we're dealing with and not just developmental or a normal stage can you talk more about that our oldest son was initially very a calm kid but then his little sister was often stressed and distressed and just seemed very upset about typical things like would try to crawl off the diaper changing table because she hated it and there was a day that she was in between our bed and our dresser and she was banging her

head just to try to calm herself down so I pulled her up on top of me and I thought okay you want big intense input I'll get you some and so I started pounding her back I mean not abusively but yeah vigorously and she fell asleep on me pretty quickly and so then I'm like okay this isn't typical so it's kind of like when you see some things that are just like this doesn't make sense in how I see kids typically

growing and this shouldn't bother them that much what's going on with our son it was big auditory sensory issues he would start crying with a blender or a vacuum cleaner or even if he was sick he would start crying with the sound of the furnace fan going on so bigger reactions than seem normal and you know at this age a child is just making this up to get attention something's going on in their nervous system yeah know really

both of my kids have some sensitive and intenseness to them I my daughter as a baby needed really strong input for her to calm down what does that mean Lydia strong input she would only calm down if we were sitting on a yoga ball bouncing her or wearing her in a really tight baby carrier where she was kind of swaddled to my chest

she just craved that deep pressure the movement she was one of those babies you couldn't sit

down with her very much she wanted to be moving she needed to be having those Sensations to to calm so and then you know my son sensitive in different ways constantly moving I think I didn't sit down for a couple years of his life and I remember having the thought of like I can't go anywhere he just runs how can I keep him safe it was like I got to keep him in the stroller or he's going to be

a half mile away by the time I look up jumping climbing constant activity was a big Hallmark of him for sure I think the biggest thing was just you know there's something in my mom gut that said I don't think that this is quite typical I think something's going on here and I I'm not sure what my kids need but it's something different than maybe what I'm doing yeah our kids were incredible movers as well our daughter on her first

birthday so she's one-year-old and she gets a big bouncing horse and she climbs on top of the thing and standing on the saddle and starts bouncing and our son was so active when he was about one we had to strap the or maybe 18 months we had to strap the chairs to the table so we didn't pull them over to the counters and start climbing everywhere I shared that one time and a coaching client said oh my gosh I've

done the same thing some of what you're saying feels really normal to me don't many kids climb up on the table don't many kids want to just run when they get outside so correct me if I'm wrong but I think what I'm hearing is it's a full body of all of these behaviors though it's not just one my child likes to run or climb up but it's continually and in many situations you're seeing patterns of needing kind of like the Deep

bouncing or input that you called it do you want to shed any more light on that yeah a typical child doesn't run 24/7 or they're not like driven to climb in a way that they can't do other things so a typical c will run and have fun and twirl and over in the living room and then they'll sit and they'll collar for a while you know there's just a flexibility versus a drivenness I think that's what Lydia is kind of describing

but then also that hyperreactivity it shouldn't be typical for a child to fall apart at the sound of a flushing toilet usually see clusters of these symptoms and a key issue is if it starts interfering with daily life then you know you've got a problem that seems to be really key if it's interfering with daily life then it needs more attention good okay will you talk about your own awareness it sounds like you started to have some Clues early on on diaper

changing tables and I don't know back in my day it was the baby beorn that's what we all had when you held the baby close to you and you wrapped them like almost you know swaddled them right onto your chest what else were clues in your awareness of this journey with your children one was just the loudness of my one child and that developed a little bit later in school age but he actually had therapy for vocal nodes because he

was always so loud so he just needed to dominate that auditory overload with his own stuff that was a clue and just his agitation level was really high we started to get some swings and different activities for him and there

was a day it was right around 18 months and he grabs my pants and at the time he couldn't talk so his language was delayed later he got really loud pulled me downstairs to the swing that we had

and he points to it so I put him in the swing and it was like kind of like a hamac swing and then he starts pointing at all the pillows that he wants piled on top of them and so you know he goes and AG so and then I start swinging and he's loaded with pillows and kind of all I can see is his eyes and he's watching me like crazy kind of like the princess bribe where

everything's paralyzed but the eyes then he gets so calm he's so calm he he is literally looks paralyzed and I started to laugh and he gets this little smile on his face so then his mouth moved instead of it just of his eyes so anyway a ramby story but a description of how he was so agitated he knew what he needed he pulled me toward it he got it you know I understood him and then he

really calmed down I mean that's a statement of the power of sensory activities but also kids kind of internally just having a sense of something wrong and I need you to fix it Mom or Dad I think for me realizing this legitimately is hard for my child like potty training it's not just that they're a really tough kid to potty train it's not just that they really don't want to be potty trained this is hard for them to read their body's cues

it's hard for them to be sitting in their high chair for me was really recognize this isn't just about their behavior this is something that is actually really hard for their brain and their body for some reason and I think that's when I started to realize oh yeah that's what this is so common for parents to think oh they're just trying to jerk my chain or they're trying to get attention and other people tell them you just got to double down on this kid

which increases their Stress and Anxiety and makes everything worse and then that's just this frustration and stress cycle in a family where the parents are fighting more and more to try to get control of this child with good intentions and the child is reacting like no is threatening I I'm overwhelmed and you're coming at me with these demands and these consequences and I just can't handle it so I'm so in the parents shoes in this episode and I just

know parents are wondering how do I know if I need to start pursuing this learning more about it and understanding if we have issues around sensitivity how do I know I think that if you as a parent are feeling you know something feels a little bit off here I relate to a lot of this you know if if you're wondering try some of these strategies out you know all of us have a little bit of sensitive and intense in us I think

and so a lot of the tools that we talk about for sensitive and intense kids the sensory input the different things that we teach can be helpful for kids in general all kids have a little bit of extra trouble regulating their nervous system compared to adults and so you know my thought is give it a try if you're wondering possibly do have a sensitive and intense child and it's not going to hurt to try some new strategies

well and we have lots of strategies we're going to go to a break right now but everyone's going to hear about the seven practical calming strategies for kids which would be a great place to start so we'll come back after the

break with a lot more tools and next steps for our conversation today about sensitive and intense kiddos do you have one really intense child or a couple almost every family in the connected families Community has at

least one child who is more sensitive and more intense than the other kids often what worked for your other kids doesn't seem to work for this intense child well don't pull your hair out in frustration or try to force a square peg into a round hole some kids are different it's a GameChanger when you learn some new parenting skills and can truly understand and empathize with your sensitive and intense child listen you've got this and we can help our free

online course called seven practical calming strategies for young kids will take you like 30 minutes and you'll learn seven activities that will help calm and organize your child's nervous system these activities are fun and will be great in the morning if your child needs help waking up or even in the evening if your child needs help settling down for sleep the seven practical calming strategies for young kids is a free online course our show notes have all the details or go

straight to [Connected families.org](https://connectedfamilies.org) it's in the free section of the resources page so go grab that [Music] today all right we are back after the break and you know something that you said Lydia at the beginning you said that there was a coaching family that came to you and they were so discouraged and they said this child is ruining our family and I I just like my heart breaks

for that family they're struggling and so I think that there's a lot of families as they hear your stories Lyn and Lydia and they hear all these things and they're like yes this is happening in my home and they are struggling too and so my question is what does the future look like for these spicy kids the ones that are struggling and where's the hope there is so much hope for these parents and I say that both from a

research standpoint but also from watching families for 20 almost 30 years now and seeing that these sensitive intense kids when they when parents are equipped to know how to guide them well and bring out the best in them they just can become amazing young adults um and there's actually monkey studies about that that the monkeys the little baby monkeys that were the most aggressive and and sort of initially socially isolated or whatever when they had

nurturing parents nurturing mothers those monkeys by and large became leaders in the the monkey pack or whatever monkeys are called yeah that's just so much hope when you see this intensity in your child it's like that's a god-given gift that can be developed these kids often they're either like really energetic go-getters or sometimes they're really deep thinkers but in either case God can use that it's like our younger son the one that was

climbing everywhere he has so much energy to and he loves to serve and our older two tend to be more in the deep thinker realm and super creative and God has used those gifts as well to to really be a blessing these kids just have a I think naturally a deeper potential for compassion and Lydia I know you've had some thoughts about that when we have families come to us for coaching they fill out a little

information and goals form and one of the questions that we ask is what does your child do well and over and over and over I see parents describing their their intense child with things like he's the first kid to notice another child having a hard time they love so big this child is so caring extremely creative she forgives other people when they don't handle things well over and over families who have a sensitive child there are some really deep amazing

wonderful gifts that that child has at the same time as they have some really challenging behaviors and so looking at that potential there and certainly we can look at some of our favorite Biblical characters and think that many of them were very sensitive and intense so you know you look at your Peter and Paul and Moses and and these people and the Lord saw you know who they were and the amazing potential in them and so

that is you know what we can step into as parents is seeing some of those really incredible intense things about intensity is not a bad thing being sensitive is not a bad thing in fact those are amazing gifts It's just tough to parent these people in the little years yeah right oh man I love that say that again Lydia It's just tough to parent these kids in the little years it is and we acknowledge that it's just the

way it is for sure oh that's good there is so much hope for our kids and and I just always come back to even like Ephesians 2:10 you are God's workmanship every one of you with every temperament and every difference of brain and all the things you are God's workmanship and so I want to join God in coaching you and supporting you and getting more perspective I think is so important is when parents can get a vision and shift

from this kid as just the Troublemaker the problem child to this child has so much potential and God has gifted them in unique ways and I want to start to build identity around that instead of identity around Troublemaker prow and child such a huge shift and it's energizing as a parent too when you start thinking like oh God gave me this intense amazing little person and I wonder what he's gonna do instead of thinking oh my goodness I gotta keep

this kid out of jail you know I it's a huge perspective shift and one that brings hope and peace and and some confidence too I would imagine too that in the stories that both you Lynn and Lydia talked about so Lynn you talked about your daughter and you started really pounding her back a bit and that that was very calming and Lydia you talked about the swaddling the baby tight when you found those things and they were like light bulb moments I can

imagine that was very hopeful oh my goodness yeah yeah for sure I actually did a pretty intensive sensory input program with both of my younger two and it didn't seem to make a big difference with my daughter but with my son it was absolutely transforming and I did a more thorough kind of lots of sensory systems programm with him of you know deep pressure massage type activity and some joint compression and lots of swinging and Rough and Tumble play and when he

was 18 months old he had lost the few words he had started to have and he was extremely agitated and he was no longer sleeping through the night and when I began to do this he was sleeping through the night in a couple

of days and by 2 years old his language was exploding so it can make a big difference when you just dive in with some of those sensory needs and it takes a lot of effort is

what your child really needs then Life starts to get more peaceful and that effort is not very draining it's more lifegiving as you start to have fun with your child doing the very things that calm them down and meet their needs what's the course the free course is giving techniques that you've done with your kids and your clients because you're an occupational therapist Lynn and so they're kind of fun activities that you do with your kids to help them

calm do you remember the name of a couple of them right now Lyn or Lydia I sure do I bet you do like they have fun names like sandwich and yeah you start with what your kids favorites are and then I'll quick fill them in oh Eric loves the the giant hands the Giant Steps climbing up his back and sliding down he really likes that one so he lays down and you use your hands like feet kind of kind of Step Up his legs

and back and then slide down he likes the vacuum cleaner the bowling ball there's one where you're pretending you're squeezing him like a tube of toothpaste and we always laugh about oh a toothpaste coming out of your eyeballs or your ears today yeah it's just it's playful stuff but so calming to their nervous system so I'm sure that for families these bring hope it's like wow it's connection that they maybe haven't had in their daily life you know through all the

chaos it's connection and then it's calming yeah you know think about how we connect with an infant it's very sensory based and it's joyful and there's not a lot of language and so it goes back to just really deep bonding needs in kids when they're having fun receiving really Pleasant calming input from a parent and there's just you know fun interactions and laughter and eye to eye contact and all those things it can be an endorphin

boost for both parent and child in those really stressful times of parenting well we've mentioned it a couple of times that course is definitely a great place to start the free course but I wonder where else would you suggest parents to get started you know I think it's really important to start with some adjustment of expectations right because if some things are legitimately harder for my child and also legitimately harder for me as a parent of an intense child it's

okay to change the expectations for your family it's okay for you to not be the one to volunteer for all the things right now it's okay if your child is up and down at the dinner table stepping back from some of our expectations and goals for our family and adjusting to that that to what's a what's a challenge that's right for my family I think was really important for me to just have that Grace of like yeah this really is

hard and we're going to work on it and it's not going to be hard like this forever but for right now what can I do to take some of that extra stress off of my nervous system and my kids nervous systems want imagine those those parents they're trying really hard and feeling like they're not meeting expectations and really they're they're failing at this because they're not seeing progress I can relate to that so much just the almost like this white

knuckled grip on I got to try harder and and it's not working so I need to try harder and what I really found to be freeing and full of grace is that I needed to try a different way not keep trying harder I needed to try a different way and you know approaching behavior from a sensory standpoint instead of just a behavior standpoint I'm meeting my child's sensory needs I remember when we started OT for my son

boy we were in such a struggling place it seemed like all of parenting was swallowed up in this struggle and after a few months of OT and starting to work on just helping my child feel more comfortable in their body I wrote to our I wrote an email to our OT and I said I I feel like we've gotten to meet our precious son all over again like I feel like I'm beginning to have this relationship ship with him that I really

wanted some of that struggle is just starting to let up and it was because we were caring for his sensory needs and and not just focusing on the day-to-day struggles and the behavior element very powerful let go of the need to be shiny and embracing what can I do to help my child where they need it most and connect with their hearts wow thanks for sharing that Lydia well what are some key needs of parents who have sensitive

and intense children because we've said it it's a struggle this just is a challenge certainly starting with grace for yourself like Lydia was talking about and just the Mind shift of I'm really gonna go below the surface here and learn to reparent and to embrace how God has showed up in our family and not be ashamed of it I just think that's just such a starting place of Shifting

our mindset from shame to just like God you are in this with us I think of a Bible verse Isaiah 40:11 that says about God he leads his flock like a shepherd He gathers the Lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart he gently leads those who have young and I I think if we can just get a hold of just a little bit of God's heart for us and our intense kids I think he is just

full of joy when he sees these little humans that are so very human so very intense like this is some of the beauty of how God created us is to be vibrant personalities and I think I think God looks at our intense little ones with such a big smile with this confidence of like I created this beautiful little person and I think there's so much freedom and Grace for us as parents of like this is good intense and sensitivity

is good um challenging yes but there's some Freedom here to walk out this journey of God's grace and his Mercy For Us yeah it's like can you look at your child and just think I can't wait to see what God does with all this passion someday yes absolutely yeah I think the mindset shifts are so important I just coached a family last night who has two very sensitive very intense very little children and we finished the session and

we had talked about some sensory stuff and just some new ideas and and thoughts and the mom said at the end she goes I'm so excited you know like I'm excited for what is in store for these kids I'm excited to try some things differently and and that hope I think is what is so important for parents you know it's so easy to feel discouraged when you've got an intense child I know I felt an immense amount of guilt for what I

perceived as my failures and so to shift that mindset to God's doing something good here that family who had shared we feel like this kid is destroying our family and they were able to shift their mindset and start to think about what is God's truth about this child and about our family their belief that they identified their grace-filled truth to hang on to was this child is God's gift to us for healing and both parents par

had had come into parenting with some wounds from their own childhood and they recognized that their child was God's invitation to them for healing and I think that's so powerful and I've seen that in my family so much like this little child is who God put in our family to lead us to a life of freedom of healing and Grace yep it's really about receiving God's grace and truth because we can't pass it on to our kids

until we're receive receive it you know I've seen what you saw Lydia just Time After Time parents receiving healing for challenging upbringings as they receive and pass on God's grace and truth for their child yeah it's not about you know what are the strategies to help you get through life with your sensitive and intense child it's about what is the gift that God has for your family and that's so fun to see yeah and so there is so much

hope and God's presence is so real in the midst of that really whether we recognize it or not it's who he is and it's just part of our DNA as he's created each one of us our kids our sensitive and intense kiddos and even us sensitive and intense parents sometimes yes oh this has been a fantastic conversation Lydia and Lynn thanks so much for being with me today it was our pleasure yeah is all right well until

next time ladies sounds good thanks for tuning in today friends are you interested in diving deeper to learn more about sensitive and intense kids with a free short online course on seven practical calming strategies for kids be helpful for you we have plenty of free resources to get you started go to our show notes to get all the information and if this podcast has been helpful please consider sharing it with a friend that's so helpful to spread God's grace

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