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Dr. Ann-Louise Lockhart

Highly Sensitive Kids: Regulation, Anger, and Screens

Welcome to Happily Family I'm Cecilia Hilkey Jason Hilkey. And we're delighted today to have Dr. Ann Louise Lockhart with us. Ann Louise is a pediatric psychologist. She's board-certified in clinical child and adolescent psychology. She's the founder and owner of a new day, pediatric psychology. And she's originally from St. Croix in the US Virgin islands. She considers herself a dual citizen of Texas and the Caribbean.

She specializes in treating ADHD, depression, anxiety, and medical diagnoses. Well go, and Louise it's great to have you back again. Thank you. Thank you. I wanted to start by asking you about highly sensitive kids because sometimes people throw that term around or people might not even know what that means. So let's start with like, how do you,

what does it mean to be a highly sensitive child or person? Yes. So it is a personality or temperament type. It's not a diagnosis, although there is a lot of research and articles talking about how they are more likely to have certain diagnoses, but it's about 15 to 20% of the population is considered highly sensitive. And these individuals are often diagnosed or misdiagnosed sometimes as the case with anxiety,

depression, even autism, spectrum disorders, those, those kinds of diagnoses, because they sometimes are predisposed to those, or they're more likely to develop them because of their sensitive temperament. So they are individuals who tend to be very, have a difficult time with transitions. Sometimes they tend to think very deeply about things. These are children who seem to be older beyond their years because of the things that they talk about.

They can be very great conversationalists because of that. But sometimes parents or adults forget how old they really are because they're very deep in their thinking. They often feel very pressured by time constraints. So if you are telling them, Oh, we have to leave the house in 10 minutes. What's where are your shoes? Sometimes they're more likely to have meltdowns because they are really absorbing a lot of the energy that's going on.

So they're easily startled. They're very disturbed by scary images. They tend to absorb other people's feelings. So when I work with these kids, I often see them as like these little

superheroes that are impacts where they absorb the energy and the environment. And, and that could be a good thing because they can be very empathic to other people's needs. And it could be a bad thing because they're empathic to other people's needs.

So, and it could even be very, they're very high sensory kids. So smells sounds people. They can be over people very easily because of that. And they are very in tune with those things. And so small things that other people may not notice, like they might be triggered by a smell that you're not even realizing as a smell because there's a smell of the trash or coffee or something that you're cooking that smells stinky to them.

And it could be all of those overwhelming types, sensory experiences. So yeah, they, they, they can be very isolating and they can withdraw sometimes when their cup gets too full and then they will withdraw, isolate. Okay. Some of those things sound like, it sounds like me now, but it also sounds like just like introversion, from what I understand about introversion there's there sounds like there's a bit of an overlap.

How do you distinguish between highly sensitive and introversion? And like when that's actually, when being a highly sensitive person is actually kind of to the point where, where you might need some help, because I guess they're probably highly sensitive people that are perfectly functional children and adults, and they just know, Oh, Hey, I need to like give myself a little extra time.

That was like three different questions. Let's just start with the first one distinguishing between introversion and highly sensitive people. Well, the thing is that there can be overlap, but there's also a lot of highly sensitive people who are extroverts. So they're very social. They're very the life of the party they're going, going, going. And then their cup gets full and they have to withdraw,

right? So they can be highly social and they can appear very extroverted, but then they maybe more will more likely process all of those that people kind of interactions in a way where then they get overstimulated and they have to withdraw. So sometimes a lot of these highly sensitive individuals might be introverts as well too, but they can also be very social. So that's where it can get very confusing because you see this person being very talkative,

being very engaging. And then all of a sudden they disappear and you're like, where do they go? Because now, then their cup has gotten so full. They have to pull away and then kind of regain themselves as well, too, because it was too much. So, but then there also, there are those individuals who could be highly sensitive and be very introverted so that a lot of the too many social commitments and external interactions can be too overwhelming for them.

And so they're less likely to be engaged to. So it's a personality type, just like being an introvert or an extrovert is, but there can be overlap as well too, but it's not like a hard and fast rule. It sounds like it's a spectrum. Yes, totally. Okay. And what I think about is, okay, if we're able to identify like,

okay, it's not a diagnosis, but we're putting a label on our kids or on ourselves or on someone, how can we use that productively? Like how can we, how can we use that label productively rather than it being something that just is, I, I, I guess I kind of go to a place where sometimes labels can be negative and people are,

it can be limiting. Yeah. How, how can we use this kind of an awareness to be something empowering or we do something that you use it for for good, for positive. Yeah. I think what is often happens with these kids is that they get mislabeled or they, they are seen in the wrong light. So many times parents will feel like they have to toughen them up or they're over-sensitive,

or just suck it up and push through. And I think what we have to really pay attention to is that this isn't something that needs to be changed. It's not a temperament that needs to be treated. They don't have to be toughened up. And I've found that what often happens when I work with parents, for example, who then realize that they themselves are a highly sensitive individual and they were a highly sensitive child,

is that many times what happens is that they did get the message that you're too soft. You're too sensitive, stop crying, you cry so easily. And so then the parents then try to toughen them up and it actually backfires. It actually has this adverse effect on them where it destroys them, it invalidates their experience and they feel like they're flawed in some way that there's something wrong with them that they have to change.

And so I think we have to get past that notion of this temperament is something that's, there's something wrong with them. And it's more of something that we have to educate our children in that this is your temperament, and this is what's great about it, but these are things that can sometimes derail you. And this is why. And so I think we have to pay attention to that.

That it's not something that I see as something we need to treat, but it's something that we need to educate our kids and our parents on. So they understand how to interact with this temperament because you do need to parent these kids a little bit differently than you would a kid who may have more grit and just lets things slide off their back. Okay.

So that led right into what my other question was, is like, so how do you parent kids like that different? Like if we have that awareness, which I think I could see the real value of being like aware ourselves as the parent for the child and also for the child as they get older, to be aware of it, but how do we support them?

How do we parent a child like that? I think one of the things is that we first have to realize, we need to have a secure relationship with this kid. I mean, like with any kid really, but with this kid, especially because they're so impacted. And so in tune with emotions, if there is this subtle feeling of rejection or that you're frustrated or you're fed up with them or how they are irritates you in some way,

they're going to be more likely to pick up on it because they're so in tune. Okay. Well, they're just like nailing my relationship with one of my daughters. I'm like, I'm like, Oh yeah, no wonder she like, okay. Yeah, they're going to perceive that rejection. They're going to sense that rejection. They're going to feel that emotional rejection more deeply and it'll cause a riff.

And so then their attempt to connect more may feel that they're being sassy or defiant or annoying, or give me my space. And it's because they're trying to connect in some way. And it could feel like it's like not what it actually is. So it can be often misinterpreted by the, the adult or by the parent. I think another thing is,

and this is a hard one for a lot of parents is just accepting them where they are. Like they don't need to be changed. And I think if parents can really approach these children as understanding who they are educating their child on who they are and accepting them where they're at these kids are can be a great gift. We do need more sensitive people in this world.

And so to help them understand that it's something that they don't need to change about themselves. And I think that's a huge, huge, important factor because if we don't do that, we start parenting the wrong child. We start thinking and seeing them as something that's wrong with them. And that every time we talk with them, sometimes we can give them the message like,

Oh, what's wrong with you? Why can't you just get over it? Why are you crying again? And all those different kinds of comments that sometimes we might make can make them feel like, Oh, I need to not be this person. And so I think those are really important to be able to teach them that. But on top of that,

we also have to help them realize that the world isn't going to accommodate them and we have to teach them how to regulate. And so be able to be aware of their feelings, their triggers, and then teach them how to regulate when they are feeling overwhelmed. So if you feel like your cup is getting full and you tend to get irritated and annoyed and then lash out,

what can you do instead? So that you're not shutting down when those situations happen? Oh, this is all good. This is so great. This is like reliving the last few days for me, I'm like, okay, but I can hide it so well from my kids, they have no idea how I'm really feeling. Right. Like that's, what's going through my head and of course they know me way.

They know. Yeah. It's so, well, come on. Okay. I want to ask you a question. It's not a question. It's just me being like, realizing like, okay, so there's those perfect. Sorry. There's something that we hear from parents quite often. And I'm going to even be a little gender stereotypical with this. The mom will say like,

Oh, let's, let's accommodate. This is too hard for you right now. Let's do this instead. Yeah. Be flexible. And the dad, and I'm thinking in heterosexual relationships and like being super

stereotypical right now and the dad is like, you're too flexible. You're like, you're not preparing our child for the world. How do you hold both of those truths at the same time?

Because we're really, there's a purpose behind both of those. We need to be understanding. And also we need to teach skills. Yes. What a great question. Great question. And I get that all the time when I'm doing parent coaching. I almost always have that scenario and I think both can coexist. I think so often we approach situations as either,

or has to be the truth when it could be. And so it's okay. Mom is a little bit soft on the child and it's okay. That dad's a little bit hard on the child. Like both of those can be okay. I think when we have that dichotomy and we have those opposites type of parenting, sometimes I can actually be a huge benefit because that,

that brings about balance in the home. So how I think we can balance that out is by being able for the parents to be on the same page in terms of their approach to say, Hey, the mom, for example, in this scenario, it could be the empathic listening, validating person. I know that this situation is really hard for you.

I knew it hurts your feelings when blank happened. I'm really sorry that happened to you. And then dad can then, then tag team, your it kind of thing is like, yeah, I know that was rough. So when that happens, what can you do in the future? So that when people are gossiping about you, for example, what can you do differently so that you don't feel so hurt by it in the future?

So then you're having that validation piece coming in and then you can bring in, okay, let's, let's, let's come up with some solutions for that so that you can be, feel like you're building more resilience and grit for the future so that you don't get so hurt by the situation because it's going to happen. Rejection is going to happen. People saying bad things about just going to happen,

you're going to, you're going to fail. Those things are going to happen. So just staying in your emotion, isn't going to help you deal with it. Being able to have an action plan and the solution is actually going to help you. So I actually can see both parents, even though they're approaching it differently, can actually be a good tag-team situation to help the child move forward past that situation.

So I don't see it as necessarily bad. That's interesting. You know, I was as you're saying all that, I realized like, so the scenario Cecilia kind of laid out there. Maybe we know some people that are like that, that live in our house, and that might be sitting right here, actually talking to you. But like, we,

we both have like, kind of a understanding for each other. And I think we do get into this role of, like, I think she should be doing it my way. And she thinks I should be doing it her way. And I like what you're talking about. Like, we can both have come at it with our own approaches, but we still have the,

the cohesive principle, I guess, that we're moving towards the same philosophy. And it's interesting because I started thinking like, it really takes trust between each other. Like, I have to trust that what she's doing is the right thing. And I trust it. He's thinking about it in the same way she has to trust, like what I'm doing. Like I'm thinking it through and that I'm doing,

you know, whatever it is that I'm doing, who knows what I'm doing sometimes. But, but like, that's, that's an interesting relationship that the, that the couple has to come to. I mean, and then of course, if you're a single parenting, that's a whole challenge in itself. I really, I appreciate that approach. And I could see value in that rather than trying to fix each other.

And then all of a sudden, we're in this weird dynamic while we're trying to talk to the kiddo about the difficulty they're having, but in the meantime, we're like figuring our stuff out. So I that's, that's really interesting. I, I, I value that lot And I see, and I see that with couples in, in a partnership or a marriage,

but I also see that across cultures, because sometimes if you have two people in a relationship that I've come from completely different cultures or ethnic backgrounds, their approach is also going to be very different. And I have several families like that as well, too, where we have, you know, the dad usually who's, you know, if he's black or West,

West Indian, like from the Caribbean or African, and there's very specific type of cultural mindset with a white mom, for example, and that's a very different kind of mindset. And then both of them often will clash with it and seeing, well, again, the, the, usually if it's a black dad, West Indian dad, African dad, they're thinking about,

Oh, you know, just suck it up, move on. That was the mindset that especially, and it's generational too. So depending on how your mindset, how you grew up and the kind of dismissive attitude, many of us felt like we received from our own parents, then that's the kind of parenting then we tend to pass on. And so that makes it very hard for a child.

Who's highly sensitive to have a parent who thinks that way, because many times parents didn't learn about this type of temperament. They were told that you're being too soft and you got to toughen up your kid. And so that those clashes can happen too. So it can be between like a mom and a dad. It can also be between different, within a culture,

to different cultures as well, too, can clash when they're raising a child. So we have to just be aware of where the messages that we're getting from, how we were brought up, and then how we're bringing that into this situation. Because many people don't prepare for how they're going to parent. They just parent the way they were parented. And that doesn't always work out too well.

Yeah. Or they know they don't want to pair it the way they were paired up. And so then they're just like, well, and then I swing like way. Exactly. Right. And that's not helpful either. They just

like, let go. And then that's also like lecturing to them because then they don't know what to do. But anyway,

I wanted to talk a little bit that we didn't really plan on talking too much about partnership, but I think it's really important when we're talking about highly sensitive kids to talk about some of these issues. There's, there's something I'm curious if you've seen this clinically, because I think I've seen this in the parents that we've worked with at the school, in our own relationship,

that when we both have trust in each other, that we come closer together. We come closer to the center when I'm doubting Jason and he's doubting me, I become more like we both get more extreme. He's like pushing more independence and I'm pushing more empathy, like over parenting coddling, where we hold those positions even stronger that we can be even more extreme if we're not really trusting.

Yes we can. And I think we, because the Family and we look at this and like Family systems, like psychological research, they talk about this is that families maintain homeostasis. They try to keep things even. And so if you have a healthy family system, then it works out fine. But if you have a system where you have an alcoholic family member,

or you have someone is the drugs are in and out of jail or running away, or a child who's tension tantruming all the time, or you have all these other things that are outliers within the family, then what happens within the family system is that the family members try to maintain balance in some way. So they all fulfill a certain role. And so when things are happening too extreme,

then it tries to balance itself out again. So if you have one, one parent who's very authoritarian and one who's very permissive then yeah. It's going to be clashing. And then what happens that the children then sometimes that's where it feels like manipulation to parents. The kids are playing off of that because they're trying to maintain balance. They're trying to maintain this kind of homeostasis.

So then yeah. Then you'll feel more out odds and people, both partners are going to be more extreme. And that's what causes so many rifts in the family relationships. So when people feel like no, my child is having tantrums or my child is not wanting to go to school or having separation anxiety. Well, it could be the effect of this unbalanced family system.

And so, yeah, we do tend to play off of each other that way, which then feels like that's when parents start to blame themselves, Oh, it's my fault. Or it's our fault that our kid acts this way. Well, it's not fault or blame. It's just that we're our, our brain and our, and our systems are trying to maintain something that feels predictable and certain.

And when things are uncertain, it feels uncomfortable. And so then we try to drive that system to fit our needs. And that's why we see that. And then with highly sensitive kids, even worse, because even though you think you're fighting in private and you disagree in private, they'll pick up on it. I hide it. I hide it really well.

I'm always like, they have no idea really. I wanted to you. So we were touching earlier about a highly sensitive kids and them being able to regulate. And you talked a little bit about regulation. I wonder if you could say a little bit more about like, for people maybe that don't know regulation or just so that we're all on the same page.

Could you talk about what it is when you're talking about regulation and why we would want our kids to have it? Okay. Yeah. That's a great question because regulation is all about part of our executive functioning skill and it's, it's one of those things that takes time to develop. And it's something that we have to learn. So when we automatically assume that a two year old should just know how to just suck it up,

when they can't get something that they want, no, they can't. So they're going to have a tantrum that's normal. And the tantrum actually helps them to regulate because it's like, if you fast forward 40 years into the future, it would be like an adult venting about their miserable day and how they had to do this. And that got stuck in traffic.

So we're having our own little adult temper tantrum and it helps us to regulate it. Cause now like, Oh no, I got that off my back. Thanks for letting me events. That's the same thing that a toddler will probably do when they're having a tantrum. So regulation is our attempt to bring things back in. I mean, really balance is a big key for a lot of this stuff is that we're attempting to bring things back in balance again.

And so regulation is part of that. It's about emotional regulation. So to be able to be more controlled, it's about cognitive regulation. It's about behavioral regulations, all that stuff about keeping things in balance so that you are feeling like you have some level of control over yourself and then the situation that's happening. And that takes a lot of effort. So when we expect kids to automatically know how to do it,

how to handle disappointment and not freak out how to hear a no and not yell at their parents, like, well, that requires a lot of regulation and self control. They're not going to automatically know how to do that. Now for kids who are, you know, more go with the flow, they'll learn it easier and be able to act on it.

But for kids who are more sensitive, kids who are more temperamental kids who are more rigid and inflexible, that regulation is much harder. That makes sense to me. Yeah. Yeah. And others too. So I'm wondering with regulation with the kids that it's harder, they are more rigid is curriculum and part of the answer. Yes, it is. And that's the tough part because many parents,

if you have a kid who's dysregulated, if you yourself are dysregulated, which often is the case. If you're balancing a lot of stuff, if you feel overwhelmed by life and work and managing your household, then we get dysregulated. We feel exhausted. We feel angry. We feel irritable. We feel hormonal. I mean, there's all kinds of ways that we get dysregulated.

So when we're dysregulated our kids, especially our highly sensitive kids will pick up on that. And then sometimes what happens is that it pushes these kids to become parentified where they feel like I have to take care of mom, or I have to take care of grandma, take care of dad, whoever it is. I take care of my brothers and sisters that they start to feel the responsibility of it because they're so impacted.

And they're so in tune with their environment that they're trying to be helpful. But in fact, then they are overcompensating and trying to meet everybody's needs. And so a lot of these kids, that's why they can get depressed and why they can get very anxious because they feel so responsible for everybody's needs. And we want to give them the message that, no,

you don't have to be the man of the house. You don't have to be the big one in the house. I'm the parent, I'm the adult, I'm the caregiver. It's my job to do it. Even when I'm overwhelmed, it's still my job to do that. So that co-regulation piece is really helpful. So that it's about having parents being appropriately vulnerable and honest with their children,

developmentally appropriate saying, I am so sorry that I didn't spend time playing with you today. I am really exhausted from my day. Let's spend some time figuring out this week when we can do a play date together or a daddy daughter date together or whatever it is. And admitting it saying that this is how I feel. And I'm really sorry for yelling.

I'm sorry for lashing out at you and repairing that. So that way they understand, it's not my fault that this adult should, that should know better lash out on me, but you were also modeling appropriate regulation by saying, I admit that this was the way I responded and I shouldn't have, and let's repair this and let's make up for it and let's do something different.

That's great. And I feel like I spend most of my time repairing, perhaps create some, sometimes I'm painting like an exaggerated picture here, but I do like it, it is interesting. Like, it is nice that I can, I can screw up and then go back and repair that. Luckily we have great kids and I have a great wife that allows me to make those mistakes and to repair those.

So, Yeah. But you know, Jason, I think that's an important point though, is that I think so often when I meet with parents and they feel so bad about things that they've done or they complain about the things that their child does. And I'm like, why do they keep doing the same thing? Why do they never pick up the towels?

Why are they always lying or whatever it is that they're complaining about? And I'm like, I think we need to offer more grace and compassion for our kids. Right? Because you just said, you mess up and they mess up. We all mess up. So if we say, why do they keep making the same mistake? Well, why do we keep making the same mistake?

Cause like we all make mistakes so we can be able to say, well, of course we know why our kids mess up because kids mess up and as do we. And so we have to be able to offer some

level of, yeah, you, you messed up with this. And I noticed that and you did too. And so now let's do something different.

Let's commit to being different next time and then make that change. And you're going to mess up again in the future probably. And that's okay too. I like that. And I do like being able to go back and repair those risks and, and it, one of the things, so I had this realization a while back that, and I luckily can continue to repair these risks,

but I recognize that it's good modeling for my kids. Like it's, I'm doing, I have to do the stuff that I want my kids to be doing rather than just telling them like, you know, and I mean that we say that, you know, do what I do know what I say, but really we do have to look at like,

what are we doing? Do we want our kids to repair risks? Do we want our kids to mess up and be able to repair that? And if so, then we need to be able to do that ourselves. And I think that takes some humility on our part, on my part. It takes some trust on my part and it takes like some realization on my part to like,

be okay with that. Like I have to be okay with me messing up. And that's that I think is tough for some parents where they feel like, especially maybe now when there's so much uncertainty about, you know, there's a lot going on in the world, whether it's the environment or it's dealing with a pandemic or it's, whatever it might be that we're all dealing with in life.

I think that sometimes parents are like, well, I need to be that bedrock and need to be the one that knows what's going on and I need to be infallible almost. And it puts a lot of pressure on parents. And I think that if we can find a way to be okay with being wrong and model for our kids, what that looks like,

then it benefits them as well as benefits us as well. But I just think that's, it's an interesting thing to be considering as, as parents that are really trying to create an environment that's safe and secure for kids that when there's so much unknown. Yeah. I agree. And you know, the thing is I hear, especially when I meet with teenagers is that they often feel like they wish their parents would be more vulnerable,

that they wouldn't act as if they had it all together, that they want to know that their parent is human, that their parent likes to have fun that their parent messes up and that they want to connect in that way. Because many times they feel this pressure of having to perform and never, never having any flaws when we know that's not possible. And so it's about being human with your kids and helping them know that.

Yeah. Sometimes we mess up too. And I had that teachable moment with my son who was seven at the time when he, I had noticed he had done all his work, his schoolwork, and I was impressed with how quickly he had done it in the after-school program. And then as I was going through it, I realized that he didn't do it on his own.

And I said, Oh, did you get help? And he was kind of hemming and hawing. And I was like, did you, someone else help you? And he was going to hemming and hawing kept changing his answers. And, and I was like, he's like, no, I copied it off of somebody. And I said, Oh,

I said, I see why you did it. And he's like, what? And I said, yeah, it sounds like you cheated. I cheated when I was in school too. He was like, I was like, yeah, because it's easy, you got your work done. Right. I said, well, what's the problem with it. You still don't know how to do the work.

That's the problem. So although it was a great shortcut, it actually didn't help you. So let's erase it and let's actually learn it. And that was it. I didn't need to have a punishment. I didn't need to take anything away. He already felt bad for it. He knew he got busted, but he also knew that mommy also did the same thing and it makes sense to cheat.

It makes sense to me, but I also know that it doesn't help. So then let's just move on past that. And I think that's where we have to have that vulnerability with our kids. Like we don't have to share all our deep dark secrets with them and all the things we did wrong as a kid. But I think they need to understand that.

I, I didn't always have it together either. I understand why you did it. And I think that's a really great way to connect with our kids. And I think that connection that's so important for all of our kids. But especially when we talk about these highly sensitive kids, they are especially in tune with disconnection and, and, and rifts and those relationships.

And it really hurts them more deeply. Yeah. Wow. This has been such a great conversation and I'm going to have to restrain myself and not ask all the questions I want to ask. But as we're wrapping up, I want to touch on anger because we've talked about emotional regulation and co-regulation got to regulate ourselves before we relate, regulate our kids. An anger has one of those feelings that parents tend to have some fear around.

Is there anything special that we need to know about anger? And when our kids are feeling angry, I think with anger, we have to go back to the way that I conceptualize it. The way that I've seen it often conceptualized is anger is this iceberg surface emotion. And there are other emotions that drive it that are often more vulnerable and more painful.

So when kids present as angry, whether they're look like an angry toddler or school-age or a teen or adult, often we have to look at, is there rejection? Is there embarrassment? Is there not feeling good enough? Is there not, or feeling lonely, alone, all those different other emotions that often pushed forward anger because anger is a great way to protect yourself.

It's a great shell to use, to insulate yourself. And I often see it. And I described it with two kids as this kind of like this castle that has a moat with alligators and you're in the tower and you have all this anger stuff, that's protecting the stuff. That's actually the vulnerable thing, but I don't want anybody to see it. So I'm going to lock her up in that tower.

And the anger makes it look like you have this strong defense that nothing can affect you. Nothing will get to you. And everything looks like it's fire and brimstone, and you're going to destroy everybody that comes in your path, but what's really going on behind the walls are the things that you don't want people to see. And you're trying to insulate and build this protective core,

you know, so that you don't feel that hurt. And so the way I see anger is really looking at what is the vulnerable feelings underneath it. And the way to get to that is to connect with your child, to be a person with them and to find out what's happening underneath that. So when you're seeing all these different emotions that come out and you see them as anger,

and they think it's anger, that's why we need to build our feeling vocabulary and emotions with our child. So they can identify how they really feel. Because if a child thinks they're angry, angry kids do angry things. But if, instead they think that it's, Oh, I'm disappointed that I got a bad grade where I feel really lonely when I go to school or I feel really sad that,

you know, so-and-so, didn't text me when I texted them. If we can really get to the true feeling, then we can help them identify what they really are feeling. And then they will respond in a different way. Because if you're disappointed, you will respond very differently than if you just say, no, I'm mad at my teacher for giving me a bad grade,

as opposed to I'm disappointed. I didn't perform the way I wanted to. And so I really see anger is very different. And when we can really get to the core of what's going on and help our kids identify that and help parents speak to the real emotion, then we can diffuse it lot better because they'll feel understood and kids will feel heard and listened to because a lot of kids struggle with not feeling understood,

which is why they get depressed and where they feel suicidal, or they feel like they want to withdraw because they feel like no one understands them. And then we see something very different. So we have to really get to the real emotion and then educate our kids and what the real emotion is at their expense. Yeah. That's great. And I'm wondering if you could briefly just like model what that actually looks like to address the anger,

but also to get at some of those deeper emotions in the moment, just for parents that are like, okay, that all sounds great. And Louis, but how do I do it? I mean, like how you would actually say it. Yeah. What would you say? So it depends on the age. So like what age are we talking about?

Okay. Let's, let's pretend we have a middle schooler who is getting off of the video game and they're super mad because mom or dad has asked them to get off. Okay. So a few things that I, how I prefer to deal with those things is that if you're dealing with it in the moment, it's often too late, because they're already mad at you.

So many of the, if you know that that's going to be a trigger that transition from video game to off the video game, then you want to address it before the video game experience is even occurring. So that's, I think that's where you kind of preemptively address problems before they are a problem in the moment. Because then once that again, once the emotion brain is then triggered all that logic and decision-making and rational,

all that stuff is going to go out the window because now they're just mad at you, right? So it's about like, you're hanging out, you're maybe you're going for a walk, eating some ice cream, whatever it is. And then you bring it up and say, Hey, what games are you playing that you really love what we do, games,

you know, you're playing, you know, I wonder if you know, over your birthday or Christmas or whatever, that maybe we can get you the next game, but you want which what would be on your wishlist. And you just kind of just hang out with them, talk with them about what they're interested in, what they like. You know,

I also noticed that when it's time to get off the game that I know it's super hard and I totally get it because you obviously love these games. Like it's such a fun thing for you to do. And it's hard to get off, especially when you feel like there's nothing more exciting to do so, but we know you can't play all night long,

although you would love to. Cause I totally get it, but how can we work together so that we can have a smoother transition? Because I know you don't like it when I yell at you. And I know that I don't like it when you cop it attitude with me. So how can we work together so that we can make it more peaceful.

And then as you are, as you're talking them through this, then you can also then join them in the activity. So say, Hey, we got 30 more minutes left, 15 more minutes left. Hey, can I tell me what's happening? What's going on and join them in that if they are, we'll welcome you into their world. And then for me,

I find that when you can join the child in the activity, as they're transitioning out, regardless of their age, that works extremely well because then you get a glimpse into their world and you see it from their perspective and what it'll do, it'll make them feel understood that you actually get it, why it's hard and then you can then help them transition out of it.

And you can even acknowledge. I know, I know you're disappointed because it's time to turn off the game. I totally get it. So let's just turn it off for now. And then let's look at times when we can have more game, time and game play in the future or whatever it is. And so I think that it's kind of like this,

it's the building relationship piece, because then as you do that, then it's not just about you're on the game again, just get off. What's the big deal. And I know that when I've done this with my

kids, when I've joined them in things that they enjoy, I totally see why it's hard for them. And my husband and I, we did this when we were watching a show that they love.

And they were always like a cop, an attitude when it was time to shut it off. And we joined them in it while we were watching it. And I was like, Ooh, this is really good. Let's watch one more episode. We ended up watching three more episodes. Cause it's one of those cliffhanger shows. And then they were like,

mommy, we're supposed to turn it off three episodes ago. I was like, no, I totally get why you don't want to turn it off. So it gave me a glimpse into why they always didn't want to turn it off. But I think so often we are so disconnected from sometimes some of those things that it's like, what's the big deal.

What is the big deal? Like, I didn't want to turn it off either. I get it. Yeah. That's great. And that example would work for a younger child too. Totally. I love that. Right. You know, it's always fun talking to you. There's we get so much insight in talking with you. I appreciate you taking this time to talk with us.

And as we're wrap it up here, give any final words for us or anything that you'd like to ask, like a big ask for the audience, either one of those. Yeah. I think one thing I really want to encourage parents is to, I know that we have a lot of things that we're balancing at any one moment, but I think that one of the things that really helps and would really help is to take things in stride to really look at things that are going on in your life and with your kids.

And when you have all these rules and expectations really ask yourself, is it that serious? And can we just let some things go? And I think you could allow a lot of that burden of feeling like you always have to maintain everything all the time. It can really release a lot of it. And so I think that's a huge thing is just to really look at what can I take in stride and what can I just let go today and just let it go.

That's so powerful. I, I could live that one for awhile. I could really work on that one. I get overly serious, very easily Louise. So fun talking to you. I know I've gotten a lot out of this. You have a lot online that people have can get access to for resources. And I would encourage people to follow you and to sign up for your email list.

How can people find you online? What's the best way for them to find out more? So there's a couple of ways. One would be going to my website at a new day, S a.com. So in new day essay, as in San antonio.com, I have lots of different PDF downloads and information classes, webinars that I'm doing. And then I'm very active on Facebook and Instagram.

And so then Instagram would be Dr. AnnLouise Lockhart, and then Facebook would be at a new day, pediatric psychology. And so I'm always posting different updates and different encouragement and things for parents to just be, be educated on and, and informed about. And

so I have those insights and resources as well. That's awesome. And I know you have a lot of free resources as well as some paid stuff.

So it's just a, it's a fantastic opportunity for people to, to follow you. And we'll include links for all of those in speaker notes. Thank you for taking time to talk to all of us here. We look forward to future conversations. They're always great. And we'll talk to you later. Thank you very much. Bye.