Why You’re Trapped in Power Struggles With Your Child (It’s Not Defiance) Transcript

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Why Dysregulation Changes Everything

If you tried it all, if you've been yelling, you're trying grounding, charts, stickers, paying your kids. These are all true things. Still feels like every day is a standoff.

You're not alone. But here's the truth. that once we really start to understand how dysregulation is affecting your child's ability to switch gears and listen and pay attention and regulate themselves, you're going to really see their behavior differently and it's really clues.

We're gonna break down why discipline systems fail when a brain is dys-regulated and how a simple shift can change everything. We learned to parent from our parents.

And sometimes that's great. You always hear me talk about Tony and Philomena. I learned a lot of great things from them. Also don't do things like my mother did, which is chase me around with a wooden spoon.

She didn't really ever catch us, but she threatened it. If you're Italian, you know what I'm talking about. It was a wouldn't spoon and the hand biting in the mouth means you better move your coolie because Philomina was PO your mother, your Nona, whoever.

I want to talk to you about somebody I worked with a very long time ago, a kid named Alex. I've had a lot of kids named, Alex, and he was probably about nine years old, he's brilliant, funny, their mornings were a nightmare.

His mom, Lena, was just a fantastic lady. But boy, she had zero ounce of wiggle room for this shenanigans with Alex in the morning. And she kept escalating punishments.

Like if you don't do this, this is what's going to happen. No screen time. Alex didn't care. He was struggling in. The morning, so his anger grew. So did hers.

Alexu2019s Morning Battles and Brain Mapping

They really got embroiled in quite a bit of conflict, which is when she sought me out because she was like, something's going on, like nothing works for this kid.

And I just don't seem to have these problems at the same level because there were some problems. But at this time of day, at that time, we did a brain map.

And you don't always need a brain map to tell you what's going on, but it's pretty darn cool. When you do have one, I had somebody who was a sibling, adult sibling of an adult client.

You know, we were able to just see exactly what was going, no guesswork. And so that part is great. But all honesty, could have just listened, the clues were there and you could've seen it.

So what did we see in Alex's brain? We saw an overactive nervous system. overstimulated, jacked up, over aroused. He was in a state of hyperactivity of his nervous system.

So when he woke up he already was a fight. That is why the mornings were hard. Once they had this information, we really taught them how how to regulate him, we taught him how regulate himself, and once Lena really learned to really regulate, that's when everything shifted because that connection has to come before a child can listen, before they can accept correction or teaching.

Why do punishments and rewards A huge podcast episode that I just did on punishments rewards was downloaded 30 something thousand times because people want to know why is what you're doing failing?

Behavior systems depend on a thinking brain. That means your frontal lobes have to be working for your child to hear you and be able to pay attention.

And when the nervous system senses threat, the emotional brain takes over. And emotions are great. We love our emotional brain. But we don't want our emotion brain in charge when we are supposed to be thinking.

You need our prefrontal cortex. That's where our executive functioning job manager lives and works. we need that to working. And instead, when the emotional takes over, it goes offline.

And I feel like we can almost see it with our kids. My Max, when he was super dysregulated and still struggles, but is mature as a 20 year old and being able to pull it back in and talk about it.

You could see when their emotional brain just took over. I always talk is going into the red. When a kid goes into the red, job manager is like, sorry, coffee break.

I'll be back when you're not so emotional. And that's because our body is designed for that. You just can't access logic and reasoning when the stress response is there.

Because when this biology is, when stress is in, then it means we need you acting. We don't want you thinking, we want your acting.

Why Punishments and Rewards Fail

" That really becomes a problem in the real world as our nervous systems truly are activating for a lot of reasons. The person that I spoke to this morning, they were like, I'm not sure why I am so activated.

And I'm like, but your body is just in this fight, flight, or freeze. And she was like it sure is. I was, like guess what? 100%. We can knock that down.

How cool is that? She was thank you. When we're talking about threats and sticker charts and behavior charts, it's not going to reach a brain that's stuck in survival mode.

Just realize in the same way that I talk to this young adult today or when I talked to Alex back then, we don't have to have a single trigger event. Once the nervous system moves into that regular sympathetic dominant state, it starts doing that on its own.

It starts reacting to things on it's own in the same side. Cause you know, I'm always about hope and positivism is that you, once you move into a parasympathetic state, your body likes that.

And it going to do that more. We can train ourselves in simple ways, right? And how cool is this? Cause we're going be talking all about it in my book and it can be easy and you're gonna have the path and I can't wait to teach you about, it, and can change your world.

Can change the whole conversation about parenting. And you're part of it. What does regulation first parenting really mean? Why am I screaming this from a rooftop and everybody else is copying me?

That's OK. Just give me a little credit when you copy me. We have to calm the adult first. OK, and your nervous system sets the tone. That is the number one thing.

I don't want you to be perfect, okay? And in fact, showing your kids and talking about it and giving problem solving or apologizing, sometimes you need one or the other or both, shows your kid it's okay to make mistakes because that is important to show our kids that we can make mistake We can learn from them, maybe we need to apologize,

whatever happens.

But we don't have to live in perfection because what happens to my parents who struggle with the 20% of mistakes, they are hard on themselves and they get caught up in negative thinking.

We got to stop that. Your regulation can be imperfect, but most of the time, You're regulated. Step two, you have to co-regulate before you correct. You can't go into your child and aid them when you're dysregulated.

Your going to be irritated, your body language is going show it, You want to have proximity to your children, good eye contact, soft eye-contact, and you want a soft tone.

I feel like tone is everything. It's such a big deal. My bestie, Shelly and I are very sarcastic to each other. I had a retreat at my house and one of the ladies was like, are you okay with the way Roseanne talks to you?

And Shelley was, like what are talking about? She was well, you're just, she's, your nonstop sarcasm to other and she was we love each. She's the godmother of my baby.

like are fun, but an outsider was sensitive to that. So you have to meet your child where they're at. Sometimes the way you do things in your house, it doesn't mean you walk on eggshells.

That is different.

Regulation First: Calm the Adult, Then Connect

But you want to be there. You want be present. you wanna be president in tone, in eye contact, and your body proximity. sometimes just being there and as I said, being quiet, zipping it is more powerful than any words you can say to your kids.

and just hold the space. If I can be quiet for a few minutes, pretty much anybody can quiet. How about that? And once the kid is calm, and I mean kid of all ages, please know I'm mean from preschoolers to 37 year olds, okay?

Once you're calm then you teach the skill that they're missing. No learning can stick on a dysregulated nervous system and one that isn't a sympathetic jacked up state.

It's not going to happen, it's biology. So stop trying to think it does. Well, his sister can do it, brother can't do. Now, this is where you meet Johnny or Amy, where they are at, and you think about it as I have to regulate.

Connect, then correct. That's the order of regulation first parenting based on science, okay? This isn't permissive, it's physiological. You can't teach coping skills until the brain is safe.

So what's a science behind regulation? First, what the science is behind breaking parent struggles? It's really about what is happening in that body. The vagus nerve, which connects your brain to your gut, cues safety.

And when parents regulate, children can mirror that state, OK? And again, remember, talking 80% of the time, you do a little bit better, that's great.

But nobody's going to be 100% perfect. It's just not going happen. And also, again you're teaching your child a false sense that, oh, well you can never just regulate.

Every single kid dysregulates sometime. Our dys-regulators are kids that are really struggling, whatever label you want to put on it, from ADHD to mood disorder to pants, pandas, OCD.

If I didn't put it in there, it doesn't mean it's not there. Some people struggle more for a variety of reasons, but sometimes the nervous system just gets in a state of being dysregulated, overstimulated under stimulated.

So when you are activating our stress chemicals, cortisol, adrenaline, they actually start to jack up. But when you're regulated, they drop. Blood flow goes back to the prefrontal cortex.

So our physiological systems go back in line to support regulation when your co-regulating, which is pretty awesome. And then when that happens, it opens up the executive functioning of the brain.

planning, that's impulse control, working memory. Planning, not just motor planning but planning your actions for a future event is so critical. We always think of lack of executive functioning skills for people with ADHD because it goes hand in hand.

It can break down in anybody who's dysregulating on the regular. And during that moment of dysregation, physiologically, that's what happened. When we're regulating, behavior improves, right?

Because the brain can finally learn and not respond in fear. That fear of the nervous system is determined by that individual nervous. Stop trying to think, oh, does this mean something happened in school?

Maybe it did. Does this means this? Does it mean that? No. The body is dysregulating. Start thinking, how can I regulate? How can help my child find calm?

Because you got to regulate first. You're wasting your time doing anything else. Wasting your. Time. That therapy, as we talked about last week, is not going to work.

Those medical treatments aren't going work as effectively, if at all. Probiotics you keep putting in trying to restore the gut, they're not gonna work because stress actually destroys the microbiome.

Co-Regulation, Repair, and Teaching Skills

So the good news is when you regulate first, what's going happen? Everything's gonna get better. What are real world strategies? Number one thing you can do is pause before you react.

If your heart's racing, if you're irritated, you are dysregulated. What you gonna do is you going to co-dysregulate with your child. Term I coined. Instead of co regulating, your gonna actually keep your children dys-regulating.

This is the reality of what happens. You can tell your kid to calm down or you should do this, or I said so. It doesn't matter, your body is keeping them stuck and all that.

So you're gonna use some type of regulation ritual that is works for you, okay? Yes, I have in my pocket, my PEMF device. I had my magnesium on my counter.

And I use a lot of things. Well, you know me, and talking all about this. But what is going to help you? Is it a deep breath? is it is a butterfly tapping?

It is an EFT tapping on the clavicle. Quick, short. I'm going talk a lot about this in my book. What is. Going to in under two minutes or less regulate you and you're going.

To use it all the time, not just in these moments of dysregulation, but in between. Why? Because it's going train your nervous system. To stay in the hot tub state, to stay.

In the parasympathetic state and it needs that reinforcement. You want to make sure that you are naming what's happening, not who they are. Oh, your body's tense.

Let's work to bring some of that. stress out of your body or calm it down or get some of that ickiness out. Whatever word works for you and your child, but you want to be consistent in your language.

And then that's where we're starting to really teach in those calm moments. So if you've heard me talk before,

dysregulation is red. co-regulation is yellow, it starts allowing you to move into green, which is when you are regulating, your child is regulating that they can learn.

It is only in the green that can they learn and it's as simple as some of these techniques. But in a real world, they're not always easy because your kids can be drinkering.

I understand that. And but if you pause and you zip it, you won't say anything you will regret. And you can connect to your child. You can be a presence.

Always reinforce connection, because that is where the magic happens. And after calm, you want to repair. Oh, that was hard for both of us, but we figured it out, huh?

What do you think about that? You could tell your children these things. I was talking about Alex and Lena. When things shifted, they stopped all of this bickering and instead she just was like, he's going to wake up and he is activated.

So they just started their day off with a different routine. They did five deep breaths together, some hugging because she was already in a warrior state herself because this kid is going be a hot mess and you start dreading it.

I've been there. And then they talked about what their date was.

Practical Tools and the Power of the Pause

We're gonna would you like to have we can start with this or we insert with that or a choice of two things And they just started shifting it wasn't magic people, you know, I'm gonna get my magic wind out wasn' magic But it really did pretty work work pretty quick in all honesty Lena was the one who felt the quickest relief because she was so frustrated and not understanding He was just dysregulating and it was he wasn''t doing it on purpose We get so hung up, our kids are doing it on purpose.

Within two weeks, morning went from 45 minutes of a poop show to 10 minutes, of regulating and teamwork. That was how they had to do things for a very, very long time.

But that's okay. And in all honesty, as a young adult, he learned to just do these things on his own and she was doing these thing for herself. and just became part of the routine.

Sometimes people say to me like, oh, this is so effective. I mean, how long do I have to do this? And I'm like it's a lifestyle. Stress is always there.

Why wouldn't we wanna do these things? Like I talk about it like brushing your teeth, you use it proactively. So I really want you to shift your thinking.

You can't punish a dysregulated brain. you have focus on regulation. Your calm is the control system. that your child borrows until they can learn to self-regulate, just like this kid.

He learned to Self-Regulate and use these tools with zero queuing. Discipline doesn't mean a child is going to learn this for self control. It actually can contribute to fears.

And it doesn' mean that we never discipline our kids, because sometimes kids do things that are not appropriate. You got to regulate first, connect second, and then teach third.

I mean, it's just absolutely critical. This is a recognition that Parenting is not easy. Our dysregulated kids can be quite traumatic. I very much talk about when Max was dysreglated, all it did was trigger this fear that I have of a family member who is a nightmare.

It's not my dad, but I thought this person, my Max, is literally the embodiment of this And that was my stuff. This is not true. And so sometimes we have to do deeper work to be more available and more loving and connected to our parents.

But connection in and of itself, we're all into this gentle parenting. Gentle parenting doesn't work until you regulate. And we really have to focus on teaching our kids and so that that's how they gain the skills.

But your power in co-regulation can't be measured. How you get there has to be very intentful and requires regular micro practices. all throughout the day.

The amplification that you will have in your personal life, in work life and your relationships, but in you're parenting is just unbelievable. And I love when you get real regulated the people who are dysregulated, the adults, they will be repelled by you.

So you'll just get a nice little cleaning of all those dys-regulating individuals. If you are looking, if you haven't taken our solution matcher and you're looking for more support, what you need to do is go to drrosanne.com forward slash help.

It's a three minute quiz that really helps you to understand what solutions can be beneficial. And all of our work everything that I'm doing and this next book is really teaching you about regulation first.

It does not matter what your clinical issue is. Wherever you're getting guidance from, if you are not doing this work, whether it's whatever intervention you choosing to do, nutrition, therapy, OT, all these other things, they're just not going to be as effective.

Make sure you aren't doing these things and that's why we talk about these. In all of my work we're talking about the strategies, we are talking how to integrate this into your daily life and that's what this book is going to be about and more.

Lots of great stories. Always remember you got this and the power of the pause pull yourself back if you are getting dysregulated. Want more insights and solutions?

Well subscribe to our dys-regulation insider and it will show up in your inbox every week.