

## Parenting Doesn't Have to Be Serious All The Time

Helena Mooney [00:00:00]:

Hello, and welcome to parenting with play podcast. I'm Helena Mooney, and I'm so pleased that you're here because parenting can be tough. Sometimes, can't it? Whether you're in the thick of things right now or you vividly remember what it is like, We can get really caught up in how hard things are, can't we? And it's very easy to have that voice Spinning around in that head of yours, telling you that you're doing a really bad job, and there's something wrong with your children, and they're gonna be a nightmare. And your parents disapprove, or so and so down the street disapproves of what you're doing, and you're really worried that you're just completely stuffing everything up. And it just feels really hard, and you can't see a way out. And, it feels really heavy, doesn't it? And I know the times when I have found it really tough. I'll often have a voice in my head Of my parents going, I wouldn't have stand for this behavior if I were you. You know, if my child is having if, you know, if I'm listening to some big feelings or Tolerating, having a higher tolerance for off track behavior than my parents would have done.

Helena Mooney [00:01:18]:

That's when I suddenly just go, oh my god. I'm doing everything wrong. Right. That's it. And I can come in, and I wanna set harsh limits. And I wanna lay down the law, and I wanna Get this sorted out, and how dare you behave like that? And how dare you talk to me that way? Right. I need to teach you. I need to Discipline you so that you become a fully good functioning member of society, and I can go really harsh mode.

Helena Mooney [00:01:45]:

Or other times, I can just be in that sort of spiral of like, this is just too hard. I really don't wanna have to do this. Spinning out and just going, no. I don't wanna have to. And then my child does something minor, and then I just go off on 1. So I'm gonna preface what I wanna offer by really fully acknowledging just how hard it is. And we can come to parenting with the Absolute best of intentions and desire to help our children in the best way. And then our child does something That is so infuriating that all of those good intentions just go out the window, can't they? And, you know, you might have gone, right, I'm gonna have a really lovely day with my child today.

Helena Mooney [00:02:31]:

And then they do something, and you go, right. That's it. You're incredibly ungrateful. I'm not gonna do this anymore. That's it. I'm done. Well, I don't know about you, but I have had moments of doing that. But and however we wanna Bridge this segment is saying that we can get so caught up in the day to day stresses of it, those voices in our head, Those huge expectations that we place on ourselves and that pressure that we've got to do this right, We need to do the best thing for our children.

Helena Mooney [00:03:06]:

They need to turn out to be functioning adults. They need to be able to get along with their friends, do schoolwork, Empty the dishwasher, become toilet trained, sleep through the night. It's all of those things that we want for our children, which are all really, really good. But when we get caught up in all of those things, we sometimes lose sight of actually what makes life enjoyable and what ultimately works best. And that is to lighten up, to not take Everything so seriously all the time. And I know I mentioned this before in a Couple of podcasts ago about episodes ago about what do we want to focus on, and it is generally the relationship with our child. That is ultimately the most important thing. But we can't do that when we're when we're being really serious, When we have all this pressure on ourselves to do things, in inverted commas, right, to feel that we need to Teach our child to discipline them to do all of that stuff.

Helena Mooney [00:04:06]:

We can get very serious. And that's not fun, is it? That's not a fun way to live. If my Husband was serious with me all the time. I'd be like, oh my god. This is not the environment that I want to be in. It's not the relationship I wanna be in. Where's the fun? Now this is not saying that we have to be frivolous and, er, y's. And well, maybe.

Helena Mooney [00:04:26]:

What what actually, what comes up for you? At the thought of not taking not being serious all the time. You know, as I'm saying this, I can feel like, gosh. Well, that means that I'm frivolous, and I'm not taking things seriously. And if I am not serious, Then does that mean that everything just falls apart, that nobody gets fed? Nobody does anything that needs to happen. Everybody's rude and disrespectful. You know? I'm not doing my job well if I don't take it seriously. And, of course, there's a difference between taking things seriously and being serious. And there's times when we need to be serious.

Helena Mooney [00:05:10]:

But, generally, Life is much more enjoyable when we are light about things, when we are playful and silly. And, you know, I work with a lot of moms who go, okay. Well, what should I do in this particular situation? My child's being disrespectful, or they're whining, or they're asking for another biscuit before dinner, or they're refusing to get in the car, or, you know, the myriad of everyday scenarios that we all have to deal with. And often, my answer is, just pick your child up and kiss them all over, And just blow raspberries on them. Because the reason why I say that is, a, it completely interrupts that pattern, That spiral of your child refusing to do something, you getting more and more annoyed, your child getting more and more entrenched in their refusal to do the very simple thing that you know that they can absolutely do. And you're really caught in that battle of the wills. And sometime well, a lot of the time, we then expect our child to be the one who breaks that sort of pattern, and then does what they're told so then

everything then runs smoothly. But it does come down to us.

Helena Mooney [00:06:25]:

We cannot expect our children to be the ones who recognizes that this is not a helpful situation and to do something different? Children are not capable of that. Often, we're not capable of it, but it is down to us. And so when in those heat of the moment situations where you're getting really frustrated, a great circuit breaker is to just connect with your child in a really silly, ridiculous way. And so if you can think about things in advance about what you would like to do, it then makes it easier in those challenging situations that you don't have to think. You can just go and this is why I like it. I just kiss I just pick my child up and just kiss them all over because because then I don't have to think. I don't need to know what words to say, or I could just say, oh, come here, my lovely. And I just pick them up and kiss them all over.

Helena Mooney [00:07:22]:

And then it often will completely it will shift everything. And it can go one of 2 ways. It can either be brilliant. Your child just soaks up your warm, beautiful attention. They giggle. They feel warm and connected with you, and then they're happy to have their cars you know, have the straps go into the car seat and have the straps put on. Brilliant. That's great.

Helena Mooney [00:07:47]:

You've given your child what they need. They needed that loving connection with you, and they needed to release some stress by giggling. Brilliant. Job done. Or you could find that your child gets really annoyed that you're doing that. Now when I say to do this, I don't mean to do this when your child is already clearly upset and furious. And in upset feelings, that's not the time to then start kissing them all over because that interrupts the healing process that they're already in. And it's not connecting because you're not meeting your child where they're at. I'm talking about, you know, when they're whiny, or they just don't wanna do something, or perhaps they say something like a rude word, and you're going, okay.

Helena Mooney [00:08:32]:

I don't really know what to do with this right now. What do I do with this word? That's the time. It's those times when you're going it could go either way. And so if you could have it that play is your default, that loving them is your default. I mean, picking monkeys and whatever. Now your child could then say, no. I don't want kisses, and they could say it in a playful way, and that's brilliant. And then and then you could do okay.

Helena Mooney [00:08:58]:

Well, I'm just going to snuggle into your beautiful tummy, because I just love you so much. And that could be great. We've escalated you know, in our household, it's escalated to licking. Well, sometimes they'll then lick me, and I'll lick them. And that's gross but

hilarious. And that just changes the whole interaction, and then we all get on with our day in a much more upbeat, playful, fun way. It's fun. But those times when your child go, no.

Helena Mooney [00:09:28]:

Get off me. I don't like you. Go away. Then It's very obvious then that your child is not willing to be playful. They're not in the frame of mind where they can be playful. And so then that clearly shows you what they really do need, which is a cry with you to have a rage. You set a loving limit. You're with them.

Helena Mooney [00:09:51]:

You're for the empathy, and then they release their feelings that way. But I think that if you can be playful as much as you can as your first response, That's first of all, is what your child needs, but it also just makes things way more enjoyable for you. Because, yes, you can be very serious as a mother. You can do everything right and, like, be very studious about it all. And that's great if that's how you wanna be. But if you would love to have more fun and playfulness in your life as a whole, You can absolutely incorporate that into your parenting. And it may not be textbook. It may not be what Somebody else is doing, but you know your child really well.

Helena Mooney [00:10:38]:

You want to have a life that you enjoy and interactions that you enjoy with your child. And, obviously, by then doing this, it brings lightness to everybody in the family, and your children will behave much better. They will want to cooperate. They will be happy to do something that, You know? They may not particularly want to do, like getting in a car seat, but that's okay because mommy loves me. I've had a laugh. That's fine. And it just imbues playfulness into your family. And it's not specific games.

Helena Mooney [00:11:15]:

I mean, I obviously talk about specific games. And if you do want help with specific games, come on over to [helena.mooney.com](http://helena.mooney.com), and you can download my free five Brilliant games. Can't think of the title of it. Five brilliant games is the, not the actual word of it, but booklet. And then that will give you specific games that you can play in specific situations, which are great, and they've been my default. They've been my go to games with my kids for years. What I'm talking about is just a general attitude of not taking parenting and life always so seriously. Because, yeah, there's so much seriousness out there in the world, isn't there? There's so much heaviness and misery, But you don't have to have that at home.

Helena Mooney [00:12:05]:

You can be an awesome mom by just being silly and playful and putting music on and dancing. And I'm Sure you're doing loads of this already, so my encouragement is just to keep doing it. I remember my mum coming to stay with us once when we were living in Australia, and I had some friends over, might have had a glass of wine, but I can't really remember, but I might have done. Anyway, we just put music on. My mom was sort of sitting there rather bemused.

I wasn't drunk drunk if I had a glass of wine. Just, you know, just a little edge. And, and we just put some music on, and we were just dancing around.

Helena Mooney [00:12:43]:

And, for us, that was quite a normal thing to do is to have music on and dance around. I think I needed the wine to do it in front of my mom. But, but but for my mom, it was like, She was quietly bemused by it because there was no way in the world that that's what my mom would have done with me. Certainly wouldn't have been the way that her mom would have been with her. And so those simple things that perhaps now we go, oh, yeah. I just Dance around the kit you know, dance around the kitchen with my children might be a really, really normal thing for you to do. But for me, it wasn't. Certainly not growing up, but I like to do that with my kids.

Helena Mooney [00:13:22]:

Actually, I haven't done that so much recently. It's funny. Now they get older, you do some things a bit less. But when they were little, Just putting on an awesome song. I loved the, Justin Timberlake can't Justin Timberlake can't stop that feeling. Whatever. Can't stop the feeling. I love that.

Helena Mooney [00:13:38]:

It's fun. It's from Trolls. And it's just whatever whatever song you love, put it on and dance and sing with your children. And and that in itself, that's playful. That's fun. That shifts the mood. If you're getting if you're bringing picking your children up from Daycare or school or you've had a busy day out, and you're just like, oh my god. They're all getting feral here, and I've gotta put dinner on.

Helena Mooney [00:14:01]:

Put some music on. Have some lightness. Enjoy yourself. If things are going stress if you're home with the kids and it's all going again, I'm sure you're doing these things already. But just to remind you of just these really simple things, like a good song and a good dance, it just Shifts the whole energy. You do that for 1 song, then the kids are often gonna be really happy, and then you can get on and do all the serious things that you need to do. The other thing is that we can get very caught up in thinking, I need to teach my children Good manners. I need to teach them how to study.

Helena Mooney [00:14:40]:

I need to teach them that this behavior is not acceptable. I need to teach them. And it really is a case of children children, pick up on what we do and not what we say. And that heavy pressure of I need to teach them, I need to shape them, I need to discipline them, It's very heavy. And, yes, we need to do all of those things, but we don't have to do them in a serious way. They will they will Pick up. You know? If you're a decent person, your child will be a decent person because that is what that's the environment in which they're they're living. So focus more on connection, play, lightness, Giggling, silly, just you know, in the confines of your own home,

you can lose all sense of dignity and just be really ridiculous and silly.

Helena Mooney [00:15:35]:

Make fart noises. Lick, your child's face. I did do a a, Instagram about how, sometimes we, we have played a spitting game Well, we'll just end up spitting on each other, running around. And it's gross. It's disgusting, but it is utterly hilarious. So it's just those silly little things. My Colleague Kiara, she is brilliant for all of this playfulness, and, you know, she just rolls up a, you know, a sock or something and just throws it at her Child every now and again. You know, just those little, silly, playful interactions, that's what keeps The connection going, your helps your child with their feelings and just ultimately makes life And parenting, way more enjoyable.

Helena Mooney [00:16:24]:

So it becomes less drudgery and less serious and less oh Oh god. Now I've gotta do this. I really can't be bothered, which, you know, we all have times of that. But just see what you can do each day. Just something really simple to just make things a bit more fun, it you know, I talk a lot about special time and saying, you know, you can do a game in 5 minutes. Doesn't even have to take 5 minutes. It can take you just throwing something at your child. I wish I'd kept more.

Helena Mooney [00:16:56]:

I'd I'd done this, but I I found this from another hand in hand instructor, was, just keep your child's small socks And keep them rolled up, and then you have them as like little balls that you can just then throw at each other. Sometimes you can have a little sock fight instead of a snowball fight. My kids are waiting for No. There's no snow happening this year at the moment in England. Very disappointing. So in absence of snowballs, have little rolled up socks and just start chucking them at each other. Do that with your teddies. Make sure they're not the ones with the beans in the feet.

Helena Mooney [00:17:25]:

They're really annoying because that that would hurt if that didn't. You know, just What can you do to be silly and to have fun? And your idea of silliness will probably be different from my idea of silliness. You're probably horrified by the thought of spitting on your child. And to be fair, it is gross. But in the moment, hilarious. You know, it doesn't have to be pretty and perfect. It's just fun and silly. And, and that's just gonna make life a lot easier and parenting a lot easier.

Helena Mooney [00:17:57]:

And We are gonna go through hard times. You are gonna struggle at times, and it will be hard when play is hard to access. But if you have done all these little things, and you've got all these little rituals that just you and your child do, that you do when the time's gone well, then That will help you come out of those harder times, or at least navigate those harder times easier, because you've got

that That little connection point that you can just be silly about. Sometimes, you know, we chew our food and open our mouths. It's disgusting, again, but it's silly. And what I think what struck me was seeing my mom watching us. There was never that sense of being allowed to do that. It was always, you know, I'm the mom.

Helena Mooney [00:18:46]:

You're the child. And I know things are very different now, which is great in many ways. We don't have that sort of barrier. But if you are sensing, well, you know, should I do this? Or that never even occurred to me. You know? Find ways to be really silly, because, yeah, my mom never had that with her parents, and I did my dad at all. It was all very strict and very stern and very proper. And, you know, great. They had good relationships.

Helena Mooney [00:19:14]:

But there's something more enjoyable about just being silly. And your child will respect you. I mean, my children You'll respect me even if I have played the spitting game with them every now and again. You know what I mean? So, don't worry about that. Don't take everything so seriously. The when your child is going through a hard time, Find those moments of silliness. As I said, if you don't know what to do in a situation, what I do with my child sometimes is well, especially when he was really little. He's now 9, I can't do it quite so much, but sometimes I still do a variation of it.

Helena Mooney [00:19:51]:

Just pick them up and just start kissing them all over going, oh, I love you so much. Is that a is that a hitting hand? I'm not I'm gonna kiss that hitting hand. Are you saying that rude word? I'm gonna kiss you all over the face. And it's just funny. It breaks the ice. It reconnects you. They get to release some tension through giggling. Life will move on a lot more enjoyably and easily when you do that.

Helena Mooney [00:20:16]:

So I hope that helps. I'm sure you're doing many of these things already. For me, I think coming from My family, we never did that. So for me, it was more of a conscious decision that I had to make, and now it's just flows most of the time, not all of the time. So, for some of you, this might be, you know, I'm teaching you to suck eggs. But for others, just really consider that, yeah, parenting doesn't have to be serious all the time. And even in those hard times, You can still find moments of silliness and play and joy and laughter because that's what makes life so much more enjoyable. Alright.

Helena Mooney [00:20:56]:

I hope that's helpful. I'd love to hear. Come on over to [helenamuni.com](http://helenamuni.com). If you wanna have a session with me, I'm working on releasing my Updated. It was annoying to amazing. I'm changing it now. Just updating it and putting new videos in there and just rejigging things to make it much more comprehensive and much more helpful for you. So if you really want some help again, what do I do

in these situations? Come on over to [helena mooney .com](http://helena.mooney.com), and, you'll find everything there.

Helena Mooney [00:21:25]:

And particularly if you're finding it hard to access playfulness, because there are times when it is really hard to feel playful. And that's a really good indication of something's going on for you. What is it? Let's work through that. Release some of the hurt, some of those upset feelings or some of that just real general pissed offness. And then you can go back to your your children and your family refreshed, renewed, and and able to be playful. So, getting the support emotionally to be playful is such a key part of this. But, again, it doesn't have to be serious. We have lots of giggles in our sessions.

Helena Mooney [00:22:03]:

My mom was just overhearing. And, when I was up at my mom's, she's going, you're laughing a lot in your sessions. I'm going, well, yeah. Because, you know, we need to make things a bit more enjoyable, but also, going through the hard stuff too. It's not, putting a happy spin on hard times. It's listening to the hard times, dealing with the hard times, like with your children or with you, but also having that playfulness as well. Alright. I hope that's helpful.

Helena Mooney [00:22:31]:

Just even to consider, what can you do that's playful this week? And as I said, if you don't know what to do with your child, just kiss them all over, see how that goes. And and, Yeah. And then and then you'll see, but not if they're already in the midst of a big cry. That's not helpful. But, yeah, don't take parenting so seriously. You're doing such an awesome job. Your children are learning from you as you now. And, and they're gonna be great because they've got you.

Helena Mooney [00:23:01]:

So keep keep being you. Keep connecting. Keep looking after yourself, and, find ways to have fun throughout your day. Alright. I'll, I'll see you next week. Alright. Take care. Bye.