**Parenting Amongst Peer Pressure Descript**

**Maria:** [00:00:00] Do you find it difficult to parent without feeling like you have to follow the advice of everyone around you? Do you feel pressured by others' opinions on how to parent? Welcome to Mennonite Girls in a Modern World! I'm your host, Maria Dyck, and today, Deanna Friesen and I are talking about peer pressure in parenting because it's everywhere, and at every stage, and if you are a mom, you have probably experienced it.

[00:00:29] What do you say, Deanna? Do you agree with that?

[00:00:31] **Deanna:** [00:00:31] Yes, I would totally agree with that. I've felt it. Yeah. Even in my brief parenting experience, it's real.

[00:00:38]**Maria:** [00:00:38] We were talking about this that you're like, *Well, I've only been a mom for 10 months*, but the truth is all the peer pressure that you have been experiencing in these 10 months are the same peer pressures that moms experience at all stages of having a child, maybe the details are different because of course, when you're dealing with teenagers, you're not dealing with any pressure on potty training, but...

[00:01:01] but I think all the hidden mechanisms behind it are the same. So that's why it's an important discussion. What kind of pressures do you feel the most as a new mom, Deanna?

[00:01:11] **Deanna:** [00:01:11] In the beginning it was probably breastfeeding, and still to this day, it's which diapers to buy, and if your Wet Ones are organic or...

[00:01:21]**Maria:** [00:01:21] homemade?

[00:01:23]**Deanna:** [00:01:23] Homemade, which formula powder... if you're not breastfeeding, shoot, that's horrible. Anyway, losing, losing baby weight and sugar-free snacks for your little ones. And it's just endless. I could go on and on...

[00:01:37]**Maria:** [00:01:37] No kidding. I remember some of those so vividly also, so I think that that makes me a little sad that nothing has changed in all these years, and the same pressures that I faced are the pressures that you're now facing.

[00:01:48]**Deanna:** [00:01:48] I feel like it's gotten worse. Yeah. I think also because of social media too.

[00:01:53] **Maria:** [00:01:53] So you think social media makes it worse?

[00:01:55]**Deanna:** [00:01:55] Yeah. I do. There is always like there's people that post real content, but a lot of people just post the highlights, and you just see the good stuff, and it looks like they're just loving being a mom every day, and nothing ever goes wrong, and they always feel energized, and always feel like cleaning the house all the time, and everything looks perfect, and their hair is perfect, and their bodies are perfect. And it's just frustrating, sometimes.

[00:02:24]**Maria:** [00:02:24] You know, all those things that you mentioned for a new mom, I remember that. And I remember having those same discussions with my friends at that time, particularly about nursing and yeah, I think every mom has their own stories of where they really felt the pressure. And you know that people are generally, I think, well-intentioned, they're trying to help to some extent.

[00:02:47] **Deanna:** [00:02:47] Yeah, for sure.

[00:02:48] **Maria:** [00:02:48] But sometimes their help doesn't end up being very helpful, and it definitely can be hard to take.

[00:02:55] **Deanna:** [00:02:55] Can just make you feel like you're doing something wrong.

[00:02:57] **Maria:** [00:02:57] Absolutely. And then I think as your kids grow that the details change, but the pressure can still stay there. So now when your kids are a little bit older, I think you have this big, do you homeschool, or do you send your kids to public school?

[00:03:12] Even pressures to have sleepovers- there's families who prefer not to do that. And then, how many sports? Or do you put your kids into music? How busy are you are? How much do you get involved? And if your child does go to school and it's time to make the birthday cupcakes, there's this peer pressure to make sure you show up with something amazing.

[00:03:31] And then it goes on to teens. Who do you hang out with as friends? Are you allowed to go to certain parties? Are you allowed to watch certain movies? And how do you dress in an appropriate way? So there's the peer pressure aspect of parenting starts at that baby age, and it goes all the way through. So I think that no matter what age your kids are, there's something in today's show hopefully that will help you.

[00:03:54] And I think the question we have to ask ourselves is, so where does this peer pressure come from? And as I thought about this question, I was thinking, I really don't feel a lot of pressure from the world. I think we always think, *Oh, peer pressure comes from the world*. But the truth is, I think, as a Christian, I've learned to train myself to not look to the world for answers.

[00:04:18] So to a large extent, I think a lot of Christians are really wary of the world. They're, they're not looking to the world necessarily for answers, but I think what would surprise a lot of people is to think about that when you are facing peer pressure and particularly in parenting, that it is probably coming from people who are very close to you, like parents, and friends, and family.

[00:04:41] For instance, Deanna, when you're feeling this peer pressure, is it because you've opened a magazine and you feel it, or are you feeling it actually from people that you love and you want their approval?

[00:04:53]**Deanna:** [00:04:53] Oh, sure. And I don't think they do it intentionally cause I do have a great support system and, and I appreciate them a lot, but everybody has opinions, you know, and everybody has convictions and they're not necessarily yours. But when you hear them, you just think *maybe I am wrong?* And I can be a bit of a people pleaser.

[00:05:14] So then I'm thinking that, *well, maybe I should be doing that too?* Or, I dunno, just change something. It makes you wonder. And it makes you, in German, we say *"tweiwla"*, which, which just means... tweiwla-ing is just kind of like you're back and forth, wondering like, *did I do the right thing?*

[00:05:33] It's a really good word. It's very descriptive because that's what, that's what it makes you feel this peer pressure.

[00:05:39] **Maria:** [00:05:39] It's kind of like being a double-minded man, because if you're wanting to make everybody happy, you're just waffling, going between one and the next, and you're not really standing on anything solid second- guessing yourself.

[00:05:51] If there's one thing I do believe in parenting, if you can achieve, and it takes time or practice, it is consistency. So when you're being inconsistent in your guidelines on how you're trying to help your kids or guide your kids, your kids are first of all, going to notice that, and they're going to take advantage of every weakness you have.

[00:06:07] So yeah, you really do kind of have to know what you believe, and go from there. But that can be really hard if you don't know. *Well, what do I believe? I don't know what I believe.*

[00:06:18] **Deanna:** [00:06:18] Yeah. I know, like as a new mom everything is confusing.

[00:06:21]**Maria:** [00:06:21] And for myself, when I have felt the greatest peer pressure is from people that I love and I admire and I want their approval.

[00:06:28] So it's like, *do you approve of what I am doing as a parent?* And, like you said, you can find a thousand different opinions on how to do something. I think one of the things that I found most helpful to kind of get over that, was to choose the voices I listened to carefully. I knew already I couldn't listen to everybody.

[00:06:51] For instance, if there was a mom who seemed to really have a handle on a certain way of parenting, like if I thought she was handling potty training very well, then I would ask her, what are you doing? What is working for you? And then listen to what worked for her, and then try some of those ideas. Because I think you do kind of have to look out for *who can I learn from?* *Whose voice would I consider trustworthy?* And then go and ask them.

[00:07:18] In the bigger picture, like we have our parents and our friends and our family really close to us, but there is a wider circle of influence I think where we sometimes get peer pressure from, and that is what I would call our church culture or our work culture, or if you're heavy into sports, you're going to have that cultural influence as well.

[00:07:37] And I think that that's sometimes a point we overlook where we feel peer pressure from maybe our church on how to parent a certain way, because churches have a vibe. And you may not even know that your church has a vibe because you're so used to it, but if you walk into a brand new church, you'll notice right away is where the focus is on certain subjects, including parenting.

[00:08:00] And you're going to start to feel a vibe in this church: w*e do it this way*. And if you happen to be one of those who doesn't do it that way, you're going to end up feeling a bit like an outsider.

[00:08:12] **Deanna:** [00:08:12] I think even the way your kids behave in church. Your kid is being crazy and church people, I don't know if it's true in every situation, but people will talk about it probably behind your back.

[00:08:25] Like, *Oh, their kids needs a spank; they're just horribly behaved.* And they somehow idolize the kids that sit nicely, but I've heard it in conversation, so I know what happens. So then to me, I feel so much pressure that, *Oh, my kid has to be perfect in church, otherwise, Oh, I'm going to look like a bad parent,* but yeah, it's a little bit of a struggle sometimes.

[00:08:49] **Maria:** [00:08:49] I think you just said something really important, Deanna. We hear these things in conversation. You know, we are very aware from, from the gossip grapevine what is being said. We know it because we've heard it. Maybe we've partaken in it. We're not stupid. If we're saying that about others, we know that they're saying it about us.

[00:09:10] **Deanna:** [00:09:10] Of course.

[00:09:10] **Maria:** [00:09:10] Oh, I remember feeling tremendous pressure to have my kids sit very well. I was quite strict about it, but I did learn to eventually... no, I was just strict about it. Sorry. (laughing)

[00:09:20] **Deanna:** [00:09:20] Okay. Well now you have to give me your advice.

[00:09:23]**Maria:** [00:09:23] The best advice I have- and considering I'm thinking toddler age and we didn't have children's church in our church for many years- I would go to the church library and I would take out children's books that my kids could listen to for the sermon. Because my kids loved the singing and standing up, sitting down-all of that was not too bad.

[00:09:41] **Deanna:** [00:09:41] But they don't understand the sermon...

[00:09:43] **Maria:** [00:09:43] And these were special books that they could only look at during the sermon. And then I learned to bring snacks. Now, some churches do not allow snacks, which I think if you can bring a non messy snack, that is a mom's best friend, so like Cheerio's often. My kids were only allowed to have those snacks during those times when I really needed them to sit still. We allowed coloring and things like that.

[00:10:07] But the other thing I remember somebody saying, and I did do this at home: learn to snuggle your child at home just for a few quiet minutes. Just teach them to sit for a while quietly on your lap, letting them look at a book. The more they're used to that, the more they'll be used to sitting in your lap at church and also being quiet.

[00:10:24] But I think the other question we have to ask ourselves is where is the root of this peer pressure coming from? Why do we feel it so keenly? And then of course, what can we do about it? So to answer the first part of it, I would say that peer pressure has two sides to it. It has an external one where comes from others, and it has an internal one when it comes from yourself. And I'll just explain what I mean by that.

[00:10:52] So I think externally people do have expectations, and people will try to put pressure on you, and I don't think they always intend to. And part of the reason I think, from what I have seen, is that sometimes I have seen parents make a choice and pick any subject of your choosing. So let's just say, I'm going to, I'm going to say homeschooling, because I know that's a hot topic and please don't be mad as I say it, but I want to be relevant with an example here.

[00:11:20] So let's say that you choose to homeschool and that is a wonderful choice, but let's say you're feeling a little insecure in your decision to do that. So you are now looking for other parents to join you so you feel better about your decision. You start maybe subtly putting pressure on other parents to join you so you aren't alone because you don't want to stand alone. You don't want to do this alone. You would rather be in a crowd doing it together.

[00:11:45] And that's just an example of how you can end up putting pressure on someone to join you from the outside. You can put all the pressure you want, but if someone's resistant to it, it won't do any good.

[00:11:58] But if you find someone who a bit of a people pleaser and who's insecure in their own choices, then you have a double-sided problem. When we talk about the internal part, I think you mentioned that, Deanna, that you felt like that you struggle with people pleasing.

[00:12:13] **Deanna:** [00:12:13] Yeah, I totally agree. I can be a people pleaser sometimes. So if somebody in my family, whoever, has an idea, I'm right away, doubting myself.

[00:12:22]**Maria:** [00:12:22] The internal struggle is like, *Oh, but I want to make people happy. I want people to like me. I don't want to create waves.* So you kind of go along with something maybe because you're not feeling confident either in your own stand, and you end up having this two sided battle.

[00:12:42] **Deanna:** [00:12:42] Right, so talking about peer pressure, I think because it involves our kids because our kids means so much to me or to us, and they say so much about who we are. I think we take peer pressure a lot more seriously in parenting maybe because it involves our children.

[00:13:01] We care about them. And so maybe that's why we just take it harder or listen more to the voices. I don't know, but I remember when I just had my baby, I wanted to try breastfeeding, and I was so hard on myself. The pressure was coming from the inside and like whatever, also from society and maybe some people that I know, I don't think they did it intentionally, but I breastfed him for, yeah, it was like three weeks. I don't even remember. And after that I just couldn't continue. I, I was mentally overwhelmed just from having a baby itself, and it just seemed so confusing to me. For some reason, breastfeeding just seemed very confusing, I think because I was over tired and I couldn't figure out the schedule.

[00:13:47] I used my breast pump wrong, and I messed up my breasts. And then I had a lot of pain while feeding. And I was just, I just wanted to sleep during the night. It was just so hard, but I eventually stopped because I just couldn't keep going for my mental health. I stopped and I didn't have enough anyway. So there was like so much freedom and stopping, but I honestly felt so depressed.

[00:14:12] It was really hard to try to stay positive because he got sick right when I stopped breastfeeding. And I just felt like, *Oh, this kid's probably going to die,* a*nd it's my fault!* Or whatever I was, I was knee deep in, or actually I should say over my head in pregnancy hormones. And they were like, just dictating everything. And my mom wasn't at home on the weekend I stopped, and it was just... huge. It was just horrible. I was pressuring myself so much, putting myself down so much. And now that I look back, it just makes me so sad because I put so much pressure on myself, and I wish I could have just let go and realize that my kid's going to be fine.

[00:14:53] It doesn't matter if I don't breastfeed. It doesn't matter what people think. I don't have to sneak into the bathroom at the restaurant with my bottle to pretend that I'm breastfeeding... like I've done that. Like, it doesn't matter. I took it way too serious anyway.

[00:15:08] **Maria:** [00:15:08] I had my own breastfeeding kind of drama where I wasn't a great at it either to begin with. But with my second child, I look back now, and I really think that he was underfed for the first five months of his life because I was determined to nurse. And that was, that was the big push you had to nurse. He had to nurse. And so I was pushing to nurse, and then we were also planning our trip to Canada. So I, I said, W*hen I get to Canada, I will switch to formula,* because I wanted to nurse through the journey through Mexico and the States.

[00:15:38] And so I did, and he wasn't super cranky, but he was never really content. And when we arrived in Canada, I said, *Okay, that's it. We're switching to formula.* I could not believe the difference in my baby. It was in incredible! He went from sleeping eight hours a night, which I was fairly content with, to sleeping 12 hours a night.

[00:16:00] He became so content and so happy. I felt horrible. I was like, W*hy did I cling so tightly to something that wasn't good for you?* And when I saw the difference of it... so, I mean, first of all, we can't live off of mom guilt- that's a whole other episode- but it did tell me I would never do that again. And so when I had my third child, and I could tell right away is I was not gonna be able to keep up with the nursing, so I switched over to formula after six weeks. And again, another very content baby.

[00:16:30] I remember having a friend who was also struggling with this huge nursing issue and because I'd had my own struggles just to say, listen, back in the day, when you couldn't nurse, your baby got sick and died. This is why they invented formula.

[00:16:44] There is no shame in giving your baby formula. And eventually she switched as well too. And I think that it was so hard to watch these young moms struggle with it because you just want to say, *It doesn't matter.* But we can get so caught up in those details, we miss the joy of the season that we're in.

[00:17:04] So we want to talk a little bit about like, how do we overcome this peer pressure, because it's, it's not going to go away and I don't want to depress you with that, Deanna, because as a parent, I still face it. And actually, I would just say probably about a year ago- I am someone who does not oversign out my kids for sports or anything because we live on an acreage. We don't have time. We're too far from town, but I allowed myself to be talked into signing my kids up for the winter. And my intentions were good, but I knew, I knew it was too much. And I did it anyways. And we were halfway through the sports season, and I was the crankiest person ever. Like I was losing it all the time.

[00:17:43] I was so stressed, and I was mad at myself cause I knew I had signed up because there was a lot of pressure from school to be like, *We're a small school, we need every kid on the sports team* ,and you're just, *Okay. Yeah, we'll try*. And so I had to pull a child and say, *I'm sorry, I should've never done this to begin with.* I know better. And I still fell for it.

[00:18:03] But there is a way we can navigate this parenting without constantly falling into the trap of it. So we want to talk about that a bit today. At the root of this peer pressure, there is a problem that is very related to that, so we want to talk about it and want to turn the focus a little bit to some Scripture that points it out.

[00:18:22] **Deanna:** [00:18:22] So the problem is with the fear of man, and we need to replace that with the fear of God. When we put the opinions of man before the opinions of God, we lost our proper perspective. And you need to fear God first, that is the beginning of wisdom, the Scripture says.

[00:18:38]**Maria:** [00:18:38] You know, it was interesting when you go through Scripture and you look up the fear of man verses what you will find. So for instance, Proverbs 29:25 says that *"The fear of man lays a snare,"* you know, a trap*, "but whoever trust in the Lord is safe."*

[00:18:55] **Deanna:** [00:18:55] And then there's Galatians 1:10 , *"For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please, man, I would not be a servant of Christ."*

[00:19:08] Wow. That's strong.

[00:19:09] **Maria:** [00:19:09] That is *very* strong. In Psalms 118:8 says, *"It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in men."* So those are some really good reminders about when we put our trust in the wrong thing. But then we have verses that point as to what the fear of the Lord tells us and the benefits of fearing the Lord.

[00:19:29] So Proverbs 9:10, everyone knows this one, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."*

[00:19:35] **Deanna:** [00:19:35] Proverbs19:23, *"The fear of the Lord leads to life."*

[00:19:39]**Maria:** [00:19:39] I love that one. Psalms 145:19 says, *"He will fulfill the desires of those who fear him."*

[00:19:47] **Deanna:** [00:19:47] Psalms 147:11 says, *"The Lord favors those who fear him."*

[00:19:52]**Maria:** [00:19:52] And what these verses are getting to is the fact that when we fear God before we fear the opinions of men, then we've got everything in the proper order.

[00:20:04] And when we have things in the proper perspective and in the proper order, we are free. We are free to live how God wants us to live, because we know that we are accountable to Him first.

[00:20:16] **Deanna:** [00:20:16] Right.

[00:20:16] **Maria:** [00:20:16] And that is not to say that our actions don't affect people around us, but when we get those twisted and we're looking to everyone around us for answers, you know, *What do you think, what do you think I should do?* *How should I live?* We are going to get so twisted in knots. We're never going to find a right answer because there's so many opinions. And so really learning to put the fear of the Lord as our first and main focus.

[00:20:41] And just to clarify, the fear of the Lord doesn't mean that you're terrified of Him per se. Although if you're walking in rebellion to the Lord, you probably should be. But it's the idea that we hold him in proper reverence and proper awe. And we acknowledge that He is a Holy God, and we live in humility and obedience before Him. I love that because one of the books that really I found so helpful years ago, and I need to read it again because it keeps coming up in conversations is by Ed Welch, and it's called "When The Fear of Man is Bigger Than the Fear of God," and it was such a great book. So I highly recommend it. I'll link it in our show notes afterwards. It was one of the first times I really understood how important it is to have this proper order in your life in order for you to live the life God calls you to.

[00:21:32]**Deanna:** [00:21:32] It's amazing to me that a God that's so Holy, and we give him reverence that He...He wants to be involved in the little details of parenting. And seriously, I have prayed, prayed about like, my kid's poop. Like, I don't know, it's amazing that God cares about such a little details. It just gives me so much peace to know that I can bring anything before him, this Holy God who loves us and the details in our life are important to him. So you can pray about anything really well.

[00:22:05] **Maria:** [00:22:05] It's partly because God is not always as concerned about the outcome, as He's concerned about what He's transforming in us as we are being parents.

[00:22:16] We want,...we care about all these things because we want to guarantee somehow we're going to turn out perfect children, and God does not give us any guarantees of any sorts. He just says, *Trust me today with this issue, walk in obedience with me, walk in humility, and we'll get there.* Although we don't always know what *there* looks like, or it might look different than what we thought it would be, but God is much more concerned about your heart as a mom.

[00:22:40] Are you a woman who fears Him? Are you a woman who gives Him the proper space in your life and who lays everything down before Him -not laying everything down for the approval of others? And He's much more concerned about your heart than He is concerned about whether or not your breastfeeding.

[00:22:58] One last tip: for one, we have to have a proper Biblical perspective, which we just shared here, but there's a second really important element to peer pressure parenting. And I just want to say that as a wife, my number one go-to for encouragement and wisdom is my husband because sometimes women in these circles get so toxic and silly to some extent, it can go so crazy. And my husband can just cut right through it, and say, *Maria, that's just ridiculous. This is what we're going to do.*

[00:23:33] Your husband is your biggest ally when it comes to raising your family. And when you're raising your family, it is so important that you and your husband talk about it, to say, who do we feel God is calling us to be? Where does He want us? How does He want us to live? How can we honor Him in our marriage and in raising our children?

[00:23:53] And you have those discussions together because it's going to be you and your husband, each contributing to your family. That's going to give it all its unique contributions.

[00:24:05] **Deanna:** [00:24:05] Yeah, I do that too. I, I get so overwhelmed with the hormones sometimes I just need my husband's like very simple, straightforward answers to my many questions.

[00:24:17]**Maria:** [00:24:17] They care, and you can just really lean on them when you're feeling the pressure from all around you. I know that because of me, my kids have been introduced to music, and they have this musical world. And because of me, they're all a little bit nerdy at school.

[00:24:30] And then because of Jim, they're into quadding and fishing, and love all these outdoorsy things. And it's this contribution that you bring as a wife and your husband brings to the table that will create this really unique family that is *yours*. And it's not going to look necessarily like anybody else's around you. And that is perfectly good.

[00:24:52] When you and your husband have these discussions, you're going to end up... things are going to come up, and you'll be able to look at them together and say, *That's not going to work for our family.* So then you can toss it and just say, *Yeah, that's not for us. Good for you that you are choosing to make those choices, but we're okay without, that's not who we are.* But you can do that best when you do it together.

[00:25:11] **Deanna:** [00:25:11] So just because we're called to follow Christ doesn't mean that we're called to be carbon copies of each other. God gives us freedom within boundaries to raise our kids as we think pleases Him. One of the greatest joys of your life should be enjoying the unique family God has given you, rather than trying to mold your family to fit into another image.

[00:25:29] Psalm 127:1 tells us *"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain."* When you put your focus and energy on where God is leading you and your family that is when you will find the freedom and the life He intended for you to have.