

## Ep #3: Separating Your Child's Behavior from Your Thoughts



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lisa Candra

## Ep #3: Separating Your Child's Behavior from Your Thoughts

Try as we might we can't control our children's behaviors. We can however choose how we want to think about them and that's a big deal. To learn more, keep listening.

Welcome to The Autism Mom Coach, a podcast for moms who feel overwhelmed, afraid, and sometimes powerless as they raise their child with autism. My name is Lisa Candra. I'm a certified life coach, lawyer, and most importantly I'm a full-time single mom to a teenage boy with autism. In this podcast I'll show you how to transform your relationship with autism and special needs parenting. You'll learn how to shift away from being a victim of your circumstances to being the hero of the story you get to write. Let's get started.

Welcome to episode three of The Autism Mom Coach. I hope you are doing well and enjoying the spring weather. I'm recording this episode on an unseasonably warm day in March. And it's just the perfect day for being outside, taking a walk and enjoying nature. I have been urging my son to get outside all day, pleading with him, really, to go ride your bike, go play basketball. And he's just not interested. He is sitting on the couch watching YouTube videos and playing on his phone. And I'm having a lot of thoughts about it.

Which pairs perfectly with today's topic, the difference between our children's behaviors and our thoughts about them. When I say behaviors I mean it in the broadest sense, anything a person does or doesn't do. So first, all behaviors are circumstances. Circumstances are just the black and white objective facts of a situation, no adjectives. Circumstances include things like your name, your marital status, where you live, a diagnosis, something another person says or something another person does.

For example, my son is 14 years old. That's a circumstance. My son is diagnosed with autism, that's a circumstance. Second, circumstances are neutral, which means they're neither good, bad, rude, or hilarious until we have a thought about them. So, my son watching TV right now, that's neutral until I have a thought that he should be outside or he is being lazy.

## Ep #3: Separating Your Child's Behavior from Your Thoughts

A sink being filled with dishes, that's neutral until you have a thought like my family does not clean up after themselves or people expect me to do everything around here.

And then behaviors like my child repeats himself over and over, that's neutral until I have the thought, oh no, another OCD loop, this is going to be bad. And then it's not so neutral. Finally, we can't control circumstances. We can however, control our thoughts. Circumstances happen and then we have a thought about them.

So, what are thoughts? Thoughts are the language we use to interpret and make sense of the circumstances in our lives, the sentences that run through our minds. We have about 60,000 thoughts a day, most of them are subconscious and most of them are thoughts that we've had day after day on a loop. I think of thoughts as the lens through which we interpret the world. And so, this means that thoughts will vary significantly from person to person based on culture, gender, sex, religion, upbringing, social conditioning, and life experiences.

So, this is why people can have and most certainly do wildly different thoughts about the same set of circumstances. Second, thoughts are real, but they're not necessarily true. They're real in the sense that you're having it and they're impacting the way that you show up. That's all real. But it doesn't make the thought true. For example, I'm having the thought that my son should be outside. It's real in the sense that I'm having it. I'm urging him to go outside. I'm making tons of suggestions. And I even went so far as to shut off the TV. All real. It doesn't make my thought true.

Another example, in episode two I talked about my client's child who threw a remote during a meltdown. So, throwing a remote, that's a circumstance. Her thought, he is violent. That was real, but not necessarily true. Real in the sense that it caused her to feel angry. And in her anger she yelled at him and she said things she regretted. That was all real. But it didn't make her thought, he is violent, true. There are other ways of looking at that

## Ep #3: Separating Your Child's Behavior from Your Thoughts

same behavior. For instance, he is dysregulated. He didn't mean it. He was just frustrated.

The point here is that there's always more than one way to look at the same circumstances. And just because you think it, doesn't mean it's true. And let that one sink in for a minute. We are so tied to our own thoughts and interpretations of the world that we rarely stop to consider this. And this is understandable because our brains like to be right, it gives us a sense of safety. And it also keeps us stuck and sometimes miserable.

But here's the good news and the final point about thoughts. They're all optional. We can choose how we want to think about anything. And just because we've had a thought over, and over, and over, doesn't mean we need to keep it forever. Surely we've all had thoughts about things that have changed over time. Maybe you once believed in storks or Santa, or that COVID would be a two-week thing. And chances are your thoughts about all or some of those things have changed over time. We all have this ability but we rarely exercise it.

We go with the default programming, what we've been thinking over and over for years. So, I want to teach you a strategy that you can use to become the watcher of your mind and notice the thoughts you are having. The first step to changing our thoughts is first we need to notice them. So first, observe your experience and describe it as objectively as possible, no adjectives. Almost like you're like the narrator of your own experience, like that voiceover that describes exactly what is happening.

My child is sitting on the couch. The trashcan is filled. My mother-in-law said, "I don't think Johnny is autistic." Then insert the phrase, 'I'm having the thought that' in front of the thoughts that you're thinking. The purpose of inserting this phrase is to begin to put some distance between yourself and the thoughts. For example, I'm having the thought that my child should be outside. I'm having the thought that my partner expects me to do everything. Or I'm having the thought that my mother-in-law is ignorant and rude. You see the difference there?

## Ep #3: Separating Your Child's Behavior from Your Thoughts

By inserting this phrase, you begin to put some distance between yourself and the thoughts and create space to observe and question your thoughts as opposed to accepting them as the truth of the universe. And by doing this you can begin to see your thoughts for what they are, sentences running through your mind, real but not necessarily true.

Before I go, to celebrate the launch of the show I'm going to be giving away self-care packages that will include handmade soaps and lotions, and other goodies to help you relax and indulge. I'm going to be giving away three of these packages to three lucky listeners who follow, rate, and review the show. It doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I sure hope you love the show. I want your honest feedback so I can create a show that provides tons of value.

Visit [theautismmomcoach.com/podcastlaunch](http://theautismmomcoach.com/podcastlaunch) to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode. Thank you so much and talk to you next week.

Thanks for listening to The Autism Mom Coach. If you want more information or the show notes and resources from the podcast, visit [theautismmomcoach.com](http://theautismmomcoach.com). See you next week.