

Ep #9: This Should Not Be Happening



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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Episode nine, This Should Not Be Happening. When it comes to parenting your child with Autism do you find yourself thinking, saying or shouting, “This should be not be happening?” If so you are not alone. 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.

Hello everyone and welcome to the podcast. Today I want to talk to you about a situation that I and many of my clients struggle to handle which is when things do not go the way we think that they should, or when things suck because sometimes they do.

Before we get to that I want to read a podcast review from Jamie Gregory Designs titled A Powerful Resource. Jamie writes, “Lisa’s podcast and coaching program is lifechanging for parents raising Autistic children. Two months ago, I was at an all time low during our journey of raising our four year old Autistic twin boys. And I’m so grateful that I discovered The Autism Mom Coach. I really appreciate Lisa’s honesty, sincerity and compassion.

She has helped me tremendously to better understand meltdowns and increase my self-awareness of my thoughts and feelings as a special needs parent. As special needs parents we often feel helpless and isolated. It’s so refreshing to be connected with someone like Lisa who gets it and empowers us to navigate this difficult journey.” Thank you so much, Jamie for taking the time to write that wonderful review.

As you may have noticed from the review, Jamie is a client of my one-on-one coaching program and she has made incredible progress in just a few short weeks that we’ve been working together. Jamie is a mother of twin four year old boys both diagnosed with Autism at the beginning of COVID

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which I like to tell her is the equivalent of walking uphill in the snow both ways.

And today's topic is one that Jamie and I recently coached on. She and her husband are training to run a half marathon trail run and just one week before the race the entire household comes down with a nasty stomach bug. I'll talk more about Jamie's run in an upcoming episode. But let's just say that getting sick the week before the race was not how she had planned it, but yet, that's what happened. When how we plan things or how we think they are supposed to go and then how they actually are a clash, it can be really painful.

Before we get to how to process this pain I want to talk about where this thought or belief that things are supposed to be a certain way comes from. Because personally I don't believe that any of us knows how life is supposed to go. But we have these ideas about how it should be or at least how we want it to be. And just like any other thoughts, these thoughts come from our upbringings, our families, our friends, our social conditioning and social media, just to name a few. But these are all fantasies because nothing is guaranteed.

Still though we plan our days, and our years, and our lives around our thoughts about how things should be. I think this is especially so for women when it comes to motherhood. We think about the type of mother we will be, the things we will do with our children, the milestones we will celebrate, the schools they will attend, and the vacations we will take. And we all have ideas about how these things should go.

For example, I have two friends both single parents who recently told their children that they will be going to Disney this summer. Both parents had planned these elaborate ways to reveal the vacation that they had been saving up for and planning to their children. The first friend's kids reacted in exactly the way I imagine he had hoped. They cheered and they hugged one another and everyone was so excited.

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The second friend's kids, well, they appeared excited at first but they became quickly frustrated when they learned that they would need to wait until June. And then when one of the children found out that he would have to take an airplane to get to Disney, well, that did it. He ran from the room screaming, no, and crying. Not the way my friend had imagined it but that's how it went. And even in the areas where we don't have detailed plans or dreams about how life should be we definitely have a lot of ideas about how it should not be.

Our kids should not have Autism. They should not struggle as much as they do. They should not hit themselves, or others, or us. We should not have to call 911 on our children. We should not have to replace another TV, or iPhone, or iPad because, well, you know. So, there is how we think it should or should not be and how it actually is. And when fantasy and reality clash it creates conflict for us. And this is painful.

Another example, so a couple of weeks ago my son and I were interviewed by the local news about our experience at the Autism Unit of The Hospital for Special Care in Connecticut. My son was really proud to share his story and he did such a beautiful job talking about his inpatient and partial hospitalization experiences. I'll put the link to the interview in the show notes for those of you interested in seeing the interview and learning more about The Hospital for Special Care.

In some ways this interview, it felt like a victory lap, the family at rock bottom and struggling to the family offering their story to others and moving off into the sunset. No, that's not how it works in real life. Just a few days after this interview my son was readmitted to the partial program for additional support. And the thought I kept finding myself coming back to was this shouldn't be happening. Now, the experience of seeing my son struggling was painful and that pain was unavoidable. I love him, I don't want to see him suffer.

But my thoughts, this should not be happening, we are back to square one, these thoughts created a lot of suffering. This is an important distinction because there is a difference between pain and suffering. So, pain is part

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of the human experience and it's unavoidable. As human beings who are connected to others, we're going to feel pain. We're going to feel negative emotions. That's part of being human. Suffering, however, suffering is optional. Suffering is what happens when we resist our pain and we push against it.

So, every time I think about pushing against pain I think of having a contraction. So, the pain of a contraction is unavoidable, unless you get that epidural real quick. So just imagine, you have a contraction, it goes up, up, up and then it recedes. And so now you're between contractions. Imagine between contractions that you hold your breath and you tell yourself, this is too much, I shouldn't have to feel this way. This is awful. That resistance will cause suffering because again, the pain is unavoidable, it's going to happen.

Just like the physical pain of having a contraction for example is unavoidable, the emotional pain of a sick parent, or a child who is struggling, or having to cancel plans, that's unavoidable. But the suffering caused by thoughts like, my dad should not be sick, my child should not be hurting himself, and we are back to square one. All of those thoughts, they are optional. All of those thoughts that cause suffering I like to think about it as pain being unavoidable and suffering being us doubling down on our own pain.

And the way that we double down on our own pain is through the thoughts that resist the pain that we're experiencing. So, the antidote to resisting reality and the suffering that it creates is acceptance. We can choose whether we double down on our own pain by telling ourselves that this should not be happening or drop into acceptance. Acceptance is allowing what is happening to be there without resisting it. But how? How do we go from fighting reality, this should not be happening, to dropping into acceptance?

Right now, it's like this, I think this depends. Now, for minor disappointments or irritations, this may be a matter of intentionally shifting your thoughts. But there will be situations where this shift is not as

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seamless because we are still clinging to our anger, or our grief, or our disappointment. So, what to do. Before we can do the thought work to decide what we want to think and feel, we need to process how we are actually feeling. We need to let it out. Here's how I do this.

First, round up all of the thoughts that are creating the suffering. You can do this by talking to your partner, trusted friends, a coach, or a therapist, or even a stranger on Facebook, whatever works for you. I have a few close friends I deeply trust and I can share anything with them, even the ugly stuff. But maybe talking to someone does not feel comfortable to you or maybe it's not available in the moment that you need it. If that's the case write down all of the thoughts that are bubbling up inside of you. Gabby Bernstein calls this rage on the page. And I love this.

Have your own grown up meltdown on a piece of paper and get all of the ugly out. Don't filter, edit or judge yourself. Give yourself the gift of releasing all of these painful thoughts onto a piece of paper. I'll share a few of mine with you. I wish my child with OCD would stop asking me the same question. Now, yes, I know how ridiculous that sounds but that's what's inside of me right now and I want to get it out.

I wish my son was more Autistic. Yes, I know, judge away but right now I'm thinking that if he were more impacted then he would suffer less because he would not see the differences between himself and other children. As un-PC or cringe worthy as any of your thoughts are, get them out. I like this process of rage on a page because it gets the thoughts out of my head and it's part of the process of releasing them from my body of actually processing the emotion.

When I do this I don't do it in my journal. I take out a blank sheet of paper and I fill it up and then I rip it up or I put it in the shredder. These are not thoughts I want to keep inside of my head, my body or my journal. I want to release them.

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Next, get present with the emotions that came up. What does it feel like? Where are you holding them in your body? Breathe slowly and deeply through them, in and out like you are riding a wave.

And then finally, when you are ready, you can do the thought work about how you want to think, and feel, and act about the circumstances in your life, including the things that you don't believe should be happening. To do this you can begin by asking yourself powerful questions like, now what? What am I going to choose next now that this is the way it is? And how am I going to move forward? Remember, this is not easy stuff, so go slow and give yourself tons of grace.

Before I go I want to remind you that there is one week left to enter to win one of the three self-care packages I'm giving away to listeners who rate and review the podcast. Please go to theAutismmomcoach.com/podcastlaunch to learn how to enter the contest. Thank you and talk 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. See you next week.