

Ep #16: When People Don't Understand



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lisa Candra

Ep #16: When People Don't Understand

You are listening to episode 16 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, When People Don't Understand. If you've ever felt frustrated because people don't understand what your life is like or the struggles you encounter raising a child with Autism, then this episode is for you. 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.

Hey there, welcome back to another episode of the podcast. I hope you are doing well and enjoying the summer weather. Today we are going to talk about a topic that comes up all of the time in my life and in my coaching program which is other people. Part of navigating this experience of raising a child with special needs is learning how to think about the people in our lives who we believe don't understand what our lives are like, or what it is like to raise a child with Autism.

And this is just about everybody. We believe that our friends with neurotypical kids don't get it. In our mind their biggest challenges are juggling extracurricular activities and playdates. We believe our family members don't get it. I mean they think our child is just fine, or going through a phase, or just being difficult. The strangers at the park giving you a dirty look when you don't discipline your child for being 'bad', well, they certainly don't get it.

And maybe you believe your partner doesn't get it either. After all, maybe he or she is not with your child as much as you are. Maybe they know about the struggles but in your mind they just don't get it. In this episode I want to talk to you about why other people getting you or understanding your experience is not the danger you perceive it to be. Remember, the

Ep #16: When People Don't Understand

primitive brain does not know the difference between real or perceived danger. It reacts to both in the same way.

And what are the biggest dangers to the human brain? Well, first anything that can kill us. And second, being separated from our tribes, being cast out, being voted off the island. This means that our brains perceive disconnection from other humans as dangerous to our survival as the lurking lion or the latest new cycle. And this makes sense, for our primitive ancestors, connection to other humans was a matter of survival.

So, when we believe that others, our friends, our family, our neighbors, when we believe that they don't understand us, that they don't get us, well, to our primitive brains, this is just a hop, skip and a jump to certain death. But here's the thing, while other people not understanding our experience may feel uncomfortable, it is not dangerous. It is not the problem we perceive it to be.

The real problem is that when we tell ourselves other people don't understand us, we create disconnection with ourselves and disconnection with others which is exactly the opposite of what we want when we are yearning for other people to understand us. Let's start with disconnection to self. When we tell ourselves that other people need to get us, they need to understand in order for us to feel confident, connected, safe or secure. We are outsourcing how we think and feel about ourselves to other people and whatever is going on in their minds.

We are depending on them to change, on them to think differently, on them to behave differently in order for us to feel okay. Now, this is normal. We are social animals. External validation feels good, it feels like safety. It is a nice to have but it is not necessary. For example, I can believe I'm a good mom and feel confident even though other people would disagree. There are people who believe I should not be talking about my son's diagnosis, that I should not have a podcast, that I should not call myself The Autism Mom Coach.

Ep #16: When People Don't Understand

There are people who disagree with decisions I have made about my son's treatment. All of this has happened. And I still think I'm a good mom. And I feel good about how I show up most of the time. Does this mean I think all of my decisions are right and I am perfect? Hell no. I am trying my best and this is hard. Other people may disagree, they may not understand and they may not even care. This is all okay. It feels uncomfortable but it won't kill me and it won't kill you either.

The second thing that happens when we think other people should understand or we are upset that they don't understand is that we undermine our connection with others. This is because when we are thinking, no one understands and feeling frustrated, resentful or sad, we're less likely to open up. So, then we give people even less information and less opportunity to understand. Let me walk you through an example.

One of my clients recently received a group text from one of her friends inviting the group to happy hour. It was last minute but because it was such a beautiful day, everyone was excited. And the responses came in immediately, I'm in, can't wait, see you there etc., etc. Her automatic thought, no one understands, she can't just go to happy hour. Who will take care of her 12 year old? And no, she can't leave her 12 year old alone. And no, she can't just find a babysitter. On course in her mind, if her friends understood this they would have not have asked her in the first place.

She declines the invite but it was not over for her. She spent the next day spinning in frustration about her friends not understanding her life, and feeling angry towards them for, in her mind, having it so easy. What she didn't do, well, she didn't show any compassion to herself. I mean she felt sorry for herself as in her friends were the villains and she was a victim. But that is not the same thing as noticing your own suffering and offering yourself grace.

She did not have any conversations with her friends about it, how she wants to be part of the group text but sometimes it's hard for her. Because she sees what she's missing out on. She didn't make any suggestions to any of her friends about times or ways that it would be easier for her to be

Ep #16: When People Don't Understand

part of the fun. And the result of all of this, she felt lonely and disconnected. Now, think about that, she was invited out, she was invited to be part of the group, she was invited to connect but that thought, no one understands and the feelings that it created resulted in her feeling less connection.

Now, this is not about judging ourselves. It is about bringing awareness to what our thoughts are creating for us. And it is a way of separating our thoughts from reality because here is the real truth. It's never really possible for someone else to understand your experience, not fully. I am a coach for moms raising kids with Autism. I am single. I have a 14 year old boy with high functioning Autism. And he also has some comorbid diagnoses.

Yet I have clients who are married, who have multiple children, who have children with lower functioning Autism. Do I get their experience? Do I truly understand what it is like to walk in their shoes? No, probably not. I have some experiences. I can relate to them but I don't truly get them. And that's okay, we don't need other people to get us, it's not their job. And here is the other thing, we don't get them either. Other people have experiences that we can't relate to.

We might imagine what their experiences are like but we don't live in their shoes. We don't have their brains. We don't have their nervous systems. We don't truly get another person's experiences. It's okay. You don't need to get someone and all of their experiences to love them and to be connected with them. You don't need the people in your life to understand your experiences the way you would want them to in order to feel connected to them. And you most certainly do not need them to understand your experiences in order for you to understand, love and validate yourself.

External validation, it's nice to have but it is not necessary. You can still believe that you are doing a great job, that you're doing the best job that you can and that you're handling it well, even if other people don't understand. You can feel connected. You can feel validated. And you can feel normal because of how you choose to think about the people in your life and the way that you're living and the choices you are making.

Ep #16: When People Don't Understand

So instead of worrying about whether or not they understand, work on showing love and compassion for yourself as you are even when other people don't understand. Work on understanding yourself more and on validating yourself.

Alright, that's all for today. I hope this is helpful. And before I go I want you all to know that if you want to work with me one-on-one, you can. I am accepting applications for new clients. All you need to do is go to theautismmomcoach.com and check out Work With Me. You can schedule a one-on-one consult appointment right from my website. During that call we will talk about where you are and where you want to be and we will see if coaching is the right fit for you. Thanks again for listening 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. See you next week.