

Ep #20: Five Powerful Questions For Every Autism Mom



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With Your Host

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You are listening to episode 20 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Five Powerful Questions For Every Autism Mom. In her book, *Loving What Is*, Byron Katie writes, 'We either believe what we think or we question it. There is no other choice. Questioning our thoughts is the kinder way. Inquiry always leaves us a as more loving human beings'. In this episode I am going to teach you a simple tool for questioning your thoughts that will help you become a more loving human being towards yourself, your child and the people in your life. Stay tuned.

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 20 of the podcast. I'm so excited to be recording this episode because 20 just seems like a big deal, at least right now. Maybe in a year from now I won't think that at all but right now it's a big deal. I hope you are doing well and enjoying this podcast. And if you are, please take the time to rate and review it. I would love to hear what you think of it and I also want to hear what you would like to hear about in future episodes. Also, reviews are a big deal in terms of gaining visibility and I want this podcast to reach as many moms like us as possible.

I designed this podcast to support moms raising kids with Autism because there are a lot of resources out there for our children but not many for us. And that's what this podcast is. So, if you like it, please rate and review it. If it's been helpful for you, share it with a friend, share it with your mom groups, share it with your local special ed support groups or whatever it is. Let's get the word out.

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Okay now onto today's topic. In this week's episode I am going to teach you one of my favorite strategies for getting out of my own way. I use this strategy when I feel stuck and I find myself arguing for my limitations instead of for my potential. The tool is called powerful questions. It is a brain based strategy to shift from limiting beliefs to possibility.

The best way to define powerful questions is to contrast them with the questions we usually ask ourselves, the dead end questions like, am I doing enough? Am I doing the right things? Why me? Why my child? Why is my life so hard? These are dead end questions. These questions assume something is wrong with us or the world and they put us in a place of victim, life is happening to us.

These questions are dead end because they're not really questions at all. They are more like a limiting belief with a question mark at the end. By contrast, powerful questions are open minded. They are thought provoking. They open up space for inquiry and discovery. And here is the best part. Our brains do not like open loops. So powerful questions are a way of directing our brains to find answers to move us forward. Here are some examples of powerful questions.

What can I learn from this? Who better than me? What if this is not a problem? How can I support myself in this moment? If I wasn't taking this personally what would I do? These are the questions I ask myself all of the time and I want to show you how I use them.

So, the first question. Who better than me? This is a great question to ask yourself when you find yourself in victim mentality, when you're thinking things like my life is so hard, or why is this happening to me, or why is this happening in my life. This question really pumps me up because when I think about it, when I really think about this question and the answer to the question it's like who better than me is right?

I mean Autism or more specifically being a parent of a child with Autism has changed my life, yes. But in reality it has made me more of who I am. I

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am an advocate. I am a teacher. I am a collaborator. I am a connector. I am resilient. And I am resourceful. This is who I am. So, who better than me to guide my son on his journey? Who better than me to speak up for him? Who better than me to challenge the experts? No one, that's the answer, no one. In other words, this question for me lets me reclaim my power. It helps me shift from why me victim to hell yeah, yes me.

Question number two. What can I do in this moment to support myself? We spend so much time and energy trying to support our children while completely neglecting ourselves. This question is designed as a reminder to stop and look inward. You are a big part of this equation. It matters how you are feeling. So, ask yourself, in this moment what can I do to support myself? Can I take a walk? Can I walk away? Can I turn off the catastrophizing soundtrack?

By regularly asking myself this question and turning inward it has helped me to begin to build the muscle of attending to my own needs. And this has been really helpful in terms of my reactivity to my son. It has helped me slow down, it has helped me stop before I react, not every time but it has helped.

Question number three. What else could be true? So, remember from the quote from Byron Katie, we are either believing our thoughts or we are questioning them. We believe our thoughts. So, this question is inviting you to explore other possibilities. Could something else be true? Could the opposite of whatever it is you are believing, could that be just as true? For example, my client had a disagreement with her husband when he told her that she did not need to hover over her 12 year old as he played with the neighbors.

In her mind she did have to hover. She had to keep a close eye on him. He could get mad. He could yell at the other kids. He could get into a fight. She was so focused on her worse case scenario thoughts that she did not even consider the fact that he might not have an issue at all. And that if he did he and the other kids could resolve it without her.

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This was not even available in her brain which by the way this is exactly what happened because while she was arguing with her husband or having a disagreement with her husband she was not outside watching her child. And he did get upset when he was tagged first in a game and he yelled. And it was no big deal, the kids just went about their business as kids do and nothing else happened. The point here is to notice when you are holding on tightly to a thought and gently ask yourself, what are the other possibilities.

I think you will start to find that the more you open yourself up to other possibilities or at least the possibility that not everything will be a worst case scenario shit show, the more that will become your reality.

Question number four. Am I taking this personally? This is a big one for me because I will be honest, I take my son's behaviors personally. And I have a lot of justification for it because I believe my own boss. I am a single mother. I do everything for him. He should be more grateful and on and on. So anyhow, taking things personally is something that I do, I am aware of it. So, this is a question I'm always asking myself, am I taking this personally? And just to remember, I talked about this in episode two, why it's an issue, why it's a problem when we take things personally.

When we take things personally we make them personal. We make it about what kind of person our child is. He is ungrateful. We make it about us. They are doing this to me, or at me, or to spite me. And we make it about our parenting. We somehow find ways to blame ourselves for not doing enough, not being enough, you get the picture. When you ask yourself this question, am I taking it personally just do a quick scan for any judgmental thoughts that you are having about your child, yourself or your parenting.

If they pop up, chances are you are taking something personally, which leads nicely to question number five which is one of my favorites. If I was not taking this personally what would I think, how would I feel and what would I do? For this question I just try to imagine that I am unable to take behaviors personally. It's just not even available to me. Kind of like in that

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movie Liar Liar where Jim Carrey could not lie for 24 hours, it was actually impossible, something like that. I am just magically unable to take things personally.

So, if that were the case how would that make things different for me. How would I show up differently? So, for example, if my son is late getting on the bus in the morning and it's after I have told him to get out of bed over and over and he's delaying, and delaying, and delaying. And if I'm not able to take it personally that he's not listening to me, and I'm not able to make it personal that he's disrespecting me, then what do I do?

Well, he's a 14 year old boy so my actions in some ways might be the same. I'm still on him to get him out the door, make sure he has everything. But I'm not adding to it all of this judgment, all of this angst. I am showing up very differently when I'm not taking it personally. So, whenever you just find yourself in a situation where you're feeling a bit annoyed by your child or something that they're doing, just ask yourself, if I weren't taking this personally, what would I do? Would I ignore it? Would I walk away? Would I redirect them but without the judgment?

Try this one out, this one can be a gamechanger because I think what you'll find the more you do it is how much you are probably taking things personally and didn't even realize it in the first place.

Okay, to sum up. Powerful questions are a way of shifting from limiting beliefs and directing your brain to find answers to move you forward. Here are the five questions that I introduced to you today. One, who better than me? Two, what can I do in this moment to support myself? Three, what else could be true? Four, am I taking this personally? And five, if I was not taking this personally, what would I think, how would I feel and what would I do? And these are just five examples of course.

And you can be as creative with this as you want. The point here is you are either believing your thoughts or you are questioning them. So, get to questioning them in a way that moves you forward.

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Okay, that's all I have for this episode. Thank you so much for listening and please remember, if you like this podcast and you find it helpful, rate and review. I will 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.