

Ep #21: Worrying is Optional



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With Your Host

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You are listening to episode 21 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Worrying is Optional.

As special needs moms we worry about so many things when it comes to our children, their progress, what other people will think of them, what other people will think of us and what their lives will be like in the future. The list goes on and on. We worry about it all and we've somehow convinced ourselves that worrying is necessary and that it is useful but really it's neither. So then why do we do it?

Is it because we have nothing better to do? Hell, no, we're busy but we do it. We spend so much of our time devoted to worrying about our children. Stay tuned to this week's episode where I'm going to break down what worry is, why we do it and why it is always, always optional.

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 the podcast. I hope you are doing well and enjoying your summer. I want to let you know that I have been making some updates to my website, the autismmomcoach.com. So, if you haven't checked it out lately you should take a look. I've added a resources page where you can find videos and free worksheets. And I will continue to add to this page over the course of time so check in frequently. And of course, while you're on my website you can schedule a free consultation with me about my one-on-one coaching program.

You could have me as your one-on-one coach and I can teach you the tools that I use in my day-to-day life so that you can show up in your life in a way that feels good, while handling the challenges that come with raising

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a child with Autism. So go to my website, check it out, book a consultation. I'd love to talk to you.

Okay, on to the lesson for today. We are going to talk about something that we do all of the time because we are humans with human brains. And because of this we have the amazing ability to mentally simulate future events. We can think ahead of time.

We can anticipate obstacles or problems and we can take steps to prevent them or mitigate them in some cases. This is truly an amazing tool that we have but it is also one that we use against ourselves because we confuse our ability to think ahead of time, anticipate obstacles and course correct with the ability to bring certainty and control to the future. And of course, we can't do this at all. This is just an illusion. It's a really uncomfortable reality that we would rather avoid, so what do we do instead? We worry.

So, what is worry, after all, let's start with a definition. Worry as a verb is defined, to give way to anxiety or unease, to allow one's mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles. So, worrying is an action. It is something we do. And what do we all know about actions? If you've listened to episodes five and six of this podcast, the Think, Feel, Act Cycle and The Self-Coaching Model, you know that actions don't just happen out of nowhere, they all have a reason.

There's a circumstance in our life, we have a thought about it, the thought creates a feeling and the feeling drives an action. And in this case the action we are taking is we are worrying. So, let's just dig into this a bit. Why do we worry? What is the purpose of the action of worrying? Because our actions or our behaviors, if you will, just like our kids, they all serve a purpose. Maybe they are not effective but they still serve some purpose. We're doing it for a reason. So, what's the reason?

Well, some of us have the conscious belief that worrying is helpful. We think worrying motivates us to take action. But this is just wrong. When we are worrying the action we are taking is the worrying. When we are worrying we are not moving forward, we are not taking productive action,

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we are stuck. Some of us think worrying is preventative. If we worry long enough and hard enough then the thing we are worried about won't happen, or it just won't be that bad, or at least I'll be prepared.

And then of course some of us believe that worrying is just something you're supposed to do. I mean we're moms, we're moms of special needs kids. We're supposed to worry, it means we care. Now, not all of us consciously believe that worrying is helpful but as you know we have about 60,000 thoughts a day and most of them aren't conscious at all, they are subconscious. And whether we are aware of it or not many of us do have the subconscious belief that worrying is useful.

Again, after all, why would we do it? Actually, the crazy thing is that for chronic worriers, there is a reward loop that gets created because if you worry about everything there will be things that you worry about that either won't happen or aren't as bad as you expected. And you will consciously or subconsciously credit worry with a better outcome. But this simply isn't true. It is a thinking error. It is similar to magical thinking which is the belief that one's thoughts and actions can influence the course of events in the world. Worrying is not magical. It is useless.

And the good news for all of us is that it's 100% optional. It is an action we are taking and we get to decide what we do and what we don't do. We always have a choice. But easier said than done. We have been honing this skill for a long, long time. Some of us worry so much that we don't even notice it, it's just like breathing. So, the first step in curbing this nasty brain habit, because ultimately that is what it is, is to notice it. Notice the behavior of worrying, notice when you're spending time spinning in your mind and then get curious.

Play detective with yourself like you do with your child, ask yourself, why am I worrying? And just write it all down, get it all out of your brain and onto paper. And then ask yourself, is this behavior moving me towards taking productive action? Is it keeping me stuck? What else could I do instead? Take the time to practice catching yourself and interrupting this neural loop.

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This is the first step in rewiring your brain, this is the first step in creating intentional thoughts and thinking on purpose.

This is the first step to reclaiming authority over your own life is deciding what you want to think, how you want to feel and the actions you want to take. So, give this a try and tune into next week's episode where I'm going to teach you a tool that you can use as a replacement behavior whenever you find yourself spinning in worry. Thank you so much for listening and 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.