

## Ep #22: How to Stop Worrying



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With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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You are listening to episode 22 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, How to Stop Worrying.

In last week's episode I told you that worrying is useless and completely optional. You don't have to do it, but how? How do I just stop worrying? After all, I'm so good at it. I hear you. In this week's episode I am going to teach you a strategy that you can use as a replacement behavior when your worry thoughts pop up. 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 another episode of the podcast. I hope you are doing well and enjoying the summer. ESY is over for us and we are just a couple of weeks away from the beginning of a new school year and high school. Speaking of which, starting next week I will be doing a back to school series to get prepared for the upcoming school year which based on my 12 years of experience with back to school with my son I know that it is always a challenge.

So, in this series I will provide you with some actionable strategies you can use now to prepare yourself for whatever the school year brings. And I also want to let you know you do not have to do this alone. And now is the perfect time to schedule a one-on-one consultation with me to see if coaching is the right fit for you. You can go to my website, [theautismmomcoach](http://theautismmomcoach.com) and schedule right on the site. If you're unable to find a time that works for you, message me directly and we'll figure it out.

Okay, onto how to stop worrying. Like I said, high school is just a couple of weeks away and I am surprised and happy but mostly surprised to say that

## Ep #22: How to Stop Worrying

I'm not worrying about it which is not how I handled the transition to middle school. I started worrying about middle school a full year before it even happened. I worried about how my son would handle a new school, more kids, new expectations. I also worried about how I would be able to support him while working full-time outside the home. And you know what happened? COVID happened.

We spent middle school in the same room, a year of worrying about the transition to middle school to be hit by a global pandemic and that's life, right? It reminds me of one of my favorite quotes by Mark Twain who said, "Some of the worst things in my life never even happened." This is so true. When I think of all the things I've spent time worrying about in my life, a lot of them never happened.

Like failing the bar exam which is the test that you have to take after you graduate from law school before you can be licensed to practice law. I spent so much time worrying about the bar exam that to this day and it has been almost 20 years to the day that I took the exam and I still have nightmares about it. All of that worrying and for what? It's not like the worrying helped me pass the exam. Of course, it didn't help me because it's useless.

Do you remember the song, Everyone is Free to Wear Sunscreen? It's a spoken word song by Baz Luhrmann. I will put the link in the show notes. And he makes the point that worrying is useless, much better than I do when he says, "Don't worry about the future, or worry but know that worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing bubblegum. The real troubles in your life are apt to be the things that never crossed your worried mind, the kind that blindsides you at 4:00pm on some idle Tuesday."

This one really hits home for me, the things you never even imagined to worry about like a global pandemic, or an Autism diagnosis. But here we are. In addition to being useless, worrying also keeps us stuck and prevents us from taking productive action. This is because when we are worrying that is what we are doing. It means we can't possibly be doing

## Ep #22: How to Stop Worrying

anything to make our lives better when we are actively worrying because the worry is taking up all of our brain space and all of our energy.

But like I said before, for so many of us, worrying is as natural as breathing, we hardly notice it. But once we do, once we catch ourselves in this nasty little brain habit we can choose not to do it. Like you know when you are about to watch a YouTube video and they give you the option to watch the entire commercial or to skip the ad? Well, imagine that worrying is the commercial. You can skip it. You don't need it. You do not need to buy what it is selling you anymore, thanks but no. Easier said than done, I know.

Again, worrying is second nature to so many of us and it is so socially accepted and even expected for women, especially for mothers. But just because something is hard doesn't mean we can't do it, in fact just the opposite. So, let's get to the strategy that I want to teach you so that you can gain some control over this nasty little habit, it is called divide and conquer. Here's what you do.

Get out a piece of paper and divide it into three columns. At the top of the page, write down one thing that you are worried about. For example, my child's teacher is going on maternity leave and I am afraid they will not respond well to the transition. Then in the first column write down everything you do not have control over. This would be things like the teacher's pregnancy, who the replacement teacher is, whether that replacement teacher has experience with Autism, whether your child likes the replacement teacher.

For the things on the list where you have no control there is no use in spending your precious energy focusing on them. You have no control means move on. Now, you are going to have to make a conscious choice to redirect your brain every time it pops up and is like, "Hey, maybe you should start thinking about that thing you have zero control over." No, thank you, skip ad.

## Ep #22: How to Stop Worrying

Then in column two write down what you do have control over. So, this would be things like previewing it to your child, creating a social story, working with the school to support the transition. These are the things that you can control. And then in the third column, for all of the things that are under your control, write down the actions you can take now to move closer to your goal which in this case is a smooth transition. This is how you divide and conquer.

Now, a reminder about the things you can control. Your children and other people do not belong on this list. What your kids do, what they think, how they feel are never ever in this column of things that you can control. Please remind yourself of this as often as you can because as parents we have bought the lie that we should be able to control our children. We can't. We can influence them but we can't control them. So, when you're putting together the list, remind yourself of this.

You can do all of the things and you can do them perfectly but ultimately what other people do and don't do, including our children is not within our control. So, there you have it. Worrying is useless, when you are worrying you are not able to live intentionally and take productive action. A replacement behavior to worrying is divide and conquer. Write down what you are worried about, then make a list of what you can't control and what you can. For the things you can't control, move on, let them go. There is no use spending your precious energy here.

Then for the things you can control, write down the actions you can take now to move you forward and get to work. Thank you so much for listening, 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](http://theautismmomcoach.com). See you next week.