

Ep #33: When You Wish Your Child Was “Normal” (Part 1)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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You are listening to episode 33 of *The Autism Mom Coach*. When You Wish Your Child was “Normal.” Whether we want to admit it or not, so many of us have had this thought at one point or another. Maybe it was when we received the diagnosis. Maybe it was after a phone call from the school about an incident or a behavior. Maybe it is when we see our children with their peers and their friends doing “normal” things.

In the next two episodes of this podcast, I am going to tackle the word “normal”. So, if you have ever found yourself thinking, saying or wishing that your child, or your life, or your parenting experience was normal, these episodes are for you. In part one I’m going to tell you why it is a 100% normal to wish your child was normal. And in part two I am going to get to work on dismantling some of the language that is used to oppress our children and leave us feeling powerless. 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 am so glad you are here and hope you are doing well. I am going to introduce today’s topic by telling you about my first coaching call with new clients. During this call, we are talking about goals, where the client is and what they want to get out of the coaching relationship. And as part of this I ask this question, “What do you wish was different and why?” And here’s what happens.

They pause, they look down and in some way or another they reply with, “I wish they were normal.” Followed by, “I know I shouldn’t say that. I know I shouldn’t think that about my own kid. Oh my God, I’m such a terrible

Ep #33: When You Wish Your Child Was “Normal” (Part 1)

parent. Who would say that about their own child?” And here’s what I say to them. “Of course, you do.” So why do I say this? Is it because I think that there is some version of normal and that our children aren’t meeting it and so we need to fix them and catch them up? No, that’s not why at all.

But before I get to why I say this, let’s start with the definition of what it means to be normal. Normal is defined as conforming to a type, standard, or regular pattern. It is characterized by that which is considered usual. Do you know what this definition, what normal means to our primitive brains, the part of our brains that are only concerned with our survival and not our happiness? Normal means safety.

Conforming to a type, fitting in, being like everyone else. That means you are part of the tribe. You get to stay. You get to live. I know that that sounds dramatic but our primitive brain is dramatic. The survival of our ancestors depended on being part of the group, and part of the tribe, and not getting kicked off the island. So, when I say, “Of course you do”, what I am really saying and I do explain this by the way in my coaching, is of course you want your child to be safe.

Because I think in so many ways, this all comes down to safety. We want our children to be like everyone else, to be accepted, to be loved, to be safe. Another reason I say, “Of course you do”, is because of the motivational triad. The motivational triad tells us that humans are wired to seek pleasure, avoid pain and to be efficient. So, when you take a look at the thought, I wish they were normal, it meets all three elements of the motivation triad. If they are normal we avoid the pain of having a child who is struggling.

If they are normal we move towards the good feelings associated with fitting in. If they are normal we get to forego the tremendous effort, time, and resources we are pouring into therapies, doctors’ appointments, and recalibrating our regular routines. So of course, you do, of course you want more happiness and less pain, and less struggle for you and your child.

Ep #33: When You Wish Your Child Was “Normal” (Part 1)

Here is the good news. This is not either or, it is both and. Two things can be true. You can love the heck out of your kid and still want them to have an easier life. You can love the heck out of your kid and want to have an easier parenting experience. So instead of trying to change your kid and shaming yourself, just take a step back and look at what is really happening here. Your survival brain senses danger and it is trying to fix it. Your brain senses pain and struggle and it is trying to avoid it.

And the answer it has come up with is if my child is “normal” then everything will be okay, or at least easier. Once you can look at these thoughts and what is happening, and view it with compassion you can move towards deciding how you want to think on purpose about your child and your circumstances. But first, start with normalizing your thoughts and your feelings. You are wired this way. Your brain is responding in exactly the way it is intended to.

This does not mean anything about you, your child, or your parenting, nothing bad anyway. Once you really begin to believe this and to internalize it you can start doing the work of shifting the narrative of normal. And by the way, whenever I say normal, it’s “normal” because there ain’t no normal. I want you to get accustomed to treating yourself and this thought, not as the enemy, not as evil and not as something you need to feel ashamed about. I want you to treat it as shall I say normal or how you are wired?

We are wired to seek pleasure, to be happy and to have things be easy. That is actually normal for human beings. So as best you can use this teaching to create some distance between you, the parent who adores your child and wants the world for them, and this thought that will cause you to shame yourself. It is normal that you want things to be easier. It is normal that you don't want your child to struggle. It is normal that you would prefer not to struggle.

Ep #33: When You Wish Your Child Was “Normal” (Part 1)

In next week's episode I am going to talk to you about how “normal” is not a thing and how to reframe the language that we use to describe our children and our experiences in a way that is inclusive, empowering and moves us forward. 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.