

Ep #34: When You Wish Your Child Was “Normal” (Part 2)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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You are listening to episode 34 of *The Autism Mom Coach* podcast, When You Wish Your Child was “Normal” (Part 2). Thoughts are powerful, when we think, I wish my child was “normal” over and over, it becomes a belief. We believe there is a “normal”, but there isn’t. “Normal” is not a thing, it is completely made up. And the more we give into this idea that there is a “normal” without questioning it, the more suffering we create for ourselves by just accepting that there is a right way and that we or our children are somehow wrong.

The good news is that by doing this work of questioning your own thoughts, you can begin to shift your internal narrative and your own thinking and how you talk about your child and their uniqueness in a way that is inclusive and supportive versus exclusive and judgmental. To learn more, 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.

Hello everyone and welcome to the podcast. I hope you are doing well. If you have not already, take a listen to episode 33 of this podcast which is part one of the series, When You Wish Your Child Was “normal”. Alright, let’s dive in. The word “normal”, especially as it is used when referring to human beings is limiting and laden with judgment. N-O-R-M-A-L, just six letters all by themselves say there is a right way and a wrong way. There is what is expected and standard, and everything, and everyone else.

It promotes the idea, the myth, that there is one standard way of doing or being, and there isn’t. “Normal” is completely relative, it depends on so

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many factors, when and where you live, your race, your culture, your economic background, your sexuality. I mean you name it, there are so many factors that contribute to what any person, what any one of us thinks of as “normal”. Take this idea and apply it to Autism, we are told early on that one of the signs that our child is Autistic, is the fact that they don't look other people in the eye when speaking.

And then go to any restaurant or in any place where human beings gather and what will you see? No one's looking at one another, no one's even speaking. They're all staring at their phones. It is very “normal” to walk into a restaurant and see people at the same table staring at their phones. I mean how many times has the waiter needed to interrupt you just to take your order? But in this day and age in 2022, that is “normal” for some people. Now, look, it's not “normal” for people who are in war torn countries right now, or people who are in third world countries and on and on.

But right now, if you're listening to this podcast you probably think that that is “normal”. And anyhow, the point is, “normal” is relative, it depends on so many things. But when we use this word we are bringing all of the etymology of the word, all of the history of the word, the entire idea that there is a right way and a wrong way. When we use this word that is what we are communicating. And that's what we're internalizing in our own narrative. Words are powerful.

Think about the misuse of the word “aggression” as it relates to kids with Autism. Aggression is defined and understood as an intent to cause harm to another person. And we all know that's not what is happening when a person with Autism engages in physical behaviors directed at themselves or another person. They are dysregulated. there is no intent to harm. It is an intent to communicate, to deal with overwhelming emotions. But when Jake acts out physically towards his aide as a result of sensory overload and dysregulation, well, that doesn't roll off the tongue, does it? No.

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The report you get home is that your child was aggressive. and when you hear this word, how are you thinking and feeling about your child or any child that is labelled as aggressive? Not well, right? And in addition to reinforcing the belief that there is a “normal”, this word, this idea, this judgment robs us of joy. It tells us that our kids or we, or both are broken in some way. It stands in the way of us loving our children and our lives as it is right now and appreciating all of the amazingness of our own children.

But here is the good news, we get to decide how we want to think and talk about our experiences. One of the ways that we can start to shift from the limiting and evaluative language of “normal” is by questioning it. What do I mean by “normal” when I’m thinking this? What am I really thinking? Even if it doesn’t roll off the tongue, so maybe instead of, I wish my child was “normal”, maybe it’s, I wish she could speak and tell me what is wrong. I just want to help her out.

Now, this won't happen automatically but we can autocorrect if you will, or really just reminding ourselves what do I mean when I say, “I wish she was ‘normal,’ or I wish she wasn’t different”, what do I mean? I wish they acted “normal” in public, maybe that means I wish my kids were able to enjoy themselves in restaurants, or I wish other people weren't staring at us. This might seem simple or not like a big deal but it is because language shapes how we experience the world. It is powerful.

Alright, good luck with this and let me know how it goes. I’ll 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.