

Ep #35: Managing Your Transitions



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You are listening to episode 35 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Managing Your Transitions: Schedules, Previews, Social Stories and Test Runs. These are just a few of the ways that we try to prepare our kids for transitions and changes. And while we may not be as sensitive to changes as our kids with Autism, we still have nervous systems that can benefit from the same supports we use to help our children. 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 and welcome to the podcast. Before we get to this week's topic I wanted to knowledge something very significant in my own life and that is the recent passing of my father after a hard fought battle with cancer. Following his passing I dead stopped everything that was not essential. I canceled coaching calls. I canceled speaking engagements and I took off a week from work. In the past and by the past I mean before coaching I would have likely kept myself as busy as possible and muscled through.

I would have told myself that there was nothing I could do and better to keep busy to avoid feeling terrible by occupying myself with things to do. But not this time, I said no to everything that could wait another week. And I said yes to being with my family, and the discomfort and sadness that comes with grieving a parent. I share this because I want all of you to know that you can do this too, not just when someone passes away, but every day, any day.

You can say yes to yourself and no to other people, it is okay. You can disappoint other people and it will be okay. This is a topic I'm going to dive deeper into in the next few weeks because with the holidays coming up it is

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the season of people pleasing. And that is just another area I think where we create so much more suffering for ourselves because we are so focused on what we should do and what other people expect of us, and not on what feels right to us.

In fact, we don't even know what feels right to us because we've never even actually thought about it. It's just not been on the menu of things that we feel are important and that's going to change. So, stay tuned for the next couple of weeks where I'm going to talk about skills that you can use as we move into this holiday season to show up the way you want to versus the way everyone else expects.

Alright, for today we are talking about transitions. Now, this topic has come up completely organically, just a situation that I'm dealing with in my own life. I have shared in previous episodes that my son and I are currently living out of state while he attends an intensive OCD program. And while living out of state is very disruptive to our lives, it's been well worth it because we're finally getting the help that we need. And I say we purposefully because I am benefiting from this as much as he is.

After years of being ignored, or put off, or outright rejected from programs that told us flat out, "We can't do OCD in high functioning Autism." We are finally in a place that gets it. But like with all things Autism, it's complicated. The program is specifically for kids with OCD. And while they have experience with Autism, Autism just always introduces some wrinkles. So, they are not treating my son with the straight up OCD protocol. They are adjusting it to meet him where he is. And so that is incredible.

And on top of that I get every week one hour of face-to-face time with two doctors as we talk about my son's progress, as we talk about strategies and we brainstorm. It's been incredible for me, just to be talking to people who get it, who are right there with me, who are listening and who are really there to help. Not to say that I haven't had this in the past but this is just so specific to where we are, in the struggles that we're having that it's amazing.

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So that said, every time I hear my son say something like, “Mom, I’m sick of this. I want to go home”, or my son’s school calls and asks me, “Well, when is he going to be coming back?” I can feel my chest tightening. I feel panic in my body. And I was trying to figure out, what is going on? Why am I feeling so panicked? And what I’ve realized is that this is a transition coming up and I am resisting it. It’s creating panic in me.

And as soon as I realized that I was resisting a transition it was like, well, wait a second, I am always trying to help my son with previewing transitions, with understanding transitions and preparing for them. Maybe I can use those same strategies I use with him on myself. Because the fact is we are not going to be there forever, we are going to be transitioning home. And I really have a choice to make here. I can bury my head in the sand and I can have many panic attacks at the thought of this program ending.

Or I can begin to prepare myself for the certainty that we are leaving in just a matter of weeks. So, I want to share with you some of the things that I’m doing to support myself in this transition. First, of course, just acknowledging this is happening. I don’t really know when but it’s happening. Second, deciding, how do I want to think about the fact that this program is going to end after about 10 to 12 weeks. My default thought here was, oh no, we’re going back home where nobody understands us.

The thought that I came to was, it is okay to be nervous. And this thought actually made me feel calmer because it was validating my experience, because I was nervous. I still am a little nervous. And then when I was feeling calmer I was willing to do a couple of things I had been avoiding. I emailed my son's school to update them about the program and schedule an IEP meeting. I met with my son’s special education advocate to discuss next steps. I spoke with the hospital program about their suggestions for transition.

I started to make regular weekend trips home. I started to remove some of the things from our hotel room that I had made to make the hotel feel less

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hotelly and more homey. These things were great for the first couple of weeks when the message to my son was, "We are doing this. We're not going home, we are staying here. We are committed to this program." And now the message is, "We are leaving, this is temporary. We will be going home soon." And really the message is to me. It's a reminder to me.

And then I started to think about goodbye cards and gifts for the hospital staff, things like that just to get my mind here to we will be leaving soon. So instead of a transition that I was sort of white knuckling against and trying to avoid. It's like these little things each day to just introduce into my mind and into my nervous system, this change is happening and trying to support myself along the way. And all of these little steps have made a huge difference.

When we're talking about transitions now, I am not panicking, I am brainstorming, I am troubleshooting, I am present. So how can you apply this to your own life? First, identify areas where you might be having some difficulty with transitions. Maybe it is the transition from being asleep to being awake. This is a big one for a lot of us. I see this in my clients a lot because they have younger children. And they go from being asleep to being on. Their kid is talking, yelling, screaming, moving, whatever.

So, one of the things that you can do to ease this transition as hard as it is, is where possible wake up before your child. I know that kind of sucks because we all want to sleep in wherever possible especially for those of us where sleep is not happening a lot. But when you do wake up just a few minutes earlier than your child you get just get grounded a bit. You get to orient your nervous system. You get to take a couple of deep breaths. And so, you're not almost assaulted as soon as you wake up by sensory overload. So that's one thing you can do to ease that transition.

Maybe it's from your child being in school to them returning home from school. And you go from a quietish house or peaceful ish house to one where maybe your child's melting down because of whatever happened at school that day. Or they're just, they have a lot of needs, it's making

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snacks, it's answering questions, it's going through the school bag. Maybe just taking 10 minutes before they walk in the door to prepare yourself.

Stop what you're doing and to deep breathe, do some jumping jacks or telling yourself a little social story, they're coming home right now, they're going to have a lot of energy, it is okay, whatever little pep talk that you need to give yourself to preview to your mind and your body what's about to happen.

Another transition that I see a lot is going from weekdays to weekends. So, you go from the weekdays where there is structure and routine, to weekends where it might be a little bit less of that and maybe your child doesn't react to that as well. And so, what can you do on those Friday nights or those Saturday mornings to prepare yourself for that. So instead of white knuckling it, or panicking, or flipping out when they do the thing that they do. You are previewing it to yourself.

Maybe you are making a schedule so that you can see where your breaks will be. Maybe you are just telling yourself a little social story of your own, like weekends are challenging, whatever it is. And I know this stuff can sound silly but just think about it. We do all of this for our children for a reason. We are trying to prepare them for what is coming so it's not too much too fast and unexpected. So, wherever we can sort of slow things down for ourselves and preview to ourselves, we can help ourselves through these transitions.

The more you do this the more ease and safety you can create in your own mind and your own body, the better you will be able to manage these big and small transitions for yourself.

Alright, that's all for this week, good luck with this. Let me know how it goes. You can always send me an email, or find me on social media. I'm on Facebook and Instagram, The Autism Mom Coach. You can ask me questions and let me know how it goes.

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And of course, if you are interested in one-on-one coaching with me now is the time. Schedule an appointment, you can do this on my website, theautismmomcoach.com. I have some availability, you will see in my schedule. But if you don't see a time that works for you, just message me, we can figure that out. Alright, thanks 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.