

## Ep #50: Permission Slips



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With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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You are listening to episode 50 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Permission Slips.

In last week's episode, I talked about the importance of self-care and gave you some simple suggestions of the things that you can do to attend to your own wellness. In this week's episode, we are going to talk about the struggle so many moms have with giving themselves permission to do things for themselves. If this is you I want you to know three things. You are not alone. It is not your fault. And there is something you can do about it. 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 Canderella. 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 episode 50 of the podcast. I am so glad you're here and I hope you are doing well. I am recording this episode in the beginning of February and as of today, we have been in a holding pattern for about three months, the waiting, the in-between, the what's next. It can be really stressful and frustrating. So I am trying to direct all of this extra energy that I have into things I enjoy like Bikram Yoga. I love being in a ridiculously hot room in the middle of winter and just being present with the things that are good and that are working now.

My son is participating in an adaptive skiing program and that has been amazing. And while he is at the mountain skiing that gives me time to read and to relax. And as I do things to relax and to just have time for myself I reflect on why don't I always do this. Now, it would be easy to say, "Well, it's because I have a child with Autism. It's because I'm a single mom who works full-time." But these aren't really the reasons. I was not always full-time parenting.

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There were years when I split time with my son's father and even then when I wasn't with my kiddo I was spending time focused on him. I would spend weekends at Lakeshore Learning buying a ridiculous amount of educational products and setting up storyboards in my living room and laminating everything I could find. All time I could have devoted to myself but no, it just didn't feel right to me because I believed that I always needed to be doing something for my kiddo.

And so that's what I want to talk about today and this is really a continuation of last week's episode where I talked about the big mistake we make is focusing all of our time, energy and resources on our children to the exclusion of ourselves. The second part of that is that even when we do have the time or we could make the time we don't. We don't give ourselves permission to enjoy ourselves or to do something that's not in service of other people. I see this in my own experience and I see it all the time with my clients and it's a really interesting paradox.

On one hand, my clients are the CEOs of their family businesses, whether they are stay-at-home moms or full-time working outside-of-the-home moms. Whether they are married or single, whether they have one child or multiple children they are doing it all. They control the family calendar. They make the appointments. They find the therapist. They receive the phone calls from school. They are the decision-makers. They have, take or assume a tremendous amount of authority over decisions for the benefit of others.

They are the bosses yet they completely delegate their authority to make decisions for themselves to the people in their lives. They are looking outside of themselves for someone else to tell them it is okay to take a break, to go on the retreat, to hire a sitter, to sign up for the coaching, to go out with your friends. So why is this? In my opinion, it is not because they have a child or children with Autism. Autism and all of the extra that comes with it may be a factor but it's not the reason.

What all of these women have in common, the single, married and adoptive moms, the moms with multiple neurodivergent children, the moms with one

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neurodivergent child, the moms who are therapists, teachers, business owners, the moms who are in their 30s, their 40s and their 50s. What they all have in common is that they are women and women are socialized to put others before themselves. And as a mothers, this message is on steroids.

Mothers who are fueled with coffee and the ever-present hum of anxiety as they do more and more and more for others are rewarded with societal approval. While the mothers who take time for themselves are viewed as selfish, I mean they could be doing something else for someone else and they are choosing not to. Even if you do not consciously believe or agree with this it is nearly impossible that you have not internalized these messages. Of course, you have, they are in the air that we breathe. But there is something you can do about this.

So that's what I want to talk about now. First, notice the thoughts that you are having that are resulting in you delegating responsibility for yourself to others, thoughts like it is selfish, my child needs me, I could be doing the laundry.

Next, separate yourself from the thought, externalize it, you are not your thoughts. You are the thinker of your thoughts. And mind trip, your thoughts aren't even yours. You weren't born with these. These were fed to you by society, your upbringing, your environment, your socioeconomic status, your race, your religion, your gender, your sex, all of it. You were not born with these thoughts. They came to you from outside influences. So externalize it. I am having the thought that... This is a simple way of separating you from the sentence in your brain.

And then finally, decide how you want to relate to the thought. This is a concept that I learned in ACT, that's Acceptance and Commitment Therapy which is one of the modalities that has been really useful with OCD. So instead of trying to change a thought immediately because maybe that's not available to you, or maybe it's not even realistic. Thoughts come into our brains, it happens.

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And so even if you don't agree with a thought, you don't want to think of it, well really the more you think of it the more you will think of it. It's like the idea of don't think about white panda bears and that's all you think about. Anyhow, you're going to have thoughts but you can decide how you want to relate to them.

And so just picture this, so remember Lord of the Rings, there was Gollum and had the precious, the ring that he would covet, he had it in his hand and he would stare at it and he would play with it and he would marvel at it. You have the decision of whether you want to hold your thought like your precious or do you want to hold it like a cactus. So when you're holding it like your precious you're like, oh, thought, tell me more. Let's think about this more. And you're getting really stuck into the thought. You're getting consumed by it would like Gollum was consumed by this little ring.

Or you're holding it like a cactus, very carefully away from your body so it does not stick you and you are carefully considering it. You can do the same exercise with your thoughts. You can just observe them. Look, here it is. Of course, I'm having this thought that I don't have time or it's selfish. My mom would say that all of the time or whatever it is for you. I have been having this thought for years.

I see this all the time in the Instagram posts from other moms who are always burnt out, who are always feeling overwhelmed, who are always doing something. Of course, I would think it's selfish that I would do something for myself. This is how you hold a thought like a cactus and you observe the thought without attaching to it. This gives you the opportunity to decide how you want to relate to this thought on purpose.

Whereas when you're holding the thought like your precious, it's like you are getting consumed by the thought and then in comes all of the thought friends, all the other negative thoughts, all of the catastrophizing. That's what happens when we hold tightly to a thought that is not serving us, we just find more evidence of it. This is a really simple concept but putting this in practice is not easy. We have years of social conditioning and default thinking that we are coming up against.

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So it's actually easier to do the thing, to do the laundry, to attend to the child than to do hand-to-hand combat with your brain, your default negative thinking of how it's always been, of how it should be. But it is possible and you don't have to do this alone. This is what I do with my clients every day in my one-on-one coaching program.

So if you are ready to relate differently to the thoughts in your life that are keeping you stuck and in pain now is the time to sign up for my one-on-one coaching program. You can do that by going to my website [theautismmomcoach.com](http://theautismmomcoach.com) select Work with Me and you can schedule a consultation right on the website. Alright, that's it for this episode. 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.