

## Ep #54: Minimum Baseline



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With Your Host

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You are listening to episode 54 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Minimum Baseline.

Do you ever find yourself making grand plans not following through with them and then beating yourself up for not doing enough? Maybe you spend the weekend cutting out sight words and plan to practice them with your child every night for 20 minutes or maybe you decide you need to do more social activities with your child. So you RSVP for the birthday parties, you plan a playdate and you sign your child up for swim or soccer lessons all in the same week.

Or maybe you tell yourself that this is the week you are going to start exercising, eating paleo and drinking your body weight in water every day and then life happens, real life and you do not follow through on your fantasy of going from zero to 100 and doing it perfectly and instantly. And then this leads to more feelings of failure and more stories about how you are not good enough and not doing enough. And because of this your child will suffer.

These are all examples of how our perfectionist thinking is making our experience of raising children with Autism even harder than it already is. When we put these kinds of unrealistic expectations on ourselves we are undermining ourselves without even knowing it. If this sounds like you, stay tuned to learn a simple concept that you can use to replace perfectionism with a strategy that you can use to set yourself and your child up for success.

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.

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Hello everyone and welcome to the podcast. I am so glad you are here and I hope you're doing well. Before I get started, if you are not already on my mailing list, get on it. Every Sunday I send out a weekly newsletter called The Sunday Reset where I offer some pieces of coaching advice from my own life of examples from clients. You can get on my mailing list by going to the show notes or right to my website where you will see a popup.

And then of course when you are on my website you can schedule a consultation with me, a one-on-one consultation to talk about how my coaching program can help you with your very real life and how you can show up as the parent you want to be even when this looks nothing like you've expected, I got you. I help moms like you all of the time and I am accepting new clients now. So if you are interested it's time, go on my websites, schedule a consultation and let's get started.

Alright, onto today's lesson. This episode is a continuation of last week's episode about perfectionism. So if you haven't already listened to last week's episode, go check that out first. Like I said, last week, perfectionism is an ever present topic in my life and in my coaching practice which is not surprising to me. Many of my clients are all very motivated, very Type A moms. And like me, they are used to getting results by working harder, pushing themselves harder and getting it done and then Autism entered our lives.

And it's kind of like our kryptonite, it does not care about our list or our tenacity, it just doesn't. So if you think that you are going to beat Autism by outworking it or overworking it, you are headed for burnout if you aren't there already. Perfectionism has no place here. It does not work. It leaves us exhausted, overwhelmed and it erodes our trust in ourselves. This is because when we are setting lofty or unrealistic goals and then failing to meet them time and again. We are teaching ourselves that we can't rely on ourselves for big or little things.

So let's talk about what does work when it comes to creating and following through on our goals. And let me just point out here, I say our goals and I mean our goals for ourselves. Yes, we can have goals and expectations for

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our child but we are not in control of whether those goals and how those goals are met. Yes, we can influence them but they are not under our control. So when I'm talking about setting goals I'm talking about the ones you set for yourself. When you are doing this you can use a concept called the minimum baseline.

A minimum baseline is the least amount of anything that you are willing to do on your own towards a daily goal that you set for yourself. So you could set a goal for yourself that you will practice sight words with your child. Now that's going to be dependent on whether or not your child wants to play. You can't control that piece of it. You can only control how you show up, whether you show up and how you interact with your child during that interaction.

Nevertheless this concept of minimum baseline can be helpful because instead of saying, "We're going to do 20 minutes of sight words every night." And then your child doesn't cooperate or isn't available to do it and you chalk that up as a failure, minimum baseline will give you another way of approaching the same circumstance in a way where you're not setting yourself up for failure. You're setting yourself up for success.

Let me explain minimum baseline by contrasting it to perfectionism. So where perfectionism will tell you that you need to do everything all at once and perfectly, minimum baseline tells you that you need to choose one thing at a time and do a little bit of it consistently. Perfectionism is I have to practice sight words with my child every night and twice on Sunday or I am not doing enough. Minimum baseline is we can practice two times a week for 10 minutes each time or we can practice one word a day for a week and this is enough.

Perfectionism is we are going to the birthday party and staying until the end. My child will sit in the party room, sing happy birthday and watch the birthday child open his presents. Minimum baseline is we will go to the party for one hour, if all looks good we'll stay another 20 minutes, still good, maybe another 20. Or minimum baseline can be we will go to the birthday

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party but once the kids shift into the party room to eat cake, that's time for us to leave.

Perfectionism is I need to exercise for 45 minutes five times a week alternating between cardio, weights and stretching. Minimum baseline is I am going to move my body three days a week for 20 minutes each day. The shift here is from lofty and unrealistic plans to modest and doable. The more you make unrealistic plans and don't keep them the more making plans becomes this theoretical activity where most of the time you already know that you're not even going to do the thing. But making them gives you a dopamine hit and a short break from all the negative self-talk that yes, you have this big plan.

Your problem is not that you don't have discipline, your problem is that you are staking your self-worth and your child's future on holding yourself to an unrealistic plan. This is a lot of pressure on you, your child and the plan. And it's totally unrealistic. You are not setting yourself or your child up for success, just the opposite. So the first thing you have to do is to separate your self-worth and your child's future from whatever plans you are making.

In addition to separating yourself and your child from the plan you have to practice the minimum baseline and you're not going to like it because it's not going to give you a big dopamine rush you get from imagining your pretend perfect self having the pretend perfect plan to do all of the things perfectly. The minimum baseline is going to seem boring and pointless but it's not. The minimum baseline is how you build an actual lasting habit and develop integrity with yourself.

Small consistent actions over time is what builds any kind of relationship including your relationship with yourself. So whatever area you are working on, your minimum baseline should be the smallest commitment you can make that you know you can follow through on. Think about low hanging fruit and easy wins. You shouldn't have the secret knowledge that you'll never actually do it.

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So for example if you are trying to create a self-care routine your minimum baseline might start with just taking a 20 minute walk or a 10 minute walk three times a week. Your perfectionist brain won't like that. It seems boring and pointless but it's not. If you actually go for your walk once a day or three times a week consistently you are doing way more for your body than it does when you make elaborate plans, buy a gym membership and go every day for a week and then never again.

The point of the minimum baseline is not even really to get the results so much as to build the consistent habits and trust with yourself. Small consistent actions are the key to success whether you are exercising, working on a long-term project or working in support of your child's long-term goals like communicating with PECS, learning sight words, eating new foods, socializing with other children, staying at the party longer.

Instead of setting yourself up for failure and disappointment by imagining that you need to do all of these things at once and do it perfectly, minimum baseline for everything, the least thing that you can do towards your goal and do it consistently. One last thing about the minimum baseline is when you start this, start in one area of your life. Your perfectionist brain will want to do it all at once but that's overwhelming and it makes things way harder. So pick one thing at a time and make it achievable.

Create the consistency with yourself that I do the things that I say that I'm going to do, that I show up for myself, I show up in my commitments as I planned because my plans are achievable. They're not lofty, they're not unrealistic, they're not fantasies, minimum baseline. Alright, that is it for this week. 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.