

Ep #64: Anger



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With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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You are listening to episode 64 of *The Autism Mom Coach*. Anger. This podcast episode is inspired by real life events. I am angry and in this episode I am going to teach you why being angry is okay and why repressing it, pretending it is not there or trying to paper over it with gratitude journals is not a healthy way to process this emotion. I am also going to share with you one of the ways that I process anger that I hope you will find useful or at the very least, entertaining. Stay tuned.

Welcome to *The Autism Mom Coach* podcast, I am your host, Lisa Candra. I am a lawyer, a life coach, and most importantly, I am the full-time single mother of a teenager with Autism and other comorbid diagnoses. I know what it is like to wonder if you are doing enough or the right things for your child and to live in fear of their future.

I also know that constantly fueling yourself with fear and anxiety is not sustainable for you or of any benefit to your child. That is why in this podcast I will share practical strategies and tools you can use to shift from a chronic state of fight, flight to some calm and ease. You are your child's greatest resource, let's take care of you.

Hello everyone and welcome to the podcast. So the last two months and more specifically the last two weeks have been a whirlwind. Long story short is my son went from living in a residential placement to now being home and we are in search of another placement. And I am so frustrated and angry. I am angry because of how hard all of this is, about how much time, effort and the resources expended to still feel like we have made little progress, or just the opposite.

Now, I know there are a lot of thoughts that are creating this anger and I can work to clean those up. But right now in this moment I am angry. And I am not trying to pass over this by telling myself that I should not be angry or that I should buy a gratitude journal. How often do you do this, feel angry but shame or guilt yourself for feeling this way in the first place and then telling yourself that you should not feel this way? If you do this you are not alone. This is all too common especially for women. We are socialized to believe that being angry is unladylike, it is unattractive.

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How many of you have had the experience of a random man telling you to smile? I thought this was hilarious. There was a Washington Post article shortly after the pandemic or the height of it was over that said masks are off and men are going to go back to telling women to smile. It's like you don't look happy and appealing and you better stop that immediately. And a random stranger will tell you to do it.

Add to this that sometimes we are angry at our children, our special needs children and this just feels so shameful so we push it down. We ignore it and we buy the gratitude journal, but anger is an emotion. And the way to process an emotion is not to swerve around it. It is to go through it, to feel it, to process it and to release it. Now, with some emotions and usually these are the 'negative emotions', the emotions that we don't want to feel like sadness and anger.

I will have clients come to me and tell me that they are afraid of letting these emotions in or even giving them some space because they fear that they will get stuck in them. And then they will always be sad or they will always be angry. Now really though, it's just the opposite, what we resist, persist. It is like water boiling on a stove. We can either lift the lid and let off some steam or we can watch it boil over, which is what happens when we are resisting our emotions. We either boil over or they boil up inside of us and result in illness, fatigue, headaches and other unpleasantness.

On the other hand when we are processing an emotion we are giving it time and space. We are noticing it. We are naming it and we are allowing it. And this way, instead of staying stuck in the emotion we can release it. The trick here is to stay with the emotion, the bodily somatic experience without drifting into our thoughts about the emotion or about the experience creating the emotion. This is like putting fuel on the fire. And it is the difference between feeling an emotion and staying stuck in it, the difference between being mad and staying mad.

Now, we all have our different ways of processing our emotions, especially the more difficult ones like anger. Maybe you like to punch a pillow. Maybe you like to call a friend and scream it out. For me, one of the ways that I

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process anger and really as it relates to my Autism journey let's just say is through my really dry sense of humor. Sometimes when I am really angry about something that's going on, the last thing I want to do is talk to somebody who doesn't get it, who doesn't understand.

Or when I do talk to the people who do get it, I want to just let it out and one of the ways I let it out is by being really crass about it. And so I have inspiration for this. And Larry David, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and Howard Stern. So stay with me here. No matter how you feel about Larry or Howard, I promise you I have a point here. Now on his show, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, Larry has a long list of things he dislikes. That's pretty much what every show is about.

He hates stop and chats. He hates sample abusers, the people who go into the yogurt shop and get 10 samples of 10 different yogurts and then end up buying vanilla. He hates people who say 'Happy New Year' after January 4th. Hilarious, I think. Likewise on his radio show, *The Howard Stern Show*, Howard, I know he's known as the shock jock but he's really a curmudgeon. And there's a lot of things he doesn't like and throughout the year he's always talking about I hate this, I hate that, anything from people who whistle to parades to Halloween and the Chucky doll.

You name it, he hates it. And every year his staff puts together a compilation of all the things he hates and they play it as this one list that goes from I hate Chucky to I hate parades to I hate people who clip their nails on airplanes and on and on. I personally find this hilarious. And so this was the inspiration for me processing some of my anger about Autism or really parenting and Autism and all that comes with it.

I made my own hate list and so that is what I want to share with you today to let off some steam for myself and hopefully to make you laugh. And to give you another way of letting off some steam about the things that you experience in your life that maybe not many people understand but you get it, you understand. And so if any of these resonate with you, I hope you can use them. And if I missed any, please share them with me on social media. You can find me on Instagram and Facebook @theautismmomcoach.

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I will have posts for today's show, you can add on in the comments. Let's get it all out there. This is how we process an emotion, we name it. We give it its space and for me, I use some humor about it. My way of using humor to just, instead of just boiling over and being angry, to kind of just laugh at it and to say, "Of course this pisses me off." This would piss anybody off. Alright, so with that, let's get started. I'm going to try to keep this to 25 but who knows, I might go over.

So number one, gratitude journals. Oh my gosh, when people know that you're upset and they suggest that you get a gratitude journal or God forbid, they buy you one, that annoys me. Platitudes, I can't stand them. You can't pour from an empty cup. Well guess what? My cup's not empty, it's just filled with stress and anger so that's what's coming out. And yeah, please don't tell me about the oxygen mask, I might choke you.

The Welcome to Holland poem, or more specifically people without kids with Autism who ask me, "Have you ever read that", or send it to me. Oh my God, yes, I did on my first day and I thought it was cute and amusing and now I'm nauseated by it. So please, no more poems. IEP meetings, enough said, but in Connecticut for some [inaudible] reason, we call them PPT meetings. I'm not even sure what that stands for other than the abbreviation for PowerPoint, it's stupid.

Number four, applications and intake forms. Holy crap, in the past two weeks I have recited more times than I can remember my son's birth weight and when he started to crawl. Who cares? Also if you're listening to me, Alexas or ChatGPT or whoever is out there. This is a bazillion dollar idea. Find a way that parents raising kids with Autism don't have to fill out the same information over and over to every proprietor in their child's life forever.

Yeah, I think there's some HIPAA issues and some FERPA issues, I really don't care. I would really like to save some time here because quite honestly, between the time I spend on applications and intake forms and on the phone with the pharmacist, I think I spent less time in law school for real, it's a time suck. So please, somebody invent that.

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Six, waiting list, yeah, you're told, do this, do that. And you're like, "Okay, I'll do it." Yeah, well, you've got to wait for three years unless it's the Connecticut Autism Waiver because then you just need to wait for life. Number seven, medications that do not work or have awful side-effects. Number eight, experts who agree on nothing.

Number nine, the Autism tax. No, no, there's not a real Autism tax. What I'm talking about is the upcharge that we pay for everything that our children do just so they can do it. I mean you've probably paid more money just so your kid could cut in a straight line than most people spend on I don't know, college education. Okay, maybe not college education but you get the point. There is an upcharge for everything like babysitters. You can't pay a kid 10 bucks to babysit your kid. You've got to pay a lot more than that and God, I know.

Number 10, iPhone and iPad protectors that claim to be indestructible. This is bullshit. And clearly the test teams that put together these gadgets never employed a kiddo with Autism, they should. Number 11, the term, high functioning Autism or people who congratulate me that my kid is high functioning. I guess they assume this because he can talk. High functioning Autism is one of the biggest misnomers out there. I could say so much on this but I need to get to number 12.

Comorbidity, I hate the term. Well, first, I hate comorbidity. Wasn't Autism enough, now we need to add OCD, GAD and God knows what else. And the word is creepy, comorbidity. And now that I think about it, do you know what didn't make this list? Autism for me does not make this list. I don't hate Autism. I don't love it. I'm not obsessed with it. I don't think it's a super power. And I don't mind people who say that it is, but I don't hate Autism, but I do hate OCD a lot. OCD is just a torture device.

Number 13, inclusivity. Now, hear me out. I don't like inclusivity the way we think about it, which is basically you can hang out in this room kid with Autism and we'll include you as in we'll let you in here, but that's not inclusivity. To me, inclusivity should focus on teaching kids without Autism

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how to cope in environments with other people who are different, who learn differently, who perceive the world differently.

To me real inclusivity is when we're really teaching typical folks about disabilities. Not when we're saying, "Hey, kid with Autism, you get to hang out in this classroom with [inaudible] for a couple of hours a day." And then we get to feel good that we're an inclusive environment. To me that's not real inclusivity.

Number 14, joint legal custody, not a fan. Number 15, Autism awareness or acceptance month. And the fight over what it should be called. The idea that there is this one month where we're all going to talk about the Autism stats and do the feel good stories about the kid who was diagnosed with Autism when he was two but now he's going to the high school prom and you couldn't even tell that he has Autism. Just enough.

Number 16, any fights over ribbons, puzzle pieces or the colors that represent Autism. Who cares? 17, people with neurotypical kids, you know, the kids with the friends and the team sports and the playdates and the unbroken iPads and the college plans. 18, when other people ask, "Have you tried?" Just stop right there. I have either tried it or I have decided not to. In any event, it's not my first day, don't ask me if I've tried essential oils or melatonin or gluten free, dairy free.

Number 19, when other people say things about my son like, "I had no idea he's high functioning, he talks so much." Number 20, when people ask me, "Are you sure?" No, I'm not sure. You know what? It does seem like a cool thing to call my kid Autistic and get him all these extra services. It's just a fun thing I'm doing. Yeah, I'm sure. Number 21, when other people tell me he doesn't seem Autistic. How the hell would you know?

Number 22, when people find out my son is Autistic and we're not talking about people I know, people I barely know or just met and they tell me about their brother's neighbor's daughter who went gluten free at the age of six and by high school she was the head cheerleader and you could not even tell she had Autism. Number 23, when other people ask me, have you

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watched the insert show with kid with Autism. Number 24, what is his super power? I think we all get that one and it's super annoying.

Number 25, when people say things like, "If he were my kid I would do that or he doesn't do that with me." That is not helpful and really it's just the opposite. It's super insulting.

Alright that's 25, I've covered a lot. There are tons more but deep breath, reading these out loud, it's cathartic. It's cathartic to go through all of the things that we experience that other people don't really understand and just put it out there. Not liking these things or really just very much disliking them, does not mean we don't love our children. It does not mean we are bad parents. It means that we're frustrated and that's okay, we are angry and that's okay. But the way to be angry versus staying angry is to let yourself feel the emotion a little bit and release it.

Alright, if I've missed any, find me on Instagram or Facebook on there as the Autism Mom Coach on both and let me know. And finally, if you are pushing down your anger or overreacting to it, I can help you with this. In my coaching program I teach moms like you to process their emotions and all of the thoughts that they are having that are causing their anger and fear. We do this without judgment. We let it all out kind of like I did here with all the things that I don't like, no judgment.

I also teach you how not to stay stuck in these emotions and default reactions so that you are not being controlled by your habitual patterns and your fear. And instead, you are creating new patterns that serve you. Just schedule a consultation with me. You can go to my website theautismmomcoach.com and click on 'work with me'. Alternatively you can go to the show notes and find the link there. Alright, that is it for this week. I hope you have a great rest of your week and I will talk to you then. Thanks.

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.