

Ep #67: Failing Forward



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lisa Candra

Ep #67: Failing Forward

You are listening to episode 67 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Failing Forward.

In this week's episode I am going to talk about one of the most important skills we need to have and grow as parents of children with Autism. And that is the skill of failing forward. Failure or things not working out the way we hoped or expected, whether it is a school, an IEP goal, a medication or the new iPad protective cover is constant. It happens all of the time. It is the rule and not the exception.

That is why it is vital for us as Autism parents to grow our ability to fail forward, to try things, hope for the best and be prepared to pivot if and when it does not work out otherwise each failure will feel like a death from 1,000 paper cuts. To learn how to befriend failure and use it to move you and your child forward, keep listening.

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. I hope you are doing well. I have been better. The summer is off to a rough start and the last couple of weeks have been really hard. A lot of trying, failing and trying again which was why in this week's episode I want to talk to you about what it means to fail forward. Failing forward, and this is my definition, is the practice of taking action, failing, learning from those failures and incorporating the lessons learned into future decisions.

Ep #67: Failing Forward

Let me give you some examples. I'll start with the example that I am living right now, which is I am currently looking for a new school placement for my son. This will be the sixth in the last three years. His latest school placement, which was a boarding school for kids with Autism in Utah lasted less than 10 days. And this was so heartbreaking. We had been preparing for this move for three months. My son was so excited. After multiple hospitalizations and schools he wanted so badly to start over.

He wanted to start anew and more than anything he wanted to ski in Park City. For a month he told everyone, and I mean everyone that he was going to boarding school in Utah. He was super excited until about the moment we arrived and then I could feel the tension. I could feel his anxiety growing as the admissions officer rattled off a list of schedules and activities. Still I was able to leave without him chasing me down or begging to go home. This was a victory.

And he did well for the first 24 hours, but it was downhill from there. He became physically dysregulated. He was acting out towards staff and he was having self-injury. So nine days later he was transferred to a medical treatment center for stabilization, which basically never happened. Well, it happened but it didn't last. The medical staff at some point introduced an SSRI in hopes of helping him with his severe anxiety, but this medicine had 100% opposite impact than intended.

He went through the roof and so was then transferred to a psychiatric center where he was med washed and stabilized enough to be released but not back to the boarding school. He came home to me. So no more Utah. After three months of preparations and the highest hopes and changing everything in our lives and then two months of being in limbo, we are back to what feels like square one, but is that true? Was Utah really a failure? Well, yeah, in some ways it was. We wanted him to be there. We wanted it to work out and it didn't. So yeah, that's a fail.

But it is a fail that we can and will learn from. This is what it means to fail forward. Failing forward encourages us to learn from our experiences and mistakes, adapt and move forward. Failing forward is not for the faint of

Ep #67: Failing Forward

heart. To do this you have to be ready to put your heart and soul into something and see it all burned down just to build it again. It is a muscle that you build. The weights are still heavy but you are stronger and you have more energy to lift these weights when you are not telling yourself the story that you are failing, that nothing is working and that this is hopeless. None of that helps.

So here is the exercise that I do in order to fail forward. I ask myself the following three questions. What went well? What didn't go well? And what would I do differently? So what went well is that we found an amazing consultant who found us an amazing school that was super excited to have Ben come and join them. Ben tried something really new and brave. He traveled across the country and he was excited to do it. What didn't go well is that we underestimated or misunderstood the depth of my son's needs and the type of environment that will best suit him.

What we will do differently, this is evolving but for one we will use this experience to inform future decisions about medications and placements in a place most suitable for my son's needs. When you do this exercise, you can let go of the particular situation and stop going back in time and reliving it and wondering and second guessing because you know that you have already pulled the lessons from the situation forward using this exercise.

Let me give you another example from a recent coaching call. My client has been dreading going to summer events because of a barbecue that happened six years ago when her son had a meltdown. All she can remember was the meltdown and how much she didn't want the meltdown to happen and how it happened, but not really much else. And so we did this exercise. And what was really fascinating is to see how much actually really went well during this barbecue that she didn't remember and how much she can use and has used going forward.

Let's start with what didn't go well. What didn't go well is my client's son had a 20 minute meltdown during the course of a 90 minute barbecue. What did go well was that prior to the meltdown the entire family was able to socialize, her son was having a good time. He was bonding with other

Ep #67: Failing Forward

family members. And then during the meltdown she and her husband really made a team effort to divide and conquer so they did not leave the barbecue.

My client was still able to stay and socialize with family members while her husband and son went to the car. What my client would do differently is have a plan ahead of time. So instead of praying and hoping that a meltdown does not happen, she would just be prepared and have a plan with her husband as to how they would trade off and what they would do.

So by going through this exercise about this big failure that my client thought that they had six years ago, she can pull the lessons from the failure and move them forward instead of always living in the past and living in fear of what happened before will happen again, because it might. Her son might have a meltdown some other time in the future. But because she has used this failure and the learnings from it to move forward she can incorporate those lessons so although something might happen that she doesn't prefer or doesn't like, she can handle it even if it's not her favorite.

Again, the power of failing forward and using this exercise is that you get to let go of the story of the situation about whatever happened. Because you know that you've done the work of pulling the lessons out of the situation, incorporating them into your future plans so that you can use whatever lessons were learned to move forward. And so you can fail forward with more grace and with more ease. Alright, give this a try, fail forward.

That is it for this week, I hope you find this helpful and that it helps you fail forward with as much grace as possible. I will talk to you next week.

Thanks for listening to *The Autism Mom Coach*. If you are ready to apply the principles you are learning in these episodes to your life, it is time to schedule a consultation call with me. Podcasts are great but the ahas are fleeting. Real change comes from application and implementation and this is exactly what we do in my one-on-one coaching program. To schedule your consultation, go to my website, theautismmomcoach.com, Work With

Ep #67: Failing Forward

Me and take the first step to taking better care of yourself so that you can show up as the parent you want to be for your child with Autism.