

Ep #83: Self-Regulation and Resourcing



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With Your Host

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You are listening to episode 83 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Self-Regulation and Resourcing.

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 another episode of the podcast. I am so glad you are here and I hope you are doing well. This week's episode is a continuation from last week's discussion about the nervous system and creating internal safety. And one of the ways that we can create internal safety for ourselves is through resourcing. That's why in this week's episode, I'm going to teach you how to resource yourself when you are in fight, flight or shutdown so that you can create safety and regulate yourself.

This is because from a nervous system perspective, you are dysregulated when you are in fight, flight or shutdown. We always talk about our kids and their dysregulation. Well, the same thing happens to us. We get really angry or really upset. Our emotions are high and our rational thinking is low. We are reacting and not responding. If we want to shift from reacting to responding, we need to know how to regulate and resource ourselves.

Self-regulation is quite simply our ability to regulate ourselves, the ability to recognize when we are dysregulated, when we are being taken over by our emotions or we're headed there and to move ourselves back into regulation. One way to do this is by resourcing. Resourcing is a key component of somatic therapy and trauma work. It involves identifying and nurturing internal and external resources that can help you feel safe and

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supported while you are exploring challenging emotions or even traumatic memories.

Resourcing can help you create that internal safety, that sense of security, so that you can feel and process and integrate your emotions in a healthy and balanced way. And when you are resourced you are better able to self-regulate by managing and modulating your emotional responses. Now again, when we're talking about resourcing, we're talking about bringing conscious the unconscious. We are talking about understanding and being able to identify when we are dysregulated, when we are in a state of fight, flight activation or if we're in dorsal shutdown.

Once we recognize that, we can bring in our resources, whether they are physical, emotional, or relational to serve as anchors that provide stability and comfort for us and able to bring us back into more regulation. Let me give you examples of resources. And I want to start with the ones that you can access anytime, anywhere, no matter what's happening.

Number one, breath awareness. Your breath is a powerful internal resource, and I have talked about this a bunch on the podcast and I'm never going to stop because it really is so freaking powerful. Your breath alone can signal to your brain, to your nervous system that you are safe. Paying attention to your breath and using breathing techniques can help you regulate your emotions. So deep diaphragmatic breathing can help calm your nervous system and it can reduce stress.

And again, your actual ability to even take those long, deep, slow breaths, signals to your nervous system, you're not in danger, you're not running from a lion, that it can slow down, that you can calm down. So again, I have talked about this in previous episodes. You can do this in any way you like. There are different techniques. I've talked about the 4-7-8 before, that's inhaling for four counts, holding for seven, then exhaling.

You can do the box method that the Navy Seals use where you can picture yourself breathing in, holding and breathing out as you go along the edges of a box. You could pretend you are breathing in the smell of something you

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like and blowing out birthday candles. Whatever it is, it's the attention that you give to breathing in and breathing out in a rhythmic fashion that enables your nervous system to know that you are safe and to reduce stress.

Now, this breathing is a two for one because in addition to regulating your nervous system, it gives you the opportunity to pause. And the pause is so important. That is because when you are in fight, flight and again, I think that's where most of us are living, speed is fuel. So whatever you can do to slow it down is a plus.

Another resource is touch. Now, this could be your hand on your own heart or rubbing your hands together, it could be by touching a comforting object. So maybe there's a bracelet, it could be a ring, it could be your hair, anything that you touch that gives you some comfort in your body.

Another resource is sight or visualization. So sight could be focusing on the present, taking in your surroundings, what are five things I can see? How many things in this room are red? How many things in this room are yellow? Anything that brings your focus into the present moment, and has you slowing down. That can be a resource. Or visualizing, visualizing people, places or experiences that bring you comfort, that bring you a sense of safety. These are all resources that you can use.

So for me, I like to visualize petting my cat and speaking of touch, petting animals, touching any animals. Now, animals aren't always available to us, but when they are they are a great resource. Visualizing people in our lives, that brings us a sense of peace, real, fictional, past, present, doesn't matter.

Or experiences, maybe there's a vacation spot that you love. Maybe there's a spot in your home that you love and then whenever you are there, you feel relaxed. Whatever it is for you, visualizing that experience, bringing it to life in your nervous system can serve as a resource for you when you're feeling dysregulated.

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Number four, mantras or affirmations. Depending on the situation, words might be helpful for you and depending on the situation, the words you use might be different. One go to for me that I love for almost everything is the serenity prayer. And that goes, God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference. I love this prayer. I find it so comforting. I find it so reassuring. I find it so wise.

Other mantras or affirmations that I use. It is okay, I am safe. This is not personal. This too shall pass. I'm going to figure this out. I always figure it out. Those are just examples, use what works for you. But with all these resources, what I really encourage is don't make the first time you try to grab for one when you are in a really difficult situation, I mean, of course do that, but it's not as effective.

Start incorporating these resources into your life now and making them a part of your day because when you really need them and you have practice in grabbing for them, it'll just become something that is a lot more effective for you. I have really practiced what I preach in this area of really going to the breath and slowing my breath down. And I've done it so much, I've noticed that things that used to be hard for me are less hard.

For example, going to yoga, I go to yoga in 105 degree heat and I would find myself sometimes during postures almost hyperventilating because I didn't know how to control my breath. And now I've gotten so good at controlling my breath that I'm able to calm myself down even when my body is like, oh, my God, it's so hot in here, just run.

So point is, practice them every day, practice them now. And so when you are in those states of dysregulation, you are so practiced at grabbing for these different resources that you begin to integrate them faster, to slow down these experiences and to shift your experience.

Okay, last and not least and really most important is self-compassion. You can do this anytime, while you're driving with a kid, losing their shit in the back seat, in a contentious IEP meeting, listening to your friends talk about

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their 'normal problems'. You can be kind to yourself. You can notice your own suffering, your own discomfort, and you can remind yourself that your pain matters. You can remind yourself that you matter. You can be kind to yourself, and this can help you soothe and regulate intense emotions.

Judgment will put you in fight, flight or maybe even shutdown, self-compassion brings you back to ventral. It brings you back to safe and connected because if you can't be safe and connected with yourself, then it's really hard to do it with the outside world. So being kind to yourself, giving yourself grace, making this an actual practice for yourself will help you with creating internal safety for yourself. It will help you create internal safety for yourself by self-regulating your own emotions and what's more powerful than that?

We all have so many things that we deal with in our day-to-day lives that are challenging and they create big emotions for our children and big emotions for us. What better thing to be able to do than to understand your own emotional experience and understand how to shift it? That's the power that you have with these tools.

Alright, that is it for this week's episode. I want you to listen to these last two episodes more than once because next week I'm talking about the F word and that is fear. I'm going to start talking about the really difficult emotions that we experience as part of the grief and the loss of special needs parenting. But before I did that, I really wanted you to have some resources for yourself to understand your emotional experience a little bit more and to have the ability to create internal safety for yourself while we talk about these more challenging emotions.

Alright, that is it. As always, if you want to dive deeper into this work, if you want to start implementing what I teach in your day-to-day life, applying it to the specific situations that you are facing, schedule a consultation call for my one-on-one program. This is your chance to talk to me about your pain points as an Autism parent and for us to figure out whether it makes sense for us to work together. You can schedule your consultation call by going to

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the episode notes or to my website under Work With Me. Alright, that's it for this week, I will talk to you next. Have a great 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 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.