

Ep #94: The Most Triggering Time of the Year



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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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'm so glad you are here and I hope you are doing well. So it's December which means holiday season. That is why for this week's episode I am going to revisit a most valuable podcast episode I did last year called Holiday Survival Strategy. But instead this year I'm going to rename it to The Most Triggering Time of the Year, because for many Autism families, it is.

Whether it is the sadness of not participating in traditions that used to bring you joy or ones that you imagined you would do with your child but aren't because the experience is too overwhelming for them. Or if it's seeing family and feeling nervous about how they will react to your child, what they might say, how they might misunderstand your child's behaviors or how they might judge you as a parent.

And then of course, there is winter break and schedule changes which are challenging for our kids on any day but add all of these other factors and well, there we have it, the most triggering time of the year. That is why in this MVP episode, I am going to share some strategies to help you bring more ease to the holiday season. And with that let's get started.

First, prepare. Now, I know as parents, with children with Autism, you are all about preparation, schedules, social stories and previews, just to name a couple of things. This is all great especially in times of change. But when I'm talking about preparation in this episode I am talking about you and how

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you can prepare yourself for some of the stress and frustration you may feel or already be feeling this holiday season.

This preparation starts with accepting that you may feel a little bit emotional and you may experience a lot of triggers that bring up intense emotions for you like grandma baking cookies with the cousins except for your child because they have a hard time being safe in the kitchen. Or seeing other kids doing 'normal things' like playing with one another, taking family photos or sitting on Santa's lap. Maybe seeing your child retreat to an empty room to play by herself while all the cousins play together.

Or hearing your mother-in-law compare your eight year old with Autism to your sister-in-law's neurotypical five year old. If you brace yourself hoping none of these things will happen, you will be exhausted by the time the day comes and have less capacity to manage your mind and your emotions when they do. So you will either be imploding or exploding, or maybe even both.

The alternative, if you just expect that you may have some thoughts and some feelings about other people's behavior and you remember that this is not fatal, you will be much better positioned to ride the wave when these thoughts and feelings do arise, and when people do their people things. And when you expect that it might be challenging, you can mentally and emotionally prepare yourself by deciding ahead of time how you want to think and feel when the stressful thing happens.

Tip number two, expect other people to do other people things. Okay, what this means is that people in the context of the coaching model that I teach, that's episode five or six, what they do and what they don't do are all circumstances. That means they are neutral. They don't make you feel any way until you have a thought about it. In addition, circumstances in the moment are things that we cannot change.

Now, I'm not saying that other people can't and don't change but in this context expect other people to be who they are and to do the things that they do without resisting it. Now, caveat here, I am not talking about things

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that go over your boundaries. Boundaries are the standards or expectations that you have and if another person crosses them, you will take an action like if you yell at me, I will ask you to stop, or I will walk away. Or if you mock my child for flapping I will ask you to leave my house. Or if you smoke in front of me I will leave your presence.

I am never telling you to just hang out while someone crosses a boundary that you have set. What I am saying is there are a lot of things people do that are just them being who they are. Like your sister-in-law who emails you every article she can find about what causes Autism. Your child, who would rather play in his cousin's bedroom by himself rather than downstairs with the cousins. Your mother who asks you, "Why do you need to bring special food for your child", when she has cooked an elaborate meal?

Your father who asks you why you let your child get away with tantruming when he does not get his way. Or your friend who wonders why you have your child in so many therapies. When you stop resisting people doing their people things, even if you do not agree with them, even if you think that they are ignorant and tone deaf, you get to decide how you want to think, and feel, and respond.

And my favorite hack for this one is of course they did, of course my grandfather asked me why am I paying for private school when I already pay taxes to support the local school system. Of course my grandmother was offended that my child first sniffed and then rejected her signature dish. Of course my friend who has ignored all of the red flags of Autism and her child thinks it is odd that I have my child in OT, PT and speech. Of course my mother is concerned when she sees my son smack me when he is dysregulated.

Of course my child is more interested in her sister's toys than her own. Of course my child prefers the box the toy came in over the toy itself, of course they did. This is what they do. Other people are allowed to have their thoughts, feelings and actions just like you, it is okay. You do not have to brace yourself for it and this of course they did, it is just a nice way of

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bringing levity to what is happening, which is people are being people just like you and it is okay.

Finally, if you are feeling so moved by the spirit of the holidays and you have the capacity to offer generosity to others then assume the best intent. Assume the people you love, love you too. Assume that they want the best for you. Assume that they are not trying to hurt you or your child. Their behaviors are not personal. What they say and what they do is about them, not you, not your child, not your parenting.

So for example, let's say your mom gets offended when you bring chicken nuggets for your child's dinner. When you are assuming the best intent on her part you might think well, it makes her happy to see other people eating her food and she is making the chicken nuggets mean something about her, or her cooking, or her ability to feel the love and joy of knowing that she has provided for the family.

Now, am not telling you to twist yourself into and knot to get into other people's heads but in the spirit of the holiday maybe you can open yourself up to the fact that other people's actions aren't about you. They are about them and whatever they are thinking and feeling. So if some of their questions or comments come out sideways, instead of making them personal, consider that like you, they're doing the best that they can with what they have access to at the moment.

Thank you so much for listening to this most valuable podcast episode. If you are finding the podcast helpful, this is just a taste of what it is like to coach with me, and by taste, I mean a really small taste because when we work together, we get into the nitty-gritty of your challenges as an Autism mom, and we create solutions tailored to you.

So, if you want to stop dragging the holidays and start enjoying your experience as an Autism mom more, I highly recommend coaching with me. So, all you have to do to learn more about my program and for us to see if it makes sense for us to work together is to schedule a

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complimentary consultation. You can do this from the episode notes, you can do it on my website, theautismmomcoach.com/work-with-me.

If you are on my schedule and you don't see anything that works for you, email me directly at Lisa, @theautismmomcoach.com with a couple of days and times that work for you and I'll make one work. It is the best gift you can give yourself and your family because once you learn these skills, they are yours for life. So, it really is the gift that keeps on giving. Alright, that's it for this week, I will talk to you next. Have a great holiday.

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.