

Ep #95: How to Not Lose Your Mind over Winter Break



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With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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You are listening to episode 95 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, How to Not Lose Your Mind Over Winter Break.

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.

For those of you who have kids or adults who live with you and who have off or less structure during winter break, this one's for you. However, what I am going to teach you here can be applied all of the time and I think you should give it a try. Because the goal of everything I am going to teach you today is how to bring more ease to your life wherever you can. Alright, let's get started.

First, let go of the idea, the pressure, the wish, the fantasy that you are going to be able to provide your child with the level of structure they get in school or a program. It's not going to happen and it's okay. Now, I do know that our kids do struggle with less structure, that they need it, that they crave it. And to the extent that you can, as best that you can, do what you can to create that structure. But do it knowing that you're one person, not a team of people. And whatever you do, don't come down on yourself for not doing enough or not being enough. Enough with that.

Second, get out your calendar. You want to fill in all of the days where you have activities because we don't want to think of this two weeks, 12 days, 284 hours as an amorphous block of time. We want to get really clear on what days we have things planned, what we're doing. And then be able to take a look at the calendar and figure out, where do I have open days? Do

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they make sense? Are there certain days where we're doing too many things and I could break it up, spread it out over more days?

You want to have a really discerning eye when it comes to this because you know your child best. You know if they have a wide open day that that could spell trouble. On the other hand, you also know that if they have too many things back-to-back, that could also cause sensory overload. So using your expert eye as the expert on your child. Be ruthless about how you respond to invitations and how you schedule your time.

Third, create a visual schedule for yourself. Now, this might already be something you do for your child, that's great, but I want you to do this for you too. Now, of course, you don't have to draw pictures or get fancy. It could literally just be a list, a daily list of the day's activities so that you can see the day in chunks and again not just this amorphous blob of 12 to 14 or how many hours that your child is up. See how the day plays out. You can purposely schedule in breaks for yourself throughout the day.

You don't want to wait till the end of the day because one, you'll probably never find the time and two, you're already overwhelmed. So how throughout the day can you take breaks? Even little, small ones, they do add up. So if it's maybe 10 minutes while your kid is on a video game, or maybe they're still sleeping. Can you take a walk? Can you read a book? If you have a babysitter who can come in.

I have a lot of kids that I would pay five bucks, they weren't really that age, they could be teenagers, but they could sit in a room and they liked the money and my child always liked being around them. And maybe this is not something you do with your child with Autism, but maybe you have another child in the house that could benefit from being a little bit occupied or distracted. And so then you're also just freeing some of your time, some of your mental emotional space to manage your child with Autism.

Just be really purposeful in how and when you can take breaks for yourself, because again, just think of a pot that's boiling with water. You can prevent it from boiling over by just lifting up the lid and letting some of that pressure

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seep out. That will prevent it usually from overflowing. You want to do the same with yourself, so whatever it is that you can do, taking deep breaths, doing rapid fire jumping jacks, one of my favorites to get that stress out of your body, some cold, fresh air. That can be reinvigorating.

The point is not what you do, it's that you make the time and you do something for yourself so that you can be resetting your nervous system and regulating yourself throughout the day.

Fourth, wherever possible, delegate, accept help and ask for help. You don't have to do it all. Find the ways where other people can lend a hand. Now, if you're one of these people who has people in your house or in your family who can help but you're thinking to yourself, well, I shouldn't have to ask them. They should just know. They should just chip in. They should just do whatever. That is not helping you because when you are resenting them, when you're thinking that they should just do the thing and they're not and you're not even asking them. Then you're going to end up doing everything anyway.

So maybe just ask, ask your husband, ask your partner, ask your friends, ask your family members. Ask them for very specific things. For instance, next Tuesday afternoon, can you take my child for two hours while I do x? You want to be as specific as possible because we also have those people in our lives, they're like, "Just let me know anytime you need help." And that's just so amorphous. So be really specific, "Here's what help I could use. This is what would be really helpful. Can you do this for me?"

I will say as a single mom who lives in a state where I have no family, I have gotten very good at doing this and just being very purposeful about how I ask friends for help. And I've noticed that my single moms also are good at this. And maybe now that I'm thinking about it, we're just good at doing it with one another because we get it. But anyway, it is a skill and it's so helpful to tell people what you need very specifically. And maybe, look, maybe they can't do huge things.

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Maybe they can't watch your kid because they don't understand all the complexities and it would just be a big ask. But maybe there are little things that they can do that could just ease your day a little bit. But also I do want to say that so many of us have the belief that nobody could watch our kids the way we do. And yeah, that is true, but it doesn't have to be perfect, which leads me to point number five.

Let it be messy. If your child is safe then let grandma babysit. Maybe she won't do everything right. She won't do it the way you want her to but it doesn't have to be perfect. In fact, our kids benefit from people who don't get them as much as we do because it means that they have to show a little bit of flexibility and adjust to a world that doesn't get them.

And I actually think that this is a skill because I know for my son he had one-on-one aides that would change all the time. And at first I was really discouraged by it. But then as time went on, I really thought, the more he has to adapt to new personalities, to new ways of doing things, to not having someone who, like me, basically reads his mind and just jumps to. That's a benefit to him and it's a benefit to me.

Alright, that is it for this episode. I hope you are enjoying your winter break and I will talk to you next year. Take care.

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.