

Ep #99: Life Out Loud with Carrie Cariello



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With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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You are listening to episode 99 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Life Out Loud with Carrie Cariello.

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. Before I get into part two of my conversation with Carrie, I want to remind you, if you have not already, register for my upcoming webinar, Lessons from Rock Bottom. This is where I am going to be using examples of the last year of my life to show you how you can learn and bounce back from any situation in your life, no matter what it is. As you know, my son and I had a lot of ups and downs last year. We started off in Utah at a new residential program and that was followed quickly by an expulsion in multiple hospitalizations.

And through all of that, I have learned so much and I want to teach you not only what I learned, but the process I used to learn it. Instead of looking at this past year as a shit show or a horrible time or woe is me. I want to show you how you can evaluate any situation, any setback, any challenge in a way that helps you move forward. So again, register using the link in my bio. For all of you who register and attend live, you will have the opportunity to ask me questions and to be coached.

Alright, so let's shift to the topic of today's episode and that is part two of my conversation with Carrie Cariello where we talk about her upcoming collaboration with two extraordinary Autism moms, Kate Swenson of *Finding Cooper's Voice* and the author of *Forever Boy* and Adrian Wood

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from *Tales of an Educated Debutante*. Kate, Adrian and Carrie will all be collaborating on a new book called *Life Out Loud*, where each mother will share their own very different experiences as a parent of a child with Autism. To learn more, keep listening.

Lisa: Welcome again, Carrie, to the podcast. I'm so glad to have you here. As I mentioned, my podcast episodes tend to be short. So I wanted to break up our conversation into two separate conversations so that listeners could get through them quickly because that's beneficial, especially this time of the year.

But I wanted to talk a bit more about you as an Autism mom and the things that you do to support yourself. And what I do know about you is that you have very close ties to other moms in the community who share and write about their experiences. So I just want to talk to you a little bit about that and how that has been part of your journey.

Carrie: Yeah, that's a great question. Thank you. I am very much a part of the blogging and writing community on social media. And about, I'm going to think now, six or seven years ago, Kate, from *Finding Cooper's Voice* and I connected virtually. And I don't know, just over, I sent her a message, I think she was saying how, now has four kiddos, at the time at two and Cooper is non-speaking and difficult to bring places. And so I just shot her this random message saying, "You could always bring him to our house."

She lives in Minnesota and I live in New Hampshire, but really it was heartfelt. I mean, I think I was just really drawn in by one of her posts talking about isolation. She talks about that a lot. And from there we were sort of off and running and it kind of evolved into this. We text each other, we bounce writing ideas off of each other and all of that good stuff.

And then during the pandemic, she said, "Let's do a live." Now, I was always really averse to video. She would say, "You have to do video." And I'm like, "I don't do video. That's not who I am." So she convinced me to do a live when we were all kind of home for the pandemic and she invited Adrian from *Tales of an Educated Debutante* on. And sort of from there the

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three of us were kind of off and running. We're three very different women, very different mothers, different wives.

And while we have larger families, they each have four and we have five kids. We each have a son diagnosed with Autism. We each only have one daughter, which is interesting.

Lisa: That is interesting.

Carrie: But each of our sons has a very different profile and is at very different spots in the birth order. So there's sort of these interesting ties that bind us. And we started working collaboratively with different blog posts and lives and things like that, I guess about a year ago. And I just saw the story on my live last night that we have been collaborating on a big project. So my mom passed away in the summer and it was a complicated relationship. She and I were estranged from one another, and she passed away on a Monday.

And the book that just came out for me self-published *Half My Sky*, I had not decided where I was going to try to put it yet. And Kate said, "Why don't you call my agent, Jennifer. She's great. She'd love to hear about the book and maybe she'll try to sell it for you." So that call was scheduled for the day after my mother died. And this was my first experience with a big loss, a complicated loss. And I thought, do I keep this call? That's so weird. My mother died. I should cancel it and reschedule it.

And then I thought the one thing my mother and I connected with was writing in books. And the one thing my mother valued about me was me as a writer, being a writer. I said, "I'm just going to keep it. I don't know. I think she would want that." So I called the woman and after the awkwardness of, well, my mom died yesterday, but I didn't want to cancel this call. We got into the nitty gritty of the work and she as often is the feedback from agents and publishers when you present a book, it's, "Well, I can't really see this. I don't know where it would go on a shelf."

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I think that this has been said before and all of that. So she said, “But I know you work with Katie, and I know Adrian.” She said, “Why don’t the three of you write the book?” She said, “I think that could really, really land somewhere.” And I was like, “Alright.” So I got off and I texted the two of them and Adrian, very on brand for Adrian was like, “I don’t know. I’m not sure.” Then we promised her maybe she would get on television and she was immediately on board.

Lisa: She can meet Alicia Keys again.

Carrie: I know, yes. So we decided, and then the agent was able to sell it to Park Row, is an arm of HarperCollins. And they made us an offer about six weeks later. So we’ve been holding onto this secret because we wanted to be all together. The other piece is the three of us have never been in the same room at one time. We’ve each met independently. So we arranged the trip and by arranged I mean Adrian booked travel for herself and was like, “We are all going to New York City in the middle of the holiday season.”

So earlier this week we met up for, well, they were there for three nights and I was there for two nights. And we made the announcement and so the book title is *Life Out Loud*. We are working on a subtitle, but we already have one chapter in place and we’re expecting sometime in 2025 for it to be released.

Lisa: Okay. So do you have a general framework or intent behind what this book will cover?

Carrie: Yeah. So the idea is to kind of illuminate the idea of virtual community and how important it can be in friendship, in that vein. Obviously, we’re going to talk a whole lot about Autism and family and building a family. And each chapter is going to be a standalone chapter, but each one of us will write a piece for it. For example, the chapter we just wrote talks about motherhood versus caregiving. There’s certain aspects, when you think of being a mother, the nurturing side, you cook for them

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birthday cakes. There's the very real side of caregiving with a diagnosed child.

Kate describes it as she often had, she has to check Cooper because he's without words, to make sure he doesn't have any bruises or he hasn't got scratched at school and won't be able to tell her. I talk about it in terms of guardianship. When Jack turned 18, we had to go to a courtroom and he had an attorney and we had an attorney. And we had to obtain guardianship to safeguard his financial, health and wellbeing. In the three of our minds, there's a very specific delineation between motherhood and caregiving.

Lisa: Yeah. No, for sure. I think that that's going to be a fascinating book, especially when you talk about having large families and having your relationships with your spouses and how all of that comes together.

Carrie: Yeah, we're excited. I mean I think it could really appeal to a wide range of people.

Lisa: Well, definitely because you really do cover, I think, Adrian's child, the youngest, Cooper would be in the middle and Jack would be the eldest of this group. And you have verbal, you have non-verbal, a little bit of everything.

Carrie: We have a little bit of everything, absolutely. And we're very, very different writers. So I think it's going to be varied enough that people will find things to take from it for sure.

Lisa: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, so for those of you who, Carrie is referring to Kate Swenson of *Finding Cooper's Voice* and she is the author of *Forever Boy*. Then there's Adrian Wood and she is on Facebook, I believe, and Instagram as *Tales of an Educated Debutante*, and she's a cross between a professor and a comedian, as best I can tell it. She has this wonderful TEDx talk about her son's diagnosis of Autism, that's really inspiring. We'll keep that in the link to the show notes.

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And the three of the ladies coming together to share their experience, I agree. I think it will appeal to a wide range of people because as your children are different, they all have different trajectories. And so we can see ourselves in these different trajectories. So a trajectory for a Jack might be different than a Cooper, that might be different from an Amos.

Carrie: Amos, yeah.

Lisa: That might be different from Amos'. So I think that would be really great actually to have a compilation of all the possibilities and all the things that people have tried and done in one book.

Carrie: Plus we tease each other a whole lot. So there's a lot of fun with it.

Lisa: Perfect. Well, can you just tell me what the benefit to you has been of having this community of other mom writers who are also in the throes of raising a child with Autism, how that's impacted your own journey, your own mental health, your own sense of belonging.

Carrie: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think at the end of the day we just want to know that we're not alone in the thick of it. When Jack was first diagnosed, it was almost 19 years ago. There was a very little online community at all, very little virtual connection. And I felt completely and utterly alone with this child and this Autism diagnosis. And so through the years, I've just forged connections that are incredibly meaningful to me, they're reflections of the life that we're living.

And I think that's all we want is to know that there's a village out there that is accepting and gentle and willing to see us for who we are.

Lisa: No, for sure, that's great. Alright, well, again, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me. I cannot wait to have you back on. There are so many other topics to talk about, marriage. I would love to have the three of you all on the podcast because I think that would be hilarious.

Carrie: That would be hilarious.

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Lisa: Yeah. To talk about the book as it progresses. But for right now, for everyone who is interested in learning more about Carrie, you can follow her on Facebook under Carrie Cariello. We're also leaving links in the show notes to her books. Her first book is *What Color is Monday?* The second book is *I Love Someone with Autism*. and the third book is the book that we have been talking about the most, and that is *Half My Sky*.

All of these are great reads and wherever you are in your Autism journey, you will find your place in one of these books. So with that again, Carrie, thank you so much and I can't wait to have you back.

Carrie: Thank you. This has been so much fun.

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.