

## Ep #121: Behaviors are Neutral



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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You are listening to episode 121 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Behaviors are Neutral.

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. In this podcast, I am going to share with you the tools and strategies you need so you can fight like hell for your child without burning out. Let's get to it.

Hello, everyone and welcome to this week's episode of the podcast. I am so glad you are here and I hope you are doing well. In this week's episode we are going to talk about behaviors being neutral in the context of an update about my son, Ben. As some of you know, my son Ben is 16 years old, he has severe Autism and severe OCD, and he's had some severe behaviors and some severe aggression, which resulted in a hospitalization.

He's been hospitalized in a psychiatric facility for the last few months and he's doing very well. He's had some really bad months and he's had some really good ones. And through all of that, he's had the support of an amazing, amazing staff. I could not be more grateful for this facility and for the staff and all of their love and care and support of both my son and myself.

The staff and the way that they interact with my son has been so helpful for me because they've seen the bad and the really bad and the really wonderful. They've seen who my son is and so, when they're calling me up to tell me about something that's happened and I'm asking a lot of questions, they're always talking me down. They're always reminding me, "Lisa, this is not Ben. This is not him and this is not who he is." And that is so refreshing.

It's such a gift to have other people who see your child and they can see beyond the behaviors, because quite frankly, it's hard to see behind behaviors. It's hard to see beyond aggression. And that actually reminded me, is that when we're able to look at our child's behaviors from a place of neutrality, it makes it so much easier to respond to them.

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I remember this from during COVID. Every morning my son was resisting getting on the van. He would yell, he would scream, he would throw things, he would push, he would shove, but he would always get on the van. So, I was talking to my best friend about this who is a BCBA, I was telling her about all of his behaviors and she was just fascinated by them, which was not what I was. I wasn't fascinated at all. I was annoyed and afraid.

But she pointed out to me, she's like, "Lisa, no matter what he does, he always gets on the van. So, if you can just look at these behaviors from the 10,000 foot view that he wants to avoid it, but he eventually gets on the van, it's going to help you. It's going to help you stay calmer because you know he'll just get on the van anyway." That advice was game changing for me.

Instead of waking up like a nervous wreck, instead of walking on eggshells every morning, I just prepared myself. Some stuff's going to go down before he gets on the van, but he's going to get on the van. And just that ability to not look at his behaviors as bad or something to be avoided or embarrassing because the neighbors could see and hear. Just looking at them as neutral really helped me stay calm and get him on the van faster.

And for real, the calmer I got and the less I was doing to try to prevent him from yelling or screaming or whatever, the more I actually ignored him, the better it got, the calmer he got and the faster he got on that van. So, here's what happens when we look at behaviors as neutral. If you go back to the think, feel, act, cycle and the self-coaching model that I teach, those are in episodes five and six.

If we put behaviors, whatever it is your child is doing in the circumstance line, just a neutral fact, not good or bad. What that means is that we get to decide how we want to think, feel and respond to the behavior. So, if we're looking at behaviors as something that are bad and we're feeling frustrated, angry, or afraid, those emotions will fuel your actions and your reactions. And usually when we're responding from those emotions, we're not responding as effectively as we could. In fact, we're reacting or overreacting.

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But if you're able to zoom out from the 10,000 foot view and put behaviors in the circumstance line as something neutral, as something your child does, you get to choose how you want to think about it. For me, the thought I always picked was, he's dysregulated. He's dysregulated for me was so factual and so neutral that I felt calmer, I felt more in control. And when I felt calmer and more in control, I was able to respond more strategically. I wasn't making it personal about him. I wasn't making it about me and my parenting.

And as we all know, our emotions are contagious. Our children can feel how we are feeling. So, if we are frustrated, if we are angry, they are going to respond to that and not in a good way. So, by looking at behaviors as neutral, it's not saying that the broken iPad or the bruises are okay, it just becomes a more helpful way for us to deal with the behaviors, to respond to them and to co-escalate our child.

So, behaviors, whatever they are, try to think about them as neutral, not good or not bad. If they're not good, they're not bad, it's just something that your child is doing for a purpose, but possibly you don't know how you want to think about that. You get to choose a thought that will help you feel a feeling that's better than frustrated and angry that will help you take the steps that you want to take in response instead of reacting and overreacting.

Alright, sounds simple enough, but we all know this is not easy, this is work. But lucky for you, this is exactly the work that I do with my clients in my one-on-one coaching program. I work with my clients one-on-one to identify triggers and to create their own protocol for handling meltdowns and behaviors no matter what or no matter where. This is so helpful because when you already have a plan, when you already know how you want to respond beforehand, you're not a deer in the headlights when the meltdown does happen or the behavior does occur.

You know exactly what to do, both in how you want to think and feel about it, but also how you respond to it. To get started now, schedule a consultation with me on my website [theautismmomcoach.com](http://theautismmomcoach.com) or email me

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at [lisa@theautismmomcoach.com](mailto:lisa@theautismmomcoach.com). Alright, that's it for this week, I will talk to you next.

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](http://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.