

Ep #127: Burnout Buster for Autism Moms



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With Your Host

Lisa Candra

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You are listening to episode 127 of *The Autism Mom Coach*, Burnout Buster for Autism Moms.

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 burnout and specifically I am going to teach you one technique that can quickly reduce the burnout you may be experiencing. But before we get to that, I want to talk a little bit about burnout because burnout isn't just about doing too much. It's about doing too much of the wrong things or too much of the things that are depleting our energy versus giving it back to us.

So, this could look like worrying, second guessing ourselves and people pleasing. And what I have found from my own experience and from my experience in coaching Autism moms, these are all activities that we excel in. Worrying about our children, worrying about their future, worrying about whether we're doing enough or the right things. Second guessing ourselves in our decisions and then the people pleasing of trying to be everything to everyone, trying to take it all on and make it look easy.

Then you put on top of this the unrelenting demands of Autism parenting and you have a perfect recipe for burnout. That is why boundaries are so important. In fact, a 2018 study published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* found that individuals who reported higher levels of boundary control. That is the ability to say no to demands that conflict with our personal goals, experienced significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion, which is a key component of burnout.

This seems to make perfect sense. But when it comes to Autism moms, we are especially vulnerable to overcommitting ourselves because we are

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always on this quest to do more in the hopes that if we just do more, then our child would be 'okay'. Put on top of that the fact that as Autism parents we face increased demands on our time and our resources because of all of the therapies and appointments we have to manage and the constant advocacy that we're doing for our children in every setting. From the community, school, doctors, therapists, neighbors, strangers, we are always on.

We are always at the ready to advocate for our children or to support them through challenges. And then there is the balancing of all of the logistics that we do, all of our invisible labor, like researching interventions, coordinating care, managing challenging behaviors, transporting our children to and from therapy appointments. Being the point person for all of the professionals on our child's team and having to coordinate between and among them.

Given all of the unrelenting challenges and responsibilities that we face, learning to say no strategically is not just helpful, it is essential to preserving our own sanity. First I'm going to break down this technique and then I'm going to tell you what the real challenge here is. So, in order to say no, first identify your non-negotiables. These are the core responsibilities and self-care activities that are absolutely essential for your wellbeing and your ability to take care of your child.

So, this might include adequate sleep, regular meals, time for exercise or relaxation, taking a hot shower, having the ability to connect with your partner or your other children at the end of the day. And then second, recognize requests that conflict with these priorities. That means before you say yes and commit to something, that you consider whether it aligns with your non-negotiables or whether it's going to take away from them.

Now, this includes with other people, for instance, being asked to be a member of the PTA or a room mother, or to pick up someone else's children, or to watch someone else's children. These are all requests by other people and you have to evaluate, will saying yes to this mean that I

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am sacrificing some of my non-negotiables. And if that's the case, these are your opportunities to say no.

But you're not just saying no to other people, you have to build the skill of saying no to yourself because in my experience, some of the most burnout inducing activities that I do, all happen between my ears. The worrying and the second guessing that I do are more exhausting to me than any activity that I could do in a given day. I have a pretty high threshold for doing a lot of stuff and being busy and getting things done, that doesn't bother me. But getting an email from my son's school and reading it and all the worry that comes with that, just seeing it, that could tank me for a day.

So, in addition to building the muscle of saying no to other people, we have to say no to ourselves when we're about to engage in activities that are going to diminish us and that includes worrying and second guessing. And so, like I said last week in the episode about anxiety, you need to first be able to catch those worry thoughts, those second guessing thoughts. Now, we all think that worrying is useful. We think it's preparing us for something.

And we all think that second guessing ourselves is useful, because otherwise we would never be evaluating our decisions and that's not the case at all. Evaluating is not the same as second guessing. Evaluating is objectively looking at how things went, where things went well, where they didn't go well and what you would do differently. Second guessing is just a way of you eroding your own self-confidence and self-trust and that leads to burnout. So, in addition to saying no to other people, learning to say no to yourself.

And then third, rinse and repeat. This is a practice, it's not a one and done. In order for you to protect your time and your energy, you will need to look for those places where you need to say no to other people and yes to yourself. That is the way that you protect your time and your energy so that you can do the things that you want. So, you can show up as the parent that your child needs, one who is not burnt out all the time.

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Now, in my experience the problem really here isn't saying no. That's actually quite easy. It is in dealing with all of our thoughts and fears and anxieties about how other people will react, what they will think of us, if they will judge us. All of that is what's getting in our way of saying no or taking too many things on, or not asking for help. But the fear of feeling the discomfort that will come with saying no and creating boundaries, that is the path forward. You have to feel and experience that discomfort in order to be in charge of your own life, in order to protect your own time and your own energy.

If this is something you struggle with, creating boundaries, saying no, making time for yourself, if you feel like you're in a constant cycle of burnout. This is exactly what I can help you with in my one-on-one coaching program. You are not doing yourself or your child any favors by staying in this spin cycle and the good news is there is a way out and you don't have to do it alone. This is exactly what I do with my clients every day.

If you are ready to change the trajectory of your parenting experience, schedule a consultation call with me. You can do it by going to the episode notes or my website theautismmomcoach.com. Alright, that is it for this week's episode. I will talk to you next 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.