



TURN AUTISM AROUND
WITH DR. MARY BARBERA

Transcript for Podcast Episode: 040

*Autism Parenting & Autism Podcasts
with Autism Mom Megan C.*

Hosted by: Dr. Mary Barbera

Mary Barbera: You're listening to another episode of the Turn Autism Around podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Mary Barbera, and I am thrilled that you are listening today. We have a guest on the show and we are going to be talking about autism podcasts, and not just my podcast but our guest today has a podcast and I'm going to tell you all about her in just a minute. But before we get there I usually give a listener shout out, but today I am going to read a very nice message that I received a few weeks ago when kids were starting back to school and this is from Amanda who said, "I'm not sure if you remember us, but we are a family whom you had helped many years ago, eight to be exact. Our son Jayden was nonverbal, had self-injurious behaviors, and then you came and showed me how to use ABA. Fast forward to today, Jayden's first day of middle school. He's a straight A student, football player, and is the most caring kid ever. He cracks jokes all the time and his smile is so contagious. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being such a strong foundation for my son and giving me the tools I needed to connect to him and have a positive impact in his life."

Mary Barbera: And that is from Amanda and her family. And she did give us permission to share his picture as well as that awesome quote. And so it just made my whole day, my whole week, to hear from a family that literally was in the very beginning of my early intervention career. Jayden was probably two and a half when I got there. As Amanda said, nonverbal and self-injurious behavior and we were able to see pretty dramatic gains pretty quickly. So thank you so much to Amanda for reaching out and for allowing me to share your story, to offer hope to people. And along with Jayden's starting school, many of you have children and if you're professionals, many of you have started back to school and you know, one of my former clients started college this week, and my kids, my younger son, Spencer, started his senior year of college. And Lucas is continuing on with his same program. So wherever your children or clients are at, know, we can just always hope and have each child reach their fullest potential, which is really the goal of this podcast.

Mary Barbera: So let me get on to introducing our guest. Her name is Megan Carranza and she's a mother of three children. One, her oldest child, Logan, was diagnosed with autism in 2017. He is age six now. Megan created the Adventures In Autism podcast in September of 2018, so a little over a year ago, and she's kept up with that weekly, which is just so awesome. She is on a mission to spread the message of awareness, acceptance and inclusion. And she started her podcast for all those reasons. So I just found out about Megan's podcast and so I wanted to have her on. I listened to a few episodes. So let's get to this special interview with autism mom and podcast host, Megan Carranza.

Welcome to the Turn Autism Around podcast for both parents and professionals in the autism world who want to turn things around, be less stressed, and lead happier lives. And now your host, autism mom, behavior analyst, and bestselling author, Dr. Mary Barbera.

Mary Barbera: Okay. So I'm so happy now to welcome Megan to our show. Thanks for joining us, Megan.

Megan Carranza: Thanks so much for having me.

Mary Barbera: Yeah, I'm so excited that someone pointed out your podcast and I got to listen to a few episodes, and I just thought you'd be a great guest. So before we jump into your podcast and your work in terms of autism advocacy and getting the awareness out I like to always start my podcast episodes with describing your fall into the autism world. Like did you have a background or when's the first time you thought that autism would be entering your life in such a big way?

Megan Carranza: I love that you used the term fall into autism because it really is that, it really is like a fall. So no, I had literally no knowledge of autism before I had my son. I always talk about the movie Rain Man, which I know is like so cliché, but that was truly all I knew of autism at the time. And I saw the movie when I was a child. I really had no knowledge.

Megan Carranza: And then when my son was honestly like a year old was when I first started to think like, okay, I think we're dealing with something here. And I wasn't necessarily sure that it was autism; we knew he had a speech delay even at about a year old and it didn't, I mean again, a year old is not very old. They're not really talking very much. But it was just like something in my mom heart knew that it was just, there was something that not quite right.

Megan Carranza: And he had been just... He is still a complete joy and the sweetest, happiest baby. But like I said, first it was that speech that kind of tipped us off and we got him into early intervention at about 20 months old, and started speech therapy and OT with early intervention. And then it wasn't until he had aged out of early intervention at age three and was into preschool that anybody really to us that they thought maybe it was autism. It was actually his speech therapist at school that had said, this might be autism.

Megan Carranza: Which at the time it was interesting because all through early intervention, the different, you know, therapists and coordinators, I would say to them, do you think that this might be autism? Because it was just in... Like I said, it was just in my heart. I felt it even though I was so scared to admit it and everybody would say, oh no, I don't think it's autism, because he didn't have a lot of like classic signs of autism. He was always like super affectionate and really playful and he definitely would exhibit those kinds of signs of like kind of, I don't want to say like being in his own world, but it kind of removed himself sometimes. Like you could just tell he was not super engaged. But other than that he just, especially when he was really little, the kind of classic signs of autism that you see, he didn't have them so much. So like I said, once he was in school then and it was a speech therapist that said to us, okay this might be autism, then my husband and I were like, okay, we need to move forward and you know, seek a diagnosis.

Megan Carranza: Because at that point we had both been thinking it but we hadn't even said it to each other, which was really interesting. And yeah, it was scary to have that conversation. But it was also like a weight lifted cause we both, I like I had been thinking, oh my God, Manny is going to be so devastated when he finds out that you know, Logan might have autism. And he was thinking Megan is going to be so devastated when she finds out that Logan might have autism. Like we were both thinking the same things but we hadn't had that conversation yet. So it was, it was really hard to hear. But it was actually a good catalyst to, you know, move forward in just us having that conversation and then ultimately getting a diagnosis, which we did get a few months later.

Mary Barbera: Yeah. So when he went to three year olds preschool, was that a special needs preschool or...

Megan Carranza: Yeah, it was through our district. So it was the early childhood center through our school district. And he was in, they have... They have different classes, but he was in like the special needs classrooms. So it was not necessarily kids just with autism. It was kind of kids across the

board with special needs. So some had more physical delays, some had like cognitive because Logan does have... so he has a speech delay, but he definitely does have like some cognitive delays as well. He's six now and he's doing amazing. But he definitely, he's not like, a lot of times people will ask me that and he's not like conversational with his speech and he's not, he can understand and follow like simple directions. But especially at that point when he was three, that stuff was all real struggle for him.

Megan Carranza: So it was... And that was actually one of the times too that I remember very specifically was I went to go observe in his preschool class and you know, I'm seeing him with all his peers who again, all had special needs. And I saw the way that he was struggling with some of these activities that some of the kids had, you know, some challenge with it. But he, it seemed like he was having the most challenge with these activities. And that was another kind of light bulb moment for me. Like, Oh boy, like we are, you know, we're not in Kansas anymore and we were not. But like I said, it was not very long after that then that the speech therapist had said to us that he thought it would be autism. So the wheels had been turning for a while up until then, but it was that that was really the catalyst to move us forward.

Mary Barbera: Wow. I mean, it sounds like such a long time to be worried and not to be discussing it at all. And I have, I mean, but my husband who's a physician first mentioned the possibility of autism and Lucas when he was 21 months old. I looked at my husband, I mean, I was just like, what the heck are you talking about? The thought had never crossed my mind. He wasn't even in speech therapy or we didn't, you know... I just had my second son, like, what are you talking about? Like Lucas might have autism.

Mary Barbera: And I looked at him and I was just like, he doesn't have autism, and I never want to hear that word again. So unlike you and your husband who didn't discuss it and both were silently worried about it; my husband did discuss it and then I shut him down. I went into a real state of denial, although his comments planted that seed. Then I was like, oh my God every time he'd do something a little weird. He would, you know, kind of play with a string on a sofa a little longer than a few seconds. I'd be like, oh my gosh, maybe it is autism or he, you know, he wouldn't line things up, but he would, I use the term like he would squirrel things. He like, he would take a pile of stuff and move it over to a different area, kind of squirrel stuff.

Mary Barbera: And I was just like, maybe, you know, so then we started to get speech therapy and then he was... he went to typical preschool when he was two

and it was really, it was two and a half when we were talking about putting him in three year old classroom, a typical school where they were just like, he is going to need more support, you know, that sort of thing. But it is interesting and I've gone on, I mean I was in denial for over 15 months and that really hurt Lucas's chances of, you know... I mean he has reached his fullest potential now and I'm going to keep the bar high, but you know, if I could turn back the clock and earliest warning signs and treat the earliest warning signs, I do think that the trajectory would be different.

Mary Barbera: And that's why I've been such a proponent of, you know, the having parents become the experts catching the earliest warning signs. I have a free guide called, is it Autism, ADHD or Typical Toddler Tantrums, three steps you can take today instead of worrying. And that is available, we'll put it in the show notes, at Marybarbera.com/toddler, and, you know, a lot of my work now I have a toddler online course and a lot of my work is just really getting parents to act by the three steps.

Mary Barbera: The first step of the guide is to know the milestones. Know when they're supposed to sit up, know when your child is supposed to be putting two words together, when they're supposed to be waning, whether they're supposed to be, you know, pretend playing and all those kind of things. Now you went on and you have two younger daughters, so how old are they, and are you more aware of developmental milestones and those sorts of...

Megan Carranza: Oh yeah, I definitely with both of them had been on high alert. So my older daughter, Liliana, is three and she has presented like totally typical. She's in preschool now and she had to do like all the screening for that. It's been very eye-opening for my husband and I because I think there were a lot of things looking back with Logan that we didn't, we just didn't know, and then we would see her, you know, like you said like putting, even starting to talk at all. But especially like, yeah, putting words together or just like certain actions. Like we would ask her to do something and she would do it; like things that, you know, it seems simple, but we, it really opened our eyes to like, oh wow, things, things are so different with a typical child.

Megan Carranza: And then with our youngest, Layla, she's the only one. And I did have concerns with her because at her 15 month checkup, I'm sorry, at her one year checkup, she was not pointing yet. And that was something with Logan that they used to ask me all the time like, oh, is he pointing? And I didn't understand why that was a big deal back then. But then like I said, we saw Lilia start pointing and I was like, oh, I get it now. She's trying

to engage. She's trying to show me something. So I had said to the pediatrician, you know, she's not pointing at, and obviously like I'm always on high alert with autism. And the pediatrician was like, well you know, let's wait and see. And I said, well if at her 15 month checkup, if she's still not pointing, I want to have her evaluated.

Megan Carranza: Well it was probably like a week later she started pointing and now she points out everything. She's 16 months old. So it's like things like that. And she's already like putting two words together and she's doing all kinds of gestures. But things that, again, if I didn't know to look for those things, I wouldn't know. So the course you're talking about I'm sure is very valuable because like you said, that that early intervention, that time you don't get that back. And I have those same thoughts that you do of like, I wish that... If I could go back, I would have done more. And now, granted Logan did, like I said, he started speech therapy and OT when he was 20 months old. So it wasn't like, you know, we didn't, we didn't wait too long. But obviously like now he's been an ABA therapy for almost two years and I've just, we've seen such tremendous growth for him in that time that I do think back and I think if we had gotten the diagnosis sooner, you know, we could've started ABA sooner and who knows.

Megan Carranza: But I also think you've got to just deal with what you're dealing with now. So I try... I have those thoughts, but I'm just like, you know what, this is here and now this is what we got. Let's move forward. That's my thought.

Mary Barbera: And no one... You know, I don't want anyone to think that I am, you know, my life is ruined. I, you know, at the moment when he did finally get a diagnosis the day before he was three and I started asking about ABA and the worry and the Lovaas study, which showed that, you know, up to half the kids could become indistinguishable. And this is all like within the first three podcasts of my podcast Turn Autism Around, we talk about the Lovaas study and the Maurice book and those sorts of things that really got me highly motivated to get the diagnosis and take action.

Mary Barbera: One developmental pediatrician who actually just... I just did a podcast with the developmental pediatrician, Dr. James Copeland, who diagnosed Lucas that just came out in early September, his podcast interview. And you know, when I asked Dr. Copeland after he gave Lucas the diagnosis of moderate severe autism, the day before he was three, I asked him about recovery and can he get all better? And Copeland said, well, if it was more mild, maybe if it was earlier; but in his long career, at that point, he hadn't seen kids at Lucas's age with that level of severity before recover. And so like it felt like he was just, you know, nail in the coffin, you know,

oh my God, like all that delay and not taking action, you know. Through my online courses and everything, I teach parents how to actually start the therapy on their own without even waiting in line for a doctor's visit. So that a lot of these, as you probably know, with Logan, even with your daughter, is that even if it is a speech delay or early signs of autism, I mean it's basically the same treatment to get them pointing. I actually have pointing bonus video that we did...

Megan Carranza: Well, Logan points now.

Mary Barbera: Not that I recommend you like teaching to the test and then you know, that sort of thing like, but at the same time, is it teaching to the test or is it teaching valuable skills so early that they're not missing a beat?

Megan Carranza: Well, it's guidance. Yeah, yeah. In the right direction.

Mary Barbera: Yeah. So it is. I have done video blogs about denial and I do know that in my situation I was the one in denial, which is like very ironic because now I say, write, type the word 'autism' thousands of times a day. And I told my husband back then that I never ever wanted to hear the word again.

Megan Carranza: Yeah. It does feel like a dirty word at the time. I know what you mean.

Mary Barbera: It's like your life is like the curtain's going to come down and then your life is ruined, and your life has definitely changed, you know, but ruined, no. And you've managed to, you know, really start something big here with your podcast.

Mary Barbera: So you started last September, so a year ago. So why did you start a podcast and what was your background, like what was your background before you had your kids?

Megan Carranza: Oh my gosh. Not podcasting. No, I started the podcast because like you and I were talking before I, so right after Logan got diagnosed, I loved listening to podcasts and I've been listening to podcasts for years. And it was really, really soon after he got diagnosed that I was like, oh, I should look and see if I can find an autism podcast to listen to. Because especially at that point, like my head was just spinning and I was desperate for not just knowledge, but I really wanted to hear from like real parents who had gone through it. I was not necessarily looking to hear from like doctors or, because that was a lot of what I was finding was very like medicalized podcasts, which was, it was valuable information. And I enjoyed listening to those too, but it was like, I just

wanted to hear from like real people who were like in the thick of it or had come out on the other side, whatever that might mean.

Megan Carranza: So that was kind of, like I said this was, you know, years ago at this point. So I just kind of sat on the idea because I am like the least tech savvy person on the planet. And like I said, I don't have any, any kind of background in any of this, so I had to really like figure out how to do it. So I sat on the idea for a while and well, there was just, there was no new podcast popping up and I was kinda like, okay, it's now or never. So last year in 2018 I made a goal for myself. I was like, okay, I'm going to start the podcast this year. And I don't even know, like what actually there was one day that kinda just spurred me to do it. And I recorded the first episode and just kind of kept going with it.

Megan Carranza: And I did. I, at first I just reached out to the very small pool of a couple people that I knew that could be guests, that were parents of kids with autism. And then it just kind of snowballed, and I've been able to speak with parents all over the world. But I speak with experts as well. So I've had different like speech therapists and ABA therapists, psychologists, like just different, anyone who kind of has knowledge of autism, whether it be their child or in their profession. I think it's all really valuable to hear. And I think you can kind of take away something from each episode. So that was really what started it.

Mary Barbera: So your podcast is called the Adventures In Autism. And do you do that weekly or is it sporadically or how do you...

Megan Carranza: No, it's weekly. So it's been a lot of work.

Mary Barbera: I was going to ask you, why do you think there are so few autism podcasts? Because I had the same story, I had actually bought a how to do podcasting course and I just never got around to listening to it, and I kinda like ignored that. And then all of a sudden I was just like, you know what? I need to do the podcast. I started searching too, and I didn't find your podcast, I didn't find anybody's podcast. There were a couple of podcasts that started right when mine started. Mine started in January, 2019 and I think Dr. Amanda Kelly, Behavior Babe, who's been on the show started around that time and Sasha Long who's been on the show, she started around that time too. So you got to start a couple of months ahead of us. But why do you think there are so few autism podcasts?

Megan Carranza: I do think that it is like a slightly newer medium. I mean I think there are so many autism blogs and I think it's coming because like the ones that you, I know Sasha, the ones that you've mentioned in some of your

guests, like there's people that have podcasts about autism or in that field, but there still are not many. But I think it's gaining steam because in the time that I have started the podcast, I've had several people reach out to me and say I want to start a podcast. Like what should I do? And you and I were saying this before, too. I think like more is more we... any perspective, any different take on it. Like, I think the knowledge is just important. So I'm super supportive of anybody who wants to do it, but I do think it's a lot of work. More than more than I think I had anticipated going into it. But honestly like, I don't know, I think that again, podcasting is just like a slightly newer medium and I think people are catching on to it. It's just taken more time. But I think it's great that there's more, more and more podcasts about autism or you know, around that subject kind of popping up. Because like I said, there's something you can take away from all of them.

Mary Barbera: Right, right. Yeah. In the online marketing space, which I'm a big part of, they say there's no such thing as a competitor. Only a collaborator who you haven't worked with yet. And so I am all about, like, as soon as I found out about your podcast, I listened to an episode or two, reached out, you know, I'll be on your podcast. You're going to be on my podcast. Because we are stronger together. We can get the rights and help people. And so I think it's very extraordinary that you just decided as a parent, hey, there's no autism podcast I want to listen to on a weekly basis. Let me create one. And you're an awesome job. So thank you.

Megan Carranza: Aw. Same to you. Yeah, it's definitely a lot of work, but it's very rewarding, especially because now, I mean it has been like a year. I really have made some incredible connections with listeners and with past guests. I've had a couple of guests like locally that are my friends now. We hang out. I have like this great tribe of moms that had it not been for the podcast, I wouldn't have had. So that, that has been like by far the best part is hearing from the listeners, and just when people tell me that the podcast is helpful for them or sometimes people will say, oh, it's my therapy to listen to it. That's just like, even though it is a lot of work, that definitely keeps me going. Because it's so wonderful to hear that.

Mary Barbera: Yeah. So how can people find the Adventures In Autism podcast? Just search where they listen? Do you have a website?

Megan Carranza: Yeah, so I need to... That's like my goal for this year now is to get a website going so you can find me. So it's just Adventures In Autism and that's everywhere on like any major listening platform, so on Apple or Google or Spotify, Stitcher, all that good stuff. And then you can also find me on Facebook at Adventures In Autism Podcast or on Instagram at

Adventures In Autism Podcast. Or you can email me at adventuresinautism28@yahoo.com.

Megan Carranza: Yeah, website coming hopefully soon. I am like the least tech savvy person on the planet. So to have done all of this is a miracle, honestly. So like one thing at a time.

Mary Barbera: It's a learning curve.

Megan Carranza: Yes. Oh my gosh, it is.

Mary Barbera: How do you do online courses? How do you do a podcast? It's like I can write whole books, like how do you treat autism and like, it's a whole other world and yeah, you're doing it smart because you're just biting off as much as you can chew and then, you know, you bite off the next chunk and yeah, I think that's cool.

Mary Barbera: So what do you think are the biggest struggles of autism moms in general? Either with newly diagnosed or if it changes over time. I know your son's only six, but what are you think are the biggest struggles?

Megan Carranza: I do think that the early days, at least for me at this point I would say are the hardest. Because you're just really coming to terms with, like you said, it's not that it's, you know, your life is over, but it is like a whole new life and it's a whole new life for your whole family. So I think it's a challenging time, and I think a lot of that is just mental and emotional and kind of trying. And then also, I know like right after Logan got diagnosed, I just like sprang into action with, you know, making phone calls and getting his therapy together. And it's just, it's a lot of actual work to get all that stuff together.

Megan Carranza: So I would, to me, I would say the hardest would be the early days. My situation is a little bit different now because, you know, I have three kids. So like Logan is my oldest and I have two little girls who I have so much guilt because he gets so much attention and there's so much focus on him all the time with, you know, therapy and just making sure he has enough support. And I have to make a conscious effort all the time to make sure that my daughters don't feel slighted. And it's, you know, I do the best that I can. It's never perfect.

Megan Carranza: But it's interesting because I think for them it's almost an advantage because it's like they don't know any life other than autism, you know what I mean? Like they're just growing up with this. So I always think about how as just humans and individuals, I think that they have such like

a compassion. They just have that kind of built in compassion that a lot of kids don't necessarily have because they've grown up with this brother with autism.

Megan Carranza: Sorry that kind of veered off from your initial question. But those are the two things that I would say would be the toughest are the kind of the early days, and then later now for me it's just kind of like balancing and that juggling act of like, okay, I'm a mom to these two little girls, but I'm also an autism mom, a special needs mom and I have to do my best to, you know, kind of fit those roles for everybody.

Mary Barbera: Right, right. Yeah, I agree. And I think my younger son... So my kids are 18 months apart. So my senior is at college now and he's away at college. So you know, months in between when we see him. And so it just keeps changing. You know, it's great that you have typical children too. And it is always a balancing act of how... Even if you have all three of your kids are typically developing, it's always hard. But when you throw autism in the mix it gets particularly challenging.

Megan Carranza: Yeah, I agree. It's interesting though because I talked to a lot of parents who they only have their one child on the spectrum and sometimes I honestly, even though with the three kids, it's a lot, it's a lot to juggle. I'm so glad that I have them though because sometimes they kind of shake me out of that autism world because you can get so bogged down by all of that.

Megan Carranza: Like, I mean, it's heavy and we have heavy days for sure. And there's heavy moments. But I mean, children are such a gift in general. They're such a blessing and I feel that way, but I'm just, I'm so thankful for just our whole family unit and the way that we have kind of rallied around Logan and just each other. Even though my girls are so little, they are still such wonderful sisters to Logan and they... I learned something different from each of my kids and it's, it's really beautiful to see that as time goes on.

Mary Barbera: Yeah. And they will be great advocates for autism, and they'll be compassionate kids. I found that not only with Spencer, but my clients, my former clients, you know, their siblings and it really does change their lives, but in ways that makes them really, really remarkable people.

Megan Carranza: That's how I feel. I feel like, because I have that guilt like I said about Logan getting so much attention and it's hard to balance all of that. But then I also have to remind myself, like the girls are so lucky to have him and it's helping them as individuals just to be better people. I mean,

that's how I see it. So the dynamic of your family when you have a child with special needs, like when there is one child with autism, the whole family kind of has autism. You know what I mean? Like it affects everybody in a different way. And I think you can look at that, you know, in a negative way, but I really do see it in a positive way.

Mary Barbera: Yeah. I did a podcast interview a couple of months ago with Jenna, who is the mom to Cody, and she also has two daughters who are typically developing and so you might, I will put that, that show in the show notes as well. So that's like another family and she, you know, this conversation, this part of our conversation reminds me of that interview. You just, you know, you can't let autism consume your whole life. And that, you know, you only have one life. You just keep trying your best about once at all.

Megan Carranza: Absolutely.

Mary Barbera: So how about parent and professional collaboration? I know you said you have some guests on your podcast that are parents only and do you have any tips for how parents and professionals can collaborate better?

Megan Carranza: You mean like in terms of just communication?

Mary Barbera: Yeah. Communication, working together to, you know, help each child reach their fullest potential.

Megan Carranza: Yeah, I think that can be difficult. I am one of those people that, I mean I talk a lot, I have a podcast so it makes sense. But I have no problem talking to people and being very frank. I think for some people that's a little more difficult. But I think as the parent you have to find it within you to have that strong advocate role. And I think that it is just so important to have those open lines of communication and just honesty because for me, for us, for our family, we deal with a lot of different therapists and teachers and coordinators and just kind of... It can be a lot to juggle for sure. But I think my number one role with Logan is always to be his mom, especially because he is nonverbal, I need to be his voice.

Megan Carranza: And I think it's so important, like I said, to just be honest and have those conversations even though they might be tougher. I think we've been pretty lucky to be honest with you. We haven't had too many... We've had a couple instances where things got maybe didn't agree with, but like I said, I have no problem speaking up to be like, I don't really like where this is heading or I'm not sure I agree with that. And it's always resolved itself and been fine. His BCBA, the one who we deal with the most, she's

phenomenal. We love her. So and I think part of that is just that is being comfortable with the team and knowing that, you know if there's something that you don't agree with or someone that you're not clicking with, like it's okay to say, I don't think this is the right fit. You know, I think that is important, too. I don't know if I'm answering this question so well.

Mary Barbera: It's good! Communication is always, you know...

Megan Carranza: I talk about that a lot in my podcast too. Because I have a lot of people that will message me in question and say, I'm having an issue with my son or daughter's teacher, like I'm not sure how to handle it. And my advice is always just like nip it in the bud any way you can. If you're more comfortable emailing, send an email. If you're more comfortable calling, then call. But find a way to, to open that line of communication. And like I said, I know for some people that's harder to do if they do, if they are just in general, you know, maybe not, they want to, don't want to rock the boat or something so to speak, which I get that. But I do think that even if you do feel that way, you, for your kid, you have to step up and just find it within you to advocate because they're depending on you.

Mary Barbera: Yeah, yeah, I agree. And I think having ABA and having a board certified behavior analyst overseeing your son's program is a lot of... A lot of people listening, parents and professionals, they don't have that kind of situation. So it does get even trickier. But whatever your situation, I think there's always communication and there's always, you know, advocating hard for your child but also knowing like, you know, why quote unquote choose the hills you will die on carefully.

Mary Barbera: Because you know, especially like in the beginning of the school year, which we're still in the beginning of the school year per se, it's like, yes you have the IEP, yes academics are important or whatever, but there also needs to be, you know, pairing of the situation. If a child needs a special teacher staff; if there needs to be a reinforcer, assessments, and there needs to be assessments in general and make sure that the goals are being worked on are appropriate and all that stuff. And so I am all about like getting through my podcasts, my video blogs, my online courses, getting the parent to feel and be the captain of the ship so that they are able to really turn the ship if it needs to be turned. Because you're going to be there for life and the teacher or psychologist is not. And so, you know, the parent is not only one person within the team, they are basically half the team as far as I'm concerned. So I feel like just empowering parents to know like, hey you're half of this plan. And so to

get more knowledge and to really be able to advocate for the right things is very important.

Megan Carranza: Well yeah, and like you said too, getting more knowledge, educating yourself so that you're aware of the situation. Because, like you said, not everything is going to be, you know, you don't have to fight for everything, but the things that you feel really important about and things that you want to fight for, you want to kind of know what you're getting into. So I think that's also definitely key with everything is just kind of educating yourself and knowing what it is when you're going into it.

Mary Barbera: Yeah. So part of my podcast goals are to help parents and professionals be less stressed and lead happier lives. So do you have any final self-care tips or things that you've learned along the way so far that helps you reduce your stress?

Megan Carranza: Oh boy. This is not like my area of expertise. It's an ongoing thing; I'm working on it all the time. I feel like I've gotten a little bit better this past year because I've realized how important that is. I, for me, self-care is many things. I mean, I like to relax and like take a bath when I have a moment. But for me, what really like recharges my batteries is when I have a lunch or a coffee date or a night out with my friends; and whether they are fellow autism moms or you know, just my friends like that kind of takes me out of the day to day grind and I feel like you can, you know, you have these open, honest conversations with your friends that you can't really have everybody else. So, and I think there's been, there's been times in the past where I haven't let myself lean on people the way that I probably needed to because I was trying so hard to just be strong within myself.

Megan Carranza: And that might be like the noble thing to do, but it didn't get me anywhere. So I needed to really kind of humble myself and say, okay, I need help. I need support. I can't do this by myself. That's one of the reasons why I started the podcast was really just support because I wanted to help other people, but I wanted to create that community for myself as well because I didn't have it. So that to me would be like, the number one thing that I would recommend is just leaning on your community or your friends. And don't be afraid to be honest.

Megan Carranza: I'm like the most emotional person you'll ever meet. So like, there's times when I need to vent and I need to cry and get it out. And that's just who I am, and it helps me process things. And I realize it like, that's okay, you can do that and then you can move on from it. So like I said, I think that would be my advice.

Mary Barbera: Yeah. And I agree with you. I have a few very close autism mom friends who we've been together since the beginning. And so we've just been through a lot over the year. I've been at this for over two decades now. So, and so we've been advocates together. We've been, you know, bouncing ideas off and just, you know, venting or giving each other some ideas about how to get our kids to the next level or whatever. And then I also have a lot of friends through, you know, my community, my typically developing son, and so I have the friends that have been with me again for two decades and they know about autism and they can, you know, relate kinda sorta.

Megan Carranza: But it's nice to have friends who are not all about autism because it's like, sometimes you don't want to talk about it. Sometimes you do instead of you don't. And either way that's okay. And I'm always amazed too, like I have friends who, some of them don't even have children, some of them do and they're typical children and they'll say, oh, I listened to the podcast tonight, I love this episode. And I'm like, I'm so touched that you listened to the podcast. And I'm like, I don't expect anybody who isn't like within the autism world to listen. But I love that there are people that do, because obviously advocating is so important to me and I feel like if this is the message that we can spread. So same thing when I have, you know, lunch with my girlfriends who maybe they don't have a child in the spectrum, but they're going to sit and be present listening to me talk about it; that means so much to me. And I feel like not only are they there for me, but it's like they're there. That awareness and that advocacy is so important to just kind of spread that message.

Mary Barbera: Yeah. Just in the past week I've had a few people tell me, Hey, I've seen more of your stuff on Instagram or I love your video blogs. And I'm looking at them like, they have adult children, why are they watching my video blogs? And I said that to a lady that I ran into, a friend, and she said, Oh I think looking back, I think of my 25 year old who's typically developing... so you know, people are just interested. They're interested in supporting you know, the rate of autism being about one in 50 give or take. You know, a lot of people are affected by autism. So whether or not you're a parent, professional, if you've come this far in listening to this podcast episode you are supporting us in our podcasts and our videos and our awareness and acceptance and advocacy. So I think that's great advice.

Mary Barbera:

Okay, so thank you so much. Your podcast people can search for is Adventures In Autism and for more information if you're listening out there, whether you're a parent or you're professional, I would love it if you would consider joining my online course and community and you can find out more during a free online workshop at marybarbara.com/workshop. Thanks again for joining us, Megan, and you'll hear from me next week, same time, same place, so have a great one.

Thanks for listening to the Turn Autism Around podcast with Dr. Mary Barbera. For more information, visit Marybarbera.com.