Segment 1

Transcript

Self-Care Through Creating Good Boundaries

July 2nd, 2023

Welcome everyone to Today's Autistic Moment: A Podcast for Autistic Adults by an Autistic Adult. My name is Philip King-Lowe. I am the owner, producer, and host; and I am an Autistic Adult. Thank you so much for listening.

Today's Autistic Moment is a member of The Autistic Podcasters Network. Please consider joining the Autistic Podcasters Network on LinkedIn.

Today's Autistic Moment is a free podcast that gives Autistic Adults access to important information, helps us learn about our barriers to discover the strengths and tools we already have to use for the work of self-advocacy.

This first segment of Today's Autistic Moment is sponsored by The Autism Society of Minnesota: Minnesota's First Autism Resource. For over 50 years The Autism Society of Minnesota has been honored to support Minnesota's Autism Community. Visit them online at ausm.org.

Thank you for joining me for this episode *Self-Care Through Creating Good Boundaries*. My guest is Matthew Lawrence.

Please visit todaysautisticmoment.com where you can listen to the podcast, get transcripts, program updates, and read the guest bios pages. Please visit the Future Shows Page with the titles, guests, and descriptions of all the shows coming up through October. The transcripts are sponsored by Minnesota Independence College & Community. The transcripts can be read and followed from the website. There is a link provided to get access to a document form of the transcript that you can print it, so it won't use up the ink on your printer. The written document transcript has a font that is accessible for dyslexics. While visiting the website, please consider supporting the work of Today's Autistic Moment with a financial donation or purchase an item from the Logo Shop.

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To introduce today's topic about creating good boundaries, I would like to play for you an ad that was used on Today's Autistic Moment in 2021. The ad was recorded by Leah Bauman-Smith from Mad Hatter Wellness in St. Paul.

Hi, this is Leah from Mad Hatter Wellness, I would like to talk with you about boundaries for a moment. A boundary is a line that people cannot cross. A boundary can be a physical line, like you don't want someone to touch you, or it can be an emotional boundary, you might not be ready to talk about something. People cannot cross your boundary without your permission. You cannot cross another person's boundary without their permission. An example of a physical boundary is only hugging people who want to be hugged. And an example of an emotional boundary is that you get to decide how much you share about yourself with others. Boundaries can change with different people or in different places. They can change with your mood. Respecting your own boundaries and other people's boundaries is an important piece of healthy relationships.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

One of the most common criticisms neurotypical people talk about is that Autistics do not know how to keep appropriate boundaries. Many of those same people are the first ones to push back when Autistic people start creating our own boundaries. I have often started asking others to observe some boundaries of my own, only to hear the neurotypical person say that my boundaries are not appropriate and/or they are unnecessary. Why does this happen? Because the neurotypical majority wants to dictate what Autistic people's boundaries should be according to their standards. In

other words, Autistics do not have the right to create boundaries that meet our needs. Our boundaries are interpreted as us being selfish or breaking a social norm.

Well contrary to what many may believe, Autistic Adults have every right and reason to create our own boundaries that meet our needs to feel safe and respected. Autistic boundaries are unique because our sense of security is different than those of neurotypical people. The boundaries of Autistics are often dependent on our sensory processing needs. Autistic boundaries can mean withdrawing from socializing for a while.

Matthew Lawrence the #ActuallyAutisticCoach has known that he is Autistic for most of his life. Matthew's knowledge of his own journey as an Autistic and his love of info dumping has helped him to form a coaching career through which he draws many Neurodivergent people into his work that is building community across the globe. Matthew's other special interests includes animals, particularly dogs and whales and Star Wars. Matthew has such a wealth of information and experience that he is more than happy to share with others to help Autistics with their quality of life.

After this first commercial break, Matthew will join me to talk about why it is so important that Autistics take care of ourselves through creating good boundaries. Please stay tuned.

Commercial Break I

Segment 2

Philip King-Lowe

Matthew Lawrence, thank you for being on this episode of Today's Autistic Comment. It has been my pleasure to see your work on your social networks, and to learn of the work that you do. So welcome to the show.

Matthew Lawrence

Thanks for having me, Philip.

Philip King-Lowe

You're welcome. You're welcome. Well, this officially begins my second Summer of Self-Care Series. I like to do these because a lot of us can use some help with self-care. We've been given so much information about what to or not to do with self-care. And the fact is, is that a lot of us Autistics, most of us Autistics, we are quite capable of taking care of ourselves. We just need reminders or tools, ideas, or understandings of how to do that. And so today, we're going to talk about a very important topic around self-care, and that is creating good boundaries. Boundaries are something

that Autistics are consistently criticized that we do not keep them. And yet we have people constantly violating ours. So, let's start with my basic question. Of course, what important information do you feel Autistic Adults and our supporters, caregivers need to know about with regards to Autistic Adults setting good boundaries?

Matthew Lawrence

It's a great question. So, for me, the very first place I start with everything, and how I look at my own life, and when I meet fellow Autistic Adults. My number one goal is always to avoid Autistic burnout. That is my guiding principle. And so, then I reverse engineer it from there. And a big reason why we go into burnout is often because of an abundance and overabundance of stress, of demands on us, and also not being in very good touch with ourselves. So, in order to do that, we need to create boundaries. Now. I want to emphasize that boundaries look different for everybody. Right? Not, you know, everybody always says that one Autist, you met one Autistic person, you met one Autistic person. Nobody speaks for all Autistic people, everybody's different. And that's totally true. And also, about boundaries. Now there's a lot of talk in the Autistic social media world about how having zero boundaries is this thing that's part of thisn“high masking late diagnosed Autistics world.” And indeed, that is something that is very common, but it is not only late I will diagnose Autistics who lack boundaries very often, right? Those of us who are diagnosed earlier in life also can lack boundaries. Something I speak about a lot on social media, and in my work is that each of us come from a different place of not having that. So, if you're diagnosed later in life, or identified later in life, the lack of boundaries you might have is through trying to fit into society. Not because you were told you were Autistic, but you were different. You were in, in various different parts of your life, othered, you want to fade. In order to fit in, you need to make your own boundaries down. While those of us who

were diagnosed earlier in life, you know, we might have gone through behavioral therapy, which there that the whole purpose in behavioral therapy is for the Autistic child to stop having boundaries in many ways and to behave in a certain way according to their parent's needs. Now, when you have no boundaries, when anybody is able to tell you how to act, and you have no agency of your own, you lose sight, and you lose connection to the inner being of yourself. And you don't know how to live for yourself. You don't know how to look out for yourself. You're gonna get anxious. You're gonna get stressed. And it's a downward spiral from there. Making boundaries, it's connected to all these other hot topics that we speak about in the Autism community. Boundaries are connected to masking, unmasking, advocacy, to self-care what all these things, they're all the same world for me. If you don't have boundaries, if you have no lack of boundaries, if you don't know how to say no to things, if you don't know how to advocate for yourself, right? You also think of self-advocacy, in terms of interpersonal relationships and situations is a form of making boundaries, right in saying this is what I am prepared to do. This is what I'm not prepared to do. This is what my sensory or emotional or material profile of myself can handle right now or not and speaking confidently. And that, that doesn't only affect that situation. That also you internalized that. Just like a lot of us internalize a lot of anti-autistic thoughts and ableism, right? We also internalize these ideas that we can make boundaries, and we are allowed to take boundaries, and we are allowed to take up space in the world on our terms.

Philip King-Lowe

Exactly. Yes, one of those things, like I say I spoken of is the fact that we get criticized for not having good boundaries, according to neurotypical standards, but yet neurotypicals constantly violate our boundaries. And even when we start to set boundaries, we have individuals who think nothing of crossing over those boundaries. For example, one of mine is that if you're

going to shake my hand, or even try to hug me to ask me first. Don't just put a handout, and don't just spread your arms, because they can mean various things, right? People have different meanings with us. So, I say, please ask me before you stretch out your hand to give me a handshake. But there are people of course, you know, from being in American society, there's this understanding, once somebody holds out a hand, you're, you're almost obliged to shake their hand.

Matthew Lawrence

You must shake it, or you are violating a “social rule.”

Philip King-Lowe

Exactly. Talking about stuff like that. Go ahead.

Matthew Lawrence

No, you are violating the various social rules. It's the other funny thing, right? We talked about Autism is always defined as this lack of social awareness. Whose social awareness are we talking about? Exactly, based on a neurotypical which is why it's called neurotypical or normal neuro normative, right? But these are not, and this is why a lot of the "therapy" that were subjected to either as children or as adults, including a lot of other Autism coaches, right? I'm an Autistic Autism Coach. Most Autism Coaches are not Autistic, and they "social skills" and how that you Philip should have to put out your hand and why it's good and why it "won't hurt you, and you're overreacting" essentially, gaslighting you.

Philip King-Lowe

Exactly, yep. Absolutely. Yeah. And one of one theory that I personally believe in, and, you know, feel free to add your own. But if we do not have good boundaries of our own, it is going to be very difficult for us to honor the boundaries of others. But just that's my philosophy, go ahead and say you agree or disagree, and then go from there.

Matthew Lawrence

I definitely agree. You know, it's interesting that you mentioned that, you know, when I was talking before, I was only mentioning how people violate our boundaries. And I and you know, it's super true that we also can violate other people's boundaries very often. But what I do think is important to make a distinction. And this is something that people ask me this all the time, they'll, what's the difference? Where's the line between me making a boundary and me violating somebody else's boundary? By the way, sometimes you're gonna have to boundaries that don't work, but we should not confuse boundaries and needs of Autistic people to preferences of neurotypical people.

Philip King-Lowe

Exactly. Yeah, yeah.

Matthew Lawrence

A neurotypical person has a legitimate need and a boundary they are allowed. I use this example all the time. Let's say that you and I are going to go out to a restaurant.

Philip King-Lowe

Right.

Matthew Lawrence

You Philip are very sensitive to fluorescent lights. You cannot sit in a restaurant that has fluorescent lights that can dysregulate you. That can cause all sorts of things going on in you and you have a boundary. I cannot go to a restaurant with overhead fluorescent lights. Totally. It's not a preference, because if you go you will have to recover for three or four days after. You will be physically sick. Hey, that is a legitimate boundary. Maybe I have, maybe we're in a town where there's only one restaurant. And my thing that I need, let's say, I am a vegan, and I can only eat at a vegan restaurant, and I cannot eat anywhere else, or you know, maybe veganism. And you could say maybe it's a preference. No, that is my lifestyle. That is my thing. That is my boundary. I have heard that boundary, maybe it's because I'm allergic to certain things, maybe because I can't eat other things. Maybe it's somebody who has a religious dietary requirement. You can both have legitimate boundaries, and sometimes your boundaries aren't going to meet up and you can agree that you know what this relationship or this us going to dinner in that time isn't gonna work. Which is very different than somebody who says, well Philip, I really like burgers. And that's my favorite burger there. And that's what I want to eat. And I don't care if that fluorescent light is there, I want to go there, those are very different, and you're not violating that person's boundary, your boundary doesn't coincide with their preference, very different than the example of having somebody with a dietary restriction. And that is the only restaurant, and it is okay for people not to have boundaries that work all the time. That's life.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah, yeah. And what you're talking about is, is how to balance boundaries between two different Autistic people. And we know we know that our sensory needs are our, whatever those needs are, as far as sound, lighting, smells, tastes, whatever those things are going to be, they're going to be different between us. And so, and often times, you know, trying to, you know, compromise, or, or, or talk through those, it's going to take a little bit more work. You were just talking about boundaries, with regards to burnout, and other and other matters. Um, you know, Becca Lory Hector, one of my great guests, and I, we have talked about setting boundaries for yourself. For example, if you happen to be on one on a social media, and the post after post is just going by you it's negative, it's feeding negative energy into you, yes, you can create a boundary for yourself that you're only going to sit there say, watch 10 minutes of it, and then turn that thing off for the rest of the day. You can make those decisions. I also happen to believe you can make decisions about who is a safe person for you to be around, and who quite, frankly, is not. It is okay for us Autistics to have those boundaries.

Matthew Lawrence

Absolutely. And this is, this is a big part of my work is coming up with who those safe people are, and how to create them. And you know, people often say, but you know, I know this person is not good for me. I know this person is violating my boundaries all the time. They may even be they might be making fun of me. they might be belittling me. They might be making comments about my Autistic traits. They might make fun of me at work because I'm playing with my stim toy and wearing my headphones. And they're always putting me down. They're always dysregulated me; I tell them that don't write me a text message after this hour. They write. How do I

make a boundary with somebody like that? And I they might you might consider them your friend, maybe a family member? How do you do it? And the reality is, unfortunately, that very often when you start making boundaries, and you're the type of person who's never made boundaries ever in your life, yeah, people are going to push back against it. They're not going to like it. They will not like that change. They might even call you self-centered for trying to make a boundary. Why did what's different now? Why are you becoming so into yourself? Who do you think you are? And then you're gonna instantly retreat again. Boundaries is also standing your ground of why you are doing something. And just because you speak from a logical standpoint very often doesn't mean the other side is going to understand. That's the difference between two Autistic people and an Autistic person or an allistic person. Well, you and I, in that in the example of the restaurant, we might not be able to go eat at that restaurant. But you and I can talk about it, I can understand and respect your boundary, you can understand or respect mine. And we come up with a new thing. You mentioned going out as friends. I live in Paris, and we have a group of Autistic people in Paris, and we get together every other week. And everybody has different dietary things and different texture things and sound things. Right? So, we all listen to each other. And we figure out solutions and very often that means going to somebody's house and cooking or bringing something in or bringing different things and it's great and everybody understands because we're all while we don't necessarily all agree on the same thing or not even agree but we all have different needs. We respect the needs, understand because we have our own needs. And we can empathize with that and that communication. Well, when you do that with somebody who doesn't understand Autistic people or is even actively and openly hostile to an Autistic person having needs, because they're so used to having this Autistic friend or family member who they can or coworker who they can push around and talk to, they are not going to like it, then there's an extra element to that. And that, you know, there's a lot of studies out there. And they talked to talk about in Devon Price's book and

Hannah Louise Belcher's book about how allistic people can recognize Autistic people without necessarily knowing that we are Autistic, we get to speak, yeah, they're not gonna like when somebody who they perceive as less than start saying, I need to do this. They are not liking it. But that doesn't mean that we stop. And it's really important to internalize it, you have a right to make boundaries that are healthy for yourself, you are allowed to care about yourself.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah, absolutely. And that's exactly what this is about.

After this next commercial break, Matthew will talk about how the many unspoken rules can present barriers for Autistics creating our boundaries. Matthew will also talk about how creating good boundaries helps us manage our needs as an important means of self-advocacy.

Commercial Break II

Logo Shop Ad

Visit the Logo Shop on todaysautisticmoment.com to buy a 16oz drinking cup and/or a lapel pin with the logo of Today's Autistic Moment on them.

Enjoy your favorite beverage in a clear cup while you tell others about how much you are enjoying Today's Autistic Moment. Put the lapel pin on your jacket, shirt, blouse, or gym bag to help start a conversation about the important work that Today's Autistic Moment is doing for Autistic Adults and their caregivers.

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Thank you for listening to Today's Autistic Moment.

Segment 3

Philip King-Lowe

We are talking about these boundaries, that that is about, you know, we're talking about a lot of the pushback we get when we create boundaries. I myself have, have had some of that. I mean, you know, sometimes, you know, one of those boundaries is creating yourself a safe space and saying, This is my safe space, when I've got the door closed, don't knock, don't leave me alone, leave me alone, until I come out and start to talk to you. Naturally, someone's gonna say, "Well, you are kind of rude." Well, no, the thing is, I am trying to regulate myself so that I can socialize with you in a in a less anxious way, or whatever. You know, and the thing is, is our boundaries are our boundaries. And the thing is, like I say, if we don't set them for ourselves, it's going to be hard for us to ask others to respect them. And let me also add, before you start talking, you know, it is our right to decide when we when a boundary is needed. And even when it is not needed. I don't got to tell you that how many times before we were

diagnosed, or since we were diagnosed, we encountered a situation where there was an unspoken social rule, and we accidentally stepped over it. I get to I've heard that I've been on the receiving end of that one all the time. So, it's almost like we can't set our boundaries because of their unspoken rules.

Matthew Lawrence

"We can't set our boundaries".

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah. I mean, that's the attitude I've gotten. What about you?

Matthew Lawrence

The funny thing with these unspoken rules, right? They're unspoken. When we ask about them, we're belittled for them, even when we're even when they're obviously stated to us. It doesn't necessarily click, and it doesn't. And you can explain it over and over. And there's a lot of people who are very good at reading the social rules and flowing along with that. But you know, that's a skill and not all of us have that skill. Right, right. You know, I'll give you an example of that, right? Something that I did in a former workplace of mine, I was constantly told that I was loud. And I'm sure a lot of your listeners will, that'll resonate with. Autistic people are often told that we are loud. And I couldn't take have hearing that anymore. I could not take hearing that anymore. And I said why everybody here is talking, everybody is speaking at the same decibel level here. I am not speaking any louder than anybody else. And if I am, it might be in fact, because I have a lot of other sensory stuff going on. And I don't even hear that my own voice. I don't hear it. I don't even know that I'm loud. When you keep telling me day after day

after day, I don't accept that. And this is not for you to accept or not to accept that. This is you. These are the rules that you have to speak at an acceptable level. What does that mean an acceptable level? Yeah, what does that mean exactly?

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about. I mean, I've been in my situations where people have been doing things or whatever. And this, quite frankly, is one of the reasons why I have some of the boundaries that I do with regards do handshakes or, you know, I've also learned that standing there with your art with your arms open can mean a hug. Or it can also mean, what's going on? Yeah, like what? Yeah, yeah. So, you know, in an atmosphere where someone's saying what, and I misunderstood, you know, the way I the way, the reason I've created my boundaries is because of how many times I have interpreted what's going on around me only to discover that I was the one that got it wrong. So rather than me be the one to push someone else's rule, I will just create my own. I mean, that's totally reasonable, don't you think?

Matthew Lawrence

Yeah, totally reasonable. I have a similar thing with phone calls. I get very nervous with the phone ringing. And I asked the people that are close to me that before you call me, please send me a message. I also don't like having messages at certain times of the day when I'm decompressing, or I need to regulate. And I have certain I have a meditation practice that I do. Right? And I ask the people that are close to me to not write me during that time. So often people will write messages and ask, can I call that's all good, because if I have a call, I get very nervous. Now, I what I tried to do is that

I also recognize that other people also have things going on in the day. And I try to also ask people, Hey, is it convenient for you to talk right now? Right, as opposed to just assuming that I can ask a bunch of questions or anything. Now, that's a big issue for Autistic people, and in the digital age is that everything is so connected, we just write email on Twitter or LinkedIn, people just send each other DMS. And they ask, and they talk and at any time, it's always. And so, I found that with my own boundaries that I created for myself, with asking people to respect the times and the way of communicating with me, I also then able to communicate with others at that same level, and they don't even I don't even know that they have that bound. They don't even have that boundary, but find it so much nicer, because actually, there is this concept of not just invading somebody's personal space to ask questions, or talk or do whatever, right?

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah. Yeah, this is a great, great spot for me to walk into my third question, which is always, what steps should Autistic Adults and our supporters take to advocate for our needs, as far as boundaries are concerned? You know, and this is a bit of a, this is a tricky one, I think. You know, because communicating our boundaries to others it can be it can be tricky. So, maybe share with us some, some ways that you have found helpful, or, and successful, if you will, about communicating your boundaries to others. So go ahead.

Matthew Lawrence

So, there's two tricky parts, I would even say, even before community, so there's the communicate, there's three parts. First things that you need to know what your needs are. That's not super clear to everybody. Right?

Especially for those who are kind of newly identified, right, we're just starting to understand that they're even Autistic, You don't necessarily even know what your needs are. You might not even know that you need to have volume at a certain level, or the lights need to be at a certain level, or that you can't be bothered or not bothered, but you can't speak, or you need alone time at certain times. You might need more social time, you might need less social time alone time, you might need a certain type of support, and you don't even know what it is. First, you need to figure out what your needs are. Right? Second, you understand what your needs are. You can say, Okay, I know what my boundaries are. I know what I need. How am I going to advocate for what I need? So, let's use the example again. Give me an example of a boundary or need, let's think together. Everyday life for a lot of people.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah. Oh, boy. You asked an open-ended question. That's the problem.

Matthew Lawrence

So let me break it down. We'll take one from my life. Okay, go ahead. That can be that can be a good thing. So, let's say we all have friends, and we all have that one friend, who is always asking at any hour of the day for you, to Can you do this for me? Can you do that for me? Can you help me with Google this for me? Can you look at that you proofread this paper? Can you proofread this email? Can you pick me up at the airport? We always have a friend who is always depending on us. For some might even preferred just for advice, right? Everybody has something but we all have a friend, or a family member or somebody who is always who thinks that they own our time. Right, right. Maybe not even a friend, maybe, maybe when you work

with our manager, somebody who thinks you have on time. And you know that, I don't know, I think for a lot of us, we have a maximum amount of things that we can do in a day. Right. And it's not that we don't want to help our friend or our team, or our family or our, our coworkers, right. But there's a certain amount of time, and there's time and place for everything. So, I'm going to use an example from my life. I have a friend, and this friend needs a lot of advice all the time. And I actually genuinely want to help my friend. Right. But I know that I have from 7pm until 10pm I need time by myself. Right? That's the time where I go out with my dog. That's the time where I prepare my dinner. That's the time I prepare to get ready for bed. I'm going to bed with primer right preparations that I have. And I have a whole routine. Okay, yeah. And my friend always wants to talk during those hours. And so, what I told my friend, I said, Hey, this during these hours, I cannot talk. Please don't write me. Please don't call me. I know that's going to be very hard for you. But that is my boundary. And so, explaining what it is and why and I don't think we should always have to explain why people right because definitely we need it. It should be enough. But if it's a friend, you can explain it good. Use the heartstrings. And I told this to my friend. And my friend said, okay, but then stopped doing it continue or rather continued after a few days of not writing me during that time, would write me during that time. And this is a good now fun example to what we were speaking out before. I obviously didn't do that well enough. I didn't explain enough. I didn't explain why that's important to me enough. And as a friend, there's a there's a relationship aspect to it. And so, what I started doing is I stopped answering. I ignored it completely. Okay. And then that created to my friend, this feeling of abandonment. And then my friend, then you're know you have the other boundary coming back. I understand that you are unavailable. But can you do me? Show me acknowledge that you saw my message? Otherwise, I might go into a panic. Tough call.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah.

Matthew Lawrence

To reiterate how this is why. So, we know we came to in the end. So, I have a friend has a bad eye friend has a need serious need. Also, Autistic? Right? Yeah, rejection dysphoria that I am not going to get into a conversation. I am going to send an emoji. I got it and put it on the side.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah. Or you can just you can just, you know, just a reminder, I'm not available right now, I will get back to you say what would be a good time to get back to you, you can set an appointment. There's nothing wrong with that.

Matthew Lawrence

No, exactly, in other cases, in my specific case, that wasn't it. But if you can come up with a plan to go from there. What are your boundaries? So, they speak more generally about what we really want to talk about is how do we make healthy boundaries is that you need to be extremely clear. So, number one is that you need to understand your needs. You need to know what you need, not what you want, not what you prefer what you need. Then you need to communicate your need very clearly to the other to the person who's supporting you to the person who's violating the boundary of the person you need to make the boundary with might be what work, make a clear balance. This is my requirement. This is a need for my health. Right. That's step two. Step three is that pushback. You're usually gonna get a pushback. And then this is the hardest part I think Philip, is standing your ground. Because

often because so many of us deal with a lot of trauma and rejection issues. When somebody pushes back against our boundary. A lot of us will give up and we'll go Yeah. Or maybe I shouldn't have made that boundary maybe I don't deserve to make the boundary maybe it's not really a need maybe just a preference. I can get on with it. It's okay. No. You are legitimate, your need is legitimate, and that's when you have to get more firm. And you may even have to be a bit more forceful. And you can't be afraid of standing your ground. And that doesn't mean to be angry doesn't mean to be violent. Right? A lot of people think boundaries is just doing whatever you want. That is not what a boundary is.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah, I think I would like to put forth a different word there. Instead of being rude or even being angry, you there is being assertive. Yes, exactly. You know, being assertive.

Matthew Lawrence

Not being mean. It's about being assertive. Yeah, forceful, maybe isn't a great word. Assertive. Yeah, you are confident in what you're saying and why you need it. I need my three hours of digital detox, because this is how I survive. This is my mental health. And I am not willing to risk my mental health and my physical health and for anything besides an emergency. And you need to respect that. And if you don't respect that, I am sorry. But that is how it is.

Philip King-Lowe

Right. Yeah. And, and I mean, here's another boundary. So, here's another suggestion, sometimes, let's say somebody does call when they're not supposed to, you can say, I can give you exactly 10 minutes only after that we need to move, we need to move this to another time. I mean, it is your choice. But you know, the thing is, is that sometimes you need to, if you're looking for a little compromise, you compromise for yourself or and them. But you also need to sometimes remember, just a reminder that, you know, I did say that between seven o'clock and 10 o'clock, that I really can't talk. So, this is the last time I may be giving you that 10 minutes. Yeah, you know, I mean, you do have the right to decide that. You also have a right to make very clear, you know, I had I had an individual that was constantly contacting me on a social media network. And he broke our conversations and wandered off several times. And so eventually, I told him, I just need to let you know that that's just something I can't deal with. So, I said the very next time that you do that, that will be the last time we will converse. Yeah, you know, and sure enough, that's what he did. And I've kept that, you know, I mean, sometimes you do have to be that assertive, and you also have to be that disciplined with yourself.

After this final commercial break, Matthew will talk about his career as an Autistic Coach, including about his many virtual meetings and opportunities for Autistics to get the social supports we need. Immediately following that is Today's Autistic Community Bulletin Board.

Commercial Break III

4Th of July PSA

July 4th is not the best day for many Autistics and other Neurodivergent people and individuals with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The loud sound of the fireworks exploding can be a terrible trigger for the sensory processing needs of many such individuals. If you are someone who is affected by the sound of fireworks exploding; wear your noise cancelling head phones with or without music playing to decrease the sound of the fireworks. I also recommend finding a sensory safe space where you can fidget or do something you enjoy to distract you. If you are a caregiver of an Autistic person of any age who is affected by such sounds, please do not force them to attend the fireworks, as the brightness of the lights and the loud noise from them can be painful and can set their sensory processing input on overload. Let them wear their noise cancelling headphones without saying negative things to those who react to these sounds. They are not pretending, nor do they need to be made to feel that they are doing anything wrong.

Another concern is for many Neurodivergents who are hyposensitive (as in they need more sensory stimulation before they feel anything). Many of them might not be able to detect when a grill is too hot to put their hands near it. It is best that they not be near or use things that could be harmful to them without some kind of supervised assistance.

Happy Independence Day from Today's Autistic Moment.

Future Shows

On July 16th, Michelle Markman will return to Today's Autistic Moment for *Self-Care During Emotional Avalanches*. One experience most Autistics have had is emotional avalanches. You feel really happy one minute, then the next, something happens and your emotions avalanche and take all your

happiness with them. Michelle will join me to talk about some great self-care tips for Autistics in those emotional avalanche moments.

On August 6th, Becca Lory Hector, Carole Jean Whittington, and Dr. Scott Frasard will join me for *Self-Care After Autistic Diagnosis/Identification*. If you or someone you know has just been self-identified or diagnosed by a professional, this episode is especially for you. Getting an Autism diagnosis changes your life. If you are late identified because you are over 30, 40, 50 or 60 years old, it changes your entire life history. You may feel angry, sad, happy, grieve, or do all of these at once or over time. Your perception of yourself will change. Other's perception of you will change. How do you take care of yourself during this time of incredible change? Listen to Becca, Carole, Scott, and myself as we share our stories and advice to help you at this most crucial time in your life.

Check out the Future Shows page on todaysautisticmoment.com for all upcoming shows.

Do you have any topic ideas for future episodes of Today's Autistic Moment? Go to the Contact Us page on todaysautisticmoment.com and submit your topic suggestions. Go to the page for Be My Guest to submit a Guest Intake Form if you would like to be a guest.

Thank you for listening to Today's Autistic Moment.

Segment 4

Philip King-Lowe

Um, actually, you said one, one magic word that I want to I want to use as we prepare to bring this to our close, but you just said the word routine. Creating a boundary about your routines. Especially where we live in a world that can be extremely unpredictable. Something's going to happen. That's completely unpredictable. And it's going to go past your boundaries. You know, let's talk a little bit about that. Because that's that that is a great, I could make a whole show about that one just by itself. But let's just give a little snippet about that particular one, go ahead.

Matthew Lawrence

Well, you know, for those who have worked with me before, you'll smile, because I use this analogy very often. In my former career, before I became a full time Autistic Autism Coach, I worked in the built environment. And I became familiar with a construction method that's used. And in the Far East, where when they're building buildings, they use bamboo scaffolding. And not steal. Do you know, why? No. So bamboo is super strong, not quite as strong as steel, but it's much more flexible. And with the high winds, it sways a little bit. So, I tried to look at and that's how I applied this to my entire life. And it's fun, you know, I'm also ADHD. So, it's fun that I like this visual thing, that it's a structure a solid structure that also sways with the wind that you can't control. But what does that mean? That I try to approach

life and all of my routines and I already pre plan that things are gonna go wrong part of my routine is that buffer. I do that and everything in my life. Really practical examples. I'm a coach. So, I work on timeframes. Every appointment I have has a 25-minute buffer between before anyone can ever make another one because I know things will go over time. Now going to bed I mentioned before my bed routine, right? And often I talk to people about sleep. It's one of my big topics of managing sleeps, I think sleep is a really important thing, if not the most important thing for self-regulation for Autistic people. And they go, Oh, how can I make a routine? I sometimes I go to sleep at ten. Sometimes I go to sleep at four in the morning, how can you do that go great. That happens to me too, you can still make a routine, that routine, that three-hour block that can start at nine that can start at three, but you still have the same routine. And it can change based on all sorts of factors. Right. Build something, knowing that it's going to be flexible. And the idea is that you go into life. And I want everyone to walk around, like a walking meditation, of thinking of intention and what you are doing, right, a lot of us not all of us, but a lot of us thrive on being able to plan and lists and things of this sort. I like to go into stuff already planning that something will go wrong. And then something is going to change. I go when I go to a restaurant, I'm one of these people, I don't know if you're like this as well, Philip, I cannot go to a new restaurant. And I haven't reviewed the menu in depth a few times from multiple sources, whether it's the website, whether it's Yelp, Google, I cross reference them, right to see to make sure I know what's going in there, and what's going to be there. And I know that if there's something that's not there, that I could have a meltdown, if I'm really looking forward to it, right? And it's something I'm really excited about. I know that and that's happened to me many times in my life. So, I go in there and I know something is gonna go wrong, I come up with three things that I'm going to get at that restaurant. And hopefully, all three aren't going to be maxed out. But I like to prepare, I don't it sounds negative to say prepare for the worst but prepare for the fact that life doesn't always go the way you want. You can't control everything. And we

need to be aware of that, unfortunately. And in my world, that wouldn't be the case. But I try to build that already into my routine that there's going to be these hiccups.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah. Excuse me everybody. Yeah, there's a phrase I do like to use, it's called plan for plan for the best prepare for the worst, just what I like to say. And sometimes, there are routines that get broken that are easily easier to deal with and others. You know, for me, I mean, a change of routine is, you know, we live in a condo here, and suddenly they're working on something in the condo, and that's going to set my sensory processing, well, that's a little bit more complicated. Keep your headphones on, keep your keep your fridges or stims around and just make sure you've got stuff that you can hold on to yourself.

Matthew Lawrence

For that I have an escape plan, as I have a lot of work that happened on my street and I have a variety of locations where I know that I can walk to within a five minute like, right house where I can hide.

Philip King-Lowe

Right. Yeah. Yeah. Well, Matthew, before we close this out, um, you know, you are known as Matthew, the #ActuallyAutisticCoach, and you have your Autism Self Groups, and you also have your Circle Discussions and other events coming up, share with our audience some of what you're doing. And

also let them know a little bit about how they can become part they can become active with these things. Go ahead.

Matthew Lawrence

Sure. So, I'm a I'm an Autistic Autism Coach. So, helping people plan, you know, general life stuff and education about Autism, and their careers in general wellbeing self-help, self-care. But the main part of my work is I run peer groups, workshops for Autistic people. I believe that Autistic people getting together in groups and talking about their experiences, affirming our experiences, sharing, listening, learning from each other, is the most powerful experience that there can be for an Autistic person. It's a life changer for me. And so, I lead a bunch of different kinds of groups. So, I run every month I run anywhere between 10 to 15, free groups, and various different topics for different groups of people and different ages and different parts of the world just to get together and share their experiences. And in addition to that, I run five- and seven-week workshops, and in for people who are ADHD and Autistic, those who are late identified in life, those who are newly identified in life as Autistic and want to connect with others who are also and for people who want to learn more about self-advocacy, boundary making on mass skiing these kinds of things for everybody. And over those five to seven weeks, we get together. Five, six Autistic people we talk every day in a chat we meet every week on Zoom, zoom, that's super accessible for Autistic people, you can be on camera, you can be off camera, you can use chat, you can use audio, you can still play with your dogs. It's a lot of fun. Not like locked down zooms. And we grow as we build a little community. What's amazing, I've done over 150 of these groups now. And free group stays active people stay in touch, they get together, some people continue going on and on and on and form real friendships also. And it's really, really powerful stuff. So, I have a bunch of those running this summer, you can find out on my website,

theautisticcoach.com. And also, again, 10 to 15 different free groups every month. And I just want to make one last statement about boundaries. If that's okay, Philip. Something it's really important for me is that you are allowed to make boundaries. And that I think is even before like understanding your needs. I want you to know, because a lot of people will tell you that you don't deserve to make boundaries. Need to Be thankful that anybody talks to you that anyone is your friend, or that you deserve love. You deserve love and friendship and companionship and self-respect because you are alive. And you are allowed to make boundaries, and you are worth it. And you are allowed to take up space in this world. And you are allowed to live your life to the fullest that you want to live your life, and nobody can take that away from you. Because a lot of us we can't make boundaries, because we don't think we deserve it. And I know it sounds cliche to say you deserve to have your best life. But you know what? I don't care because a lot of us don't know that. And we need to be told it. So, I want everyone listening to this. You are allowed to state your boundaries, you are allowed to live a healthy, happy life. And nobody can take that away from you. And anybody who does is wrong. And you are allowed to stand up for yourself. You were allowed to say, I'm alive. I am worth it. I need to do this for myself. And that is that.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah, yeah, no, no, you are allowed to do your own self-care. In fact, it's imperative that you do on I want to direct everyone to my Adult Autism Resources Links page. And if you scroll down, you will see the #Actually Autistic Coach, that will take you to Matthew's website so that you can access it and look around and check out some of the things that Matthew has here. So please feel free if you have any. You want to find that that website along with a lot of others that you can connect to please go to todaysautisticmoment.com and look up the Adult Autism Resources Links

page. And that's where you will find him. Matthew, thank you so much for this. You know, this has been a great conversation. And I like your bluntness. I think that I think that we need to exercise some bluntness once in a while. And the thing is, is that when we're talking about self-care, especially with boundaries, it's easy to because a lot of us like to be people pleasers. And believe me, I know exactly what you're talking about you want to be at the same time. I always say this, you need to take care of yourself. And I know that it's really difficult in so many places to get an actual diagnosis or identification. Yet, I also have to stress the point that it is difficult for you to advocate for something you do not know about. So, I would dare say that if you think you could be Autistic, of course, you can contact Matthew, and others and kind of ask your questions.

Matthew Lawrence

I have a group for people exploring the idea that they might be Autistic to ask good questions.

Philip King-Lowe

Yeah, absolutely. Great. I'm so glad you said that Matthew. Yeah, because we know Yeah, we know how difficult it is. And even split even especially here in the US where we have health insurance companies that won't pay for adults to get diagnosed, let alone children. So, you know, we are aware that Matthew, thank you so much for this time, and you can be assured that I will be contacting you again in the future.

Matthew Lawrence

Looking forward to coming on again. And I really appreciate you for giving me this platform to talk about boundaries and living a healthy life. Because I think we really, really deserve to live the best that we can. And yes, that's blunt, but that's what I believe. And I hope that everybody goes out there and makes a healthy boundary today.

Philip King-Lowe

Great thank you so much Matthew.

Matthew Lawrence

Thank you, Philip.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Today's Autistic Community Bulletin Board

All of these events with their links can be found at
todaysautisticmoment.com/bulletinboard

Join The Autism Society of Minnesota for their Adult Coffee Club. The next Coffee Clubs will be on Tuesday nights from 5pm to 7pm at Dogwood Coffee in St. Paul on July 11th, July 25th, August 8th, and August 22nd. Coffee

Club meetings will be at the Milkweed Café in Minneapolis on July 17th, and August 14th from 5pm to 7pm. Please RSVP at ausm.org.

Understanding Autism virtual classes will be offered by The Autism Society of Minnesota. These classes are perfect for Autistic individuals, caregivers, those who want to understand the basics of Autism and support Autistic people. Classes will be on August 21st from 2pm to 4pm. Classes are free of charge, but you must register to attend.

For more information including summer recreation and sensory friendly activities at The Autism Society of Minnesota go to ausm.org

Matthew the #ActuallyAutistic Coach has room in his Finding Your Autistic Self Group Coaching Groups. In the groups, participants learn about unmasking strategies, coping tools, burnout & post-burnout support and much more. Go to autisticcoach.com and click on Autism Groups for more information. While visiting Matthew's website, be sure to check out the Free Autistic Discussion Circles for Autistics of various age groups, careers, students, and ethnic groups.

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Thank you for listening to Today's Autistic Moment: A Podcast for Autistic Adults by An Autistic Adult.

May you have an Autistically Amazing day.