



## AUTISM CLASSROOM RESOURCES PODCAST, EPISODE 20 YOU NEED TO TAKE A BREAK

URL: <http://autismclassroomresources.com/episode20>

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. The podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development. I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve. For more than 20 years. I've worn lots of hats in special education, but my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research based practices in a practical way in your classroom to make your job easier and more effective.

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. I am Christine Reeve and I'm excited that you're joining us today because I have a very special episode for you that I have drawn specifically from one of the two podcasts that are part of the Special Educator Academy.

The Special Educator Academy is designed to provide a place for connection for special educators who often feel alone, while also providing tools and training for implementing and solving problems in their classroom. And so we have two podcasts in the Academy. One is about more topic-based strategies, and I'll have an episode from that in our next episode. But this one comes from our Monday Morning Reflections, which began as a way to do some episodes that really focused on self-care, leadership, dealing with other people on the job, those non-educational things that happen in education.

And this particular episode is Episode 11 and it focuses on the importance of making sure that you're taking a break during school breaks. I thought it would be very timely if you're listening to this at the time that it's published. And I find that a lot of us know that self-care is important, but sometimes



we forget it and we think that we can ignore it. Sometimes we just need somebody to give us that reminder and that permission that it really is okay, and that actually will make you a better teacher. So that's what this episode really focuses on, is how taking a break during school breaks can help to make you a much better teacher as well as a happier teacher.

So I hope that you enjoy. If you would like to know more about the Special Educator Academy, just go to [specialeducatoracademy.com](http://specialeducatoracademy.com) and I will put that link in the show notes. Just a couple of housekeeping things. This original podcast was recorded for the summer, so you'll hear me referring to that, but it applies to all different breaks that we take during the school year, including the winter break. If you're listening to it right after it was recorded. I think it will still resonate with you and give you some good thoughts and ideas about why you should take time for yourself over the break, so let's get started.

And today I want to talk about 5 reasons why you should be taking a break this summer. I know that it is very hard to take a break whether you are listening to this in June when it's recorded or whether you are listening to this during December, right before winter break.

Regardless of the time that you have off, I think it's really important to remember how taking a break actually makes you a better educator rather than a behind educator. Which is what I think we all kind of think. So that's what I'm going to talk about today and I think you should do it without feeling guilty.

So there's 5 reasons why you shouldn't feel guilty that you are taking a break. One is because taking a break means that you are making time for what's really important. Your job, whether you think of it as your vocation,



your career, or just your job, is important. What you do is definitely important, but you need to have other things in your life that are as important or more important. For me and many of us family is more important. Married or single, parents or not, we all have loved ones who deserve 100% of our attention. Even when they know how much our work means for the students and their families, they still need us to make time for them and to be present in the moment.

In the end it's those everyday thoughts that you spent with your parents when they were older that you are going to miss later on. They're not the big things so much as the, "I liked having coffee with her on Saturday morning." Those are the things that you're going to remember from a friendship, from a family relationship, regardless of what it is. So make sure that you're making time for what's really important, but also that you are creating things that are as important or more important than your job. That you're not so wrapped up in your job that if something were to go wrong there, everything is bad.

Number 2, taking a break recharges your batteries, and I know that that is a real cliché, but I also know that it's true. If you're going to keep going at the speed that you go, I know from our community, in your classrooms, then your batteries are eventually going to give out. And the longer term ... This is kind of the personal version of the advice I give about scheduling classrooms. When I talk about scheduling classrooms and writing zoning plans, I always make a big point about the fact that everyone needs to take a break every day. Everyone needs to have a break in their schedule because otherwise you take the break, but because it wasn't planned, you're still standing there with the kids and they think that you're attending to them but your brain is not. The same is true with breaks from school. You have to



take that break in order to make sure that in the long term you are going to be there and present for your job as well.

Another reason, number three, is perspective. It's really easy to get caught up in the day to day activity of your classroom and completely lose your perspective on the big picture. It keeps you from seeing the progress that your students have made, how far your classroom has come. And you know, we remember the tantrum that happened this afternoon, but we forget that we used to have three of those every day and now maybe we have one a week. We're getting frustrated because he's only using two-word utterances, but we forget that when he started, he rarely used one word.

So taking a break lets you step away and get a bigger view to get perspective. It gives you the energy to continue to tackle the challenging behaviors and ignore the tantrum so that you can manage them. It reminds you of why you do this and how important it is. And that is no small thing. That is a really important component.

Number 4, taking a break actually promotes creativity. You need creativity, not for your art time, but you need creativity because that's what allows you to solve problems well. And so you know how when you're always trying to remember something that you really need to remember, the more that you try, the harder it is. When you forget what you wanted to say to somebody, the more that you try to think of it, the less likely it is that you'll remember, but in the middle of the next conversation it'll come back to you. Creativity is very similar. We know that teaching is a science and we know a lot about what works and what doesn't work, but a huge part of your actual job is figuring out how to take that scientific information and identify the individual needs of your students and then figure out how to put them together. And that takes creativity.



Getting away and leaving it behind gives your mind time to recharge and reset. Some of my best ideas, some of my most creative ideas or creative problem-solving strategies have come when my mind is disconnected from work, when I'm driving down the highway. I have a very hard time turning my brain off and my sister always laughs at me because apparently my father was the same way, she'll say it's just always going. But it's only when I get in a car and don't have anything to do and I have to drive it, that's when my brain is free to wander and really start to explore without me always trying to force it to go in certain directions.

It's hard for me to remember that I have to do that and I have a tendency to look at things like going to the theater as, "Oh, I don't want to go. I have so much work to do." But I know in the end my work will actually be better if I go. I always remember that when I go and afterwards when my brain is kind of refreshed. So it really helps to walk away from things and get that perspective, but also just to give your brain some downtime to really do its work.

And finally, number 5 is that taking a break prevents burnout. We know how high the burnout rate is in education in general and how much higher it is in special education. And taking a break means extending the time that you can do your job effectively. So when you're feeling guilty and you're feeling like, "Oh, but I have so much work to do and that's what I should be focusing on," you need to make sure that you remember that you are extending the life of you're being able to do this job by taking the break and giving yourself that leeway. Because you're not going to burn out as fast and you're not going to have to leave and find a different career.

So if you have to have work that you have to do over the summer, which we all know we want to get it done, then set aside time when you're planning



to take time for just you and your family. Put the work away where you can't see it. Dedicate yourself to being in the moment with them. Then schedule a day, maybe you have one day a week over the summer that you work or maybe you say, "I'm going to take all of the month of June off and I will start working again in July." Or things like that. That way it really helps if you schedule at the time that you're going to work and give yourself a deadline, because the amount of work that you have will always expand to meet the amount of time that you have. If you have a deadline you will work more efficiently and more effectively.

I would love to hear how you are taking a break. What kinds of things you've done for yourself either this week, this weekend, the summer that are giving you that perspective, that brain break. That time off to really rejuvenate and be able to come back afterwards with a refreshed outlook and perspective.

So in the Special Educator Academy I would have folks go to our community to share their experiences over break but I would really love to hear what you are doing as well. So hop on over to our free Facebook group at [specialeducatorsconnection.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatorsconnection) and I would love to hear from you about what you're doing over break to take some time off from work.

If you're interested in learning more about the Special Educator Academy, you can find everything at [specialeducatoracademy.com](https://www.specialeducatoracademy.com). I will put both those links in the show notes for you as well.

Thanks for tuning in. I hope you are having a wonderful winter break if you're listening to this when it was recorded. I hope that you are taking time for yourself, regardless of when you are listening to it, and I hope that you'll join me again next week for another episode.