

# ACR 199 FINAL

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## SPEAKERS

Veronica

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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 back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. I'm Dr. Christine Reeve, I'm your host, and you are listening to Episode 199. I cannot believe I have done almost 200 podcasts. So I have something special for you next week.

I'm going to start this week with a story. I have a very good friend who has an adult son with autism. And she is an autism professional. And one of the things that I think makes her real, for lack of a better word, and one of the things that always stands out to me is that when she's training about autism, she is a lot like me. And she is training about how to teach students to be independent, how we shouldn't be helping them too much, all the kinds of things that a lot of us have talked about in terms of getting a student to be where they can do things on their own, and don't need somebody hanging around helping them with every little step.

And yet there is her adult son. Her adult son has pretty severe autism, as well as intellectual disabilities and some mental health issues. But he's a really, really cool guy. And one of the things that never ceases to amaze me is how much more independent he is with other people than he is with his mom. And the part that I think amazes other people is how much his mom helps him with things that we've seen him do independently.

So we used to have folks who would come and work with him at the center I used to work at and they would literally come back and tell her, he got dressed to go swimming today. And she's like, No, he didn't. They're like no, really he did. He did all of it by himself. She's like, No, you didn't. And for a

long time, she didn't believe us. We actually started hiding her so that she could see him do things independently that he wouldn't as soon as he saw her.

This is a guy who loves cheeseburgers. And he's sitting there with me happy as can be eating his cheeseburger all by himself. We're just having a chat. His mom walks in the room, and he puts it down. And you say, Hey, eat your cheeseburger. "Can't." Like you were just eating it, you want to eat it? "No."

And he is waiting. And he will sit there as long as his mom's in the room and not eat. And at times, eventually his mother will come over and feed him even though we know that he can eat independently all by himself.

Now, why am I telling you this story? I am not telling you the story just shame my friend. I am not telling you this story with any kind of judgment. Because I will also tell you a story later today about me and my family and my sister with autism and how that plays out.

I'm telling you the story to let you know that even the best professionals among us often are different with our own family members than we are with those students that we're teaching. And I think that's a really important thing to recognize.

And so today, I want to talk about some hard truths. Whether you are a parent who is working with building relationship with a teacher, or teacher building relationship with a parent, I want to talk about some of the hard truths that we don't always talk about in terms of understanding the perspective of the different people that are involved in the students life.

Sometimes we tend to have a little bit of judgment about whether someone is babying him too much or things like that. I've seen it go both ways - parent to teacher and teacher to parent. It's not exclusive to one group, trust me. And when I see that, I always think to myself, this is an issue of the difficulty of perspective. And the fact that our students often behave in different ways with different people. So that is what we're going to focus on today. I hope you'll stick with me to talk about some of these hard facts. And with that, let's get started.

Okay, so given that example, I want you to understand that we don't want to think about how someone else is interacting with the student as being wrong. It's just that the settings, school versus home, have different characteristics and different expectations. And the people interacting with the individual on the spectrum, have different relationships with them, and a different history with them.

My guy that I was talking about in the introduction, is likely to revert to this helpless behavior when his mom comes in, because he has a lifelong history of mom helping him. And in the area of eating,

that comes from a time in his childhood where he would not eat. And the only way that she could get nutrition in him, was to feed him.

And over time, that just became something that he did, when mom is here, mom feeds me, when mom's not here, I eat. It doesn't mean she did anything wrong. It doesn't mean she didn't feed herself out appropriately. It means that they have a lifelong history of being a mom. And in that case, she is a mom, she is not an autism professional. We always laugh because we always say do what she says don't do it, she does.

And I'll tell you the same thing about my sister. Do what I suggest. Not necessarily what you always see me do, because you will see me try things several times when I'm with my sister, and I go, Oh, wait, that's not gonna work. Just like pounding on, it's not going to work, I'm gonna have to come up with a strategy.

So it's important to recognize that different settings have different characteristics. So parents, if you feel like your child is doing more for the teacher than they are for you, don't assume that you're doing something wrong. Can you learn from what they're doing? Yeah, probably. And probably the educational setting can learn from what you're doing as well. But it's really important to recognize that this isn't a case for judgment. This is a case for what are you doing that's working? Let me try that.

So different settings have different characteristics and different expectations. In school, we have more staff, we can handle behaviors in a different way. Because we have more people, we have more strategies. And at the end of the day, we go home and don't deal with this all night.

They're very different roles, family member, and educator. And it's important that we recognize that we're living in different worlds.

So the settings themselves have different characteristics. And they have different expectations. At school, people always expected me and I had to do things on my own. But at home, my mom loved me and felt bad for me. So sometimes she would do things for me.

The other thing is, if you are an educator, don't think that the student is misbehaving in your classroom because of the parents' discipline or lack of discipline. First of all, it's not productive to think that way. Because you can't do anything about it. So even if you do think that that's contributing to the behavior, you can't wash your hands of the behavior and say, well, it's the parents fault.

First of all, it's not parents fault. It's characteristic of a mismatch between the student and their skills

and their setting. That's what behavior problems are. So it's important that we're not doing that.

The other thing is that you don't need to do that. You don't need to say, well, it's a product of what the parents are doing. You need to figure out in this setting, how can I teach him to do it differently? Because whereas the, the mismatch of the setting and the skills can lead to problem behaviors, when we fix the setting, we can get different skills and behaviors. So we want to think about how do we teach him to do it here.

He may or may not generalize that to home. But we aren't being sabotaged. I put in quotes. We're not being sabotaged by what they're doing at home, because our students will very quickly learn, I do this here, and I don't do this here. The same way that my guy at the beginning learned, I eat when I'm with Chris, and I don't when I'm with mom. I eat by myself with Chris, I don't eat by myself with mom.

He learned in different environments, I behave in different ways. And guess what we all do.

I went to high school or I went to college. I grew up in a home where cursing was not something that was allowed. I went to college, as my mother would say, my friends were cursing. I started doing what they were doing. And I came home for Christmas vacation that first year and realized at the end that I had not sworn once because the environment of my mother's house told my brain, don't curse here. My environment in my college dorm told me, hey cursing here is okay. I changed my behavior without even realizing it based on the situation that I was in. The setting characteristics play an important role.

So what that means is that you can have your students behave in a certain way in your classroom based on the strategies that you set up. It might take a bit longer for them to learn if they have a different learning history, but you're probably up against the learning history of their previous school experience more than the home experience.

So if you're an educator, stop thinking about what's happening at home in terms of that unless the parents have solutions that you might want to try, and start thinking about how you can make the setting match the student's skills to change those behaviors.

The students will learn to behave in the classroom in the way that the classroom reinforces them. Even if they're not doing that at home. And blaming either setting for the others, the behavior that they see in the other setting is not useful. And a lot of times it's harmful because it causes huge rifts between home and school that take years and years to begin to repair.

Everybody behaves differently with their parents than they do with their teachers. That's normal. Believe it or not, teachers behave differently with their own children than they do with their students.

And that's normal, too.

I have an older sister with autism. And it wasn't really clear to us that it was autism until much later in life. I am an autism professional. I'm a board certified behavior analyst. I know how behavior works. I train other people and how to manage behavior and how to setup environments and how to get the most from our students.

So I will routinely be talking to my sister, in person or on the phone, and she's trying to tell me something. And I'm like, "You already told me that. You already told me that. I know that that doesn't answer my question." Before I go, Wait a minute, put on your autism hat, and think about how you would ask this question if you were talking to a student. "I need you to tell me a different way. I need more information. I need you to tell me a different sentence about what you want me to know. I don't understand what you're saying, so can you rephrase it, please?"

That's a much more productive way, with much more specific instructions than the way I interact with my sister, which is just, "I know, you already told me that. I know. Yes, you've already said that." And then it clicks. And I go, Oh, wait, I have this is an autism problem. 50 years, or 57 years now, of interacting with my sister is difficult to override with some learned behaviors, especially when those behaviors aren't necessarily learned in connection with her.

So give the family members a break. Family members give the teachers a break, they may not know exactly how to interact effectively with your student to start out. You may be able to give them ideas, but what works for you at home may not be the same thing that works for them at school. So if they're not implementing something that you said they needed to do, then it might be that they tried it and it wasn't effective in that setting.

And don't assume that if they're doing something at school that they're not doing at home, that you should feel bad about that. We want to make sure that we are building our relationships with families, with parents, and parents with teachers, not by sabotaging them with judgment.

So that is my message for today. Just remember when you're having a difficulty with a student who is engaging in a some type of behavior that is frustrating you or that you think has the origins in one of those settings, just stop and think about how you're going to deal with it. How you're going to set it up in your setting. Is there assistance you can get from the other settings? Get that. But try to avoid judging the other setting for what's going on with you.

So, thank you so much. I have a roundup of episodes on working with families that I'm going to put a link to that has information about effective Parent Teacher interactions and communication, ways that we communicate with families, ways we can build relationships with them.

I also have a free download for you. It is a strategy for helping parents and classrooms communicate. So it's a poster that you can either use electronically or at your door depending, that you can put up that gives the parameters as an educator of what and when you can communicate, but gives parents the opportunity to send you questions or give you information that you know to follow up with. So I found it to be a really useful tool for setting some boundaries, but also making sure that we are building that communication which is fundamental to our parent teacher relationships.

So I will have that playlist for you. You can find it at [autismclassroomresources.com/families](https://autismclassroomresources.com/families). In addition, you can grab the Parent Teacher Communication tool at the resource library, which you can find at [autismclassroomresources.com/free](https://autismclassroomresources.com/free). You can sign up there or you can log in if you're already a member.

So, next week, I will be back with our 200th episode. So I have a little something special planned for you to talk about what we have done since the August of 2019 when I began this podcast, and I hope that I will see you then. I'll talk to you later.

Thanks so much for listening to today's episode of the Autism Classroom Resources podcast. For even more support, you can access free materials, webinars and Video Tips inside my free resource library. Sign up at [autismclassroomresources.com/free](https://autismclassroomresources.com/free). That's F-R-E-E or click the link in the show notes to join the free library today. I'll catch you again next week.