



TURN AUTISM AROUND
WITH DR. MARY BARBERA

Transcript for Podcast Episode: 025

Leanne Page: Parenting with ABA

Hosted by: Dr. Mary Barbera

Mary: Welcome back to another episode of the Turn Autism Around podcast. And this episode I'm interviewing Leanne Page who is a behavior analyst and author and she specializes in parenting with ABA. So she specializes in teaching parents of toddlers of typical kids... of kids with special needs, any parent to use basic principles of ABA and she offers a host of services on her website. So I never met Leanne in person, but I do know of her work and I wanted to have her on. So it's going to be a great show.

Mary: Before we get to Leanne to interview, let me give a shout out to one of our listeners who gave me a five-star review of the show. Her name is Lobo and she said, "The improvement I've seen in my two and a half-year-old son's vocabulary in a couple of months of applying Mary Barbera's recommendation at home has been nearly miraculous. I totally recommend it." So thanks so much for giving me a shout out and I'm glad that my recommendations are working with your child. That's so awesome to hear. So let's get to finding out if Leanne Page has some additional advice that I'm sure will be helpful. So let's get to that interview.

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: Okay, so today I'm so excited to have on the show, Leanne Page, and she is a behavior analyst. She's a mom of two typically developing daughters. She's an author and a parent coach. She's worked as a special education teacher, a BCBA author. And she now operates a website called Parenting With ABA, which provides courses and membership for all parents to learn how to use behavioral principles to save their Saturday. So thanks so much for joining us, Leanne.

Leanne: Thank you for having me.

Mary: Yeah, I'm so excited. We've never met in person, but I did read your book when it came out and I was very impressed by it. So it's nice to have you be able to chat about using behavioral principles for everyone, and not just for kids with

autism. But before we jump into some of the strategies you'd recommend, can you tell our listeners how you fell into the autism world or the ABA World?

Leanne: Yeah, absolutely. I went to Texas A and M a million years ago to become a special ed teacher. And I started teaching after getting my graduate degree, even at A and M in educational psychology. So lots of training, some courses in ABA. But it wasn't until I started teaching that I even met a BCBA and heard of this, that it was even a thing to be.

Leanne: That was in 2007 and I was working in a school district outside Austin, Texas as an autism teacher. I worked with high functioning autism inclusion, behavior support, social skills, trying to help these kids be successful in just gen ed classrooms and not needing to be pulled out and that sort of thing. And our district would bring in a BCBA every month to train all the autism teachers. And she was amazing. And so helpful and so knowledgeable. I just wanted to become her. So I did. I went back to school again and took the required coursework and started trying to figure out how to become a BCBA and learn more about this behavior staff, and just fell in love with it. Watching my students be successful, you know, going from extreme problem behaviors at the beginning of the year to being the kid that everybody loves on the last day of school and is hugging and, you know, I'm gonna miss you this summer and making friends. So I wanted to learn how to do that better and how to do it for everybody.

Mary: Yeah, I do think that that's a big, um, a big issue with general education teachers and even special education teachers. There's a very limited curriculum that, that teachers are taught about classroom management, about basic behavioral principles and a lot of confusion between reinforcement and bribery and negative reinforcement and punishment. And it's very tricky. And when you add 20 or even 30 kids to the mix, it can get really overwhelming. And I'm sure you saw that even back in 2007, the overwhelm that teachers face every day.

Leanne: Yes. And then you, you know, before they start school, if they're a gen ed teacher and you see that this child has an IEP and a behavior intervention plan and FBA, you know, functional behavior assessment and all these things, then you're even more worried, how am I gonna manage all 20 kids?

Leanne: And then this child who has all these problem behaviors, and really if you have some support and if you wear it a little bit about ABA, it is totally doable and we can help those kids be successful. But we're not being taught that as teachers, as special ed teachers even. And it's just a little more overwhelming than it needs to be. We can make it easier. Our science can make it easier. So how do we help them? You're doing your best to help and I'm getting the word out there. That's how we help them.

Mary: Right, right. And it was pretty progressive back in 2007 to have a BCBA come into the classrooms to train teachers; not necessarily to just come in and put out fires. Which I see even now, more than a decade later, is that when school districts do bring in BCBA's a lot of times it's really as a reactive strategy for one particular child, not as a preventative strategy. Is that also what your experience has been?

Leanne: Yes. I didn't realize how lucky I was. That was my first year as a teacher and I left Austin, I moved to the Dallas area and ended up teaching high school self-contained autism, severe problem behaviors. And in that job, I had zero support. I was begging for a BCBA and in that district, they just were not into that. It was not a great situation.

Leanne: And then after leaving high school I ended up working privately for an ABA clinic and getting to go out and be the support for schools, and seeing a lot of it was called in to put out fires and we were marketing trying to get schools to hire us or anybody else to get the proactive side of things. Let us train your teachers, let us help you. And it's almost like begging them, you need this help but let us give it to you.

Mary: Yeah. And for the first seven years of my career as a BCBA from 2003 to 2010, I worked with a big grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. So we actually were doing exactly what you were describing in 2007. We were doing it since 2003 and it was, it was great. And because it was a grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, school districts didn't have to pay for it.

Leanne: Yes.

Mary: So they didn't even really, you know, need to know that they needed it. It just kind of came and it kind of took off, which, which was so fortunate for me. So it sounds like you got a similar experience in Texas by chance of being on the receiving end, and then being on the supportive end of helping teachers and that's awesome.

Mary: So you then have pivoted and what was the cause of your pivot to more of the online world and more of the becoming an author and those sorts of things?

Leanne: Yes. My whole mission these days is Parenting With ABA, helping all parents. And so it started when I became a parent. My first daughter's about to turn five, so five years ago, I became a mom and I became a stay at home mom. And so staying at home with her was, you know, a huge culture shock from working really hard as a behavior analyst. But also I joined different mom groups and mothers of preschoolers online things and met lots of really cool moms, really cool parents who did great things that I really respected.

Leanne: And then I would hear them talking about punishing their kids. And I would hear these people that I looked up to a lot as I was new to being a mom... Talking about spanking or timeouts on end or taking away all their kids' toys. And you know, I just had an infant so I didn't feel I could say anything. Obviously, I hadn't punished anybody, but my behavior analysts brain was just going, what on earth are these people talking about? That's crazy.

Leanne: And I realized that you know, parents get no training. Anybody can become a parent, you don't need training for that, and who could use these strategies more than anybody? People with kids. And so I started making my website. I already had a website but I shifted the focus to parenting with ABA and blogging about it and putting out articles and then put together my first book called Parenting With Science out of that.

Mary: That's awesome. So your book is how old?

Leanne: It is four years old next month. I self-published it through Amazon. I just said I want to try a thing and see what happens. And I call it the little book that could, cause we've sold over 2100 copies now. Um, it's just kind of a little, a short read, really easy because busy parents don't have time to read a ton of books. And so just quick, here are some strategies, here's a little chart cheat sheet to help you put some more positive in your life. Use some positive supports and quit punishing your kids all the time.

Mary: Right, right. So if you had to describe your book in, you know, or maybe three or four strategies from your book that, that is really highlighted throughout, like what would they be?

Leanne: The biggest things I like to teach parents, whether it's through the book or through any other platform, is start with what is positive reinforcement. Because if you don't know what it is, you can't use it correctly.

Mary: And so understanding that you add something, following behavior, and even if that's just a good job statement, you're still adding that; a high five is added or a hug. You know, you can give anything. It doesn't need to be candy and stickers all the time like people think. But the behavior has to increase, and so paying attention and so you need to understand what is positive reinforcement because if you're giving out rewards, praise, stickers, trinkets, something, and the child keeps having problem behavior, you're just wasting your breath. And then people say about positive reinforcement doesn't work. It does work. You're just not doing it.

Mary: Or doing it right. Or adding, adding... I think there's a lot of confusion. Actually, I might do a whole podcast on this about reinforcement versus bribery.

Leanne: Yes.

Mary: Would you like to, uh, tell our listeners what the differences?

Leanne: Yeah, I'll share my favorite example to explain this. And it's the grocery store. So we've all either been there, been the parent in the checkout line with the screaming child or we have seen it because it always happens; that there is a kid freaking out in the checkout line and they have a wall of candy right there. So how many times does the parent just grab the candy off of the wall and give it to the kid? And just buy whatever is right there to appease them and make them quiet. That's bribery: when you're in that moment and they're having a problem and you are bribing them to stop. But you can also see, you could have seen me a few years ago when my child was having a hard time in the grocery store and even now I have a two-year-old and so we do this sometimes, and I'll all take a little piece of candy in my purse or a little reward for them that they want.

Mary: And before we leave the car before we even go inside, we reviewed the expected behaviors. Okay, what does it look like to have good behavior at the grocery store? And both of my kids have to tell me quiet voices. My kids are really loud. So no screaming. Even though it's happy screaming. Quiet voices, stay close to mom, staying in the cart, wherever you're supposed to be. And not whining for things or whatever it is that you're working on.

Leanne: And we repeat the expectations. Okay? If you do those things in the checkout line, you may have whatever I've got for them, whether it's a sticker or you can look at my phone, or you can have a little lollipop or something. And so in both cases, yes, there's a kid in the checkout line having a piece of candy if you're looking at it, but one has earned it with good behavior and that's positive reinforcement and they know that contingency. And the other one is you're probably reinforcing the problem behavior. You're bribing them to stop and giving in to their demands right then.

Mary: Yeah, yeah. Bribery is a lot more reactive and yeah... I'm friendly with a teacher and she said she was doing PSSAs this week and she said, I'm going to, you know, Five Below so I can bribe my kids. And I said, actually, you're not bribing your kids. You are planning reinforcement. Planned reinforcement with expectations and rules and, and planning for it is actually reinforcement. Bribing comes when you're reacting to problem behaviors and you're negotiating like I want the candy, and that even negotiating, even if you don't even give it to them right at that second, negotiating back and forth. And then they end up with the candy and then they realize like, hey, all this arguing, you know, even... Which I think with higher functioning kids with autism and with typically developing kids, you know, problem behaviors don't have to look like throwing themselves on the

ground. They can look like arguing, being, you know, just difficult, being demanding, wanting things from stores.

Mary: And it's so, it's so great when people know just the basic principles. You don't have to get into an elaborate token system or anything. You could just be playful with reinforcement. And it doesn't always have to be candy. Like throughout the grocery store trip, you can also be like, hey, what's this called apple? Hey, can you pick out the, your favorite cereal? So you're engaging the child throughout the trip, which is also positive reinforcement. You're giving praise, oh nice sitting in the cart, and you know, can you go get that? You know.

Mary: And because you have two daughters, right? Five and two, you have to do some differential programming for both of them at the grocery store. Because the five-year old, I'm assuming can, you know, walk and go get things and help and then, you know, the two-year-old might be sitting in the cart for your convenience. I mean, not even convenience, just like...

Leanne: Safety.

Mary: But you know, she could be labeling things, and so that's a lot of what I teach in my online courses and stuff is, is it's not just the reward at the end. It's all throughout the day and all throughout the trip that you're giving eight positives to every negative, which I learned from way back from Glen Latham, who wrote an excellent book in the 90s called Positive Parenting. He also wrote another book, I don't know if you're familiar with it, but it's Behind the Schoolhouse Door: Eight Skills Every Teacher Needs.

Leanne: No, I have not read that one. I'm writing that down. I'm very familiar with Positive Parenting.

Mary: Yeah. Positive parenting is just an awesome book. And people are like, oh, it's so old. Maybe I'll get a new one. No, no you've got to stick with it. Stick with the Positive Parenting book. But the Behind The Schoolhouse Doors is interesting because, and I actually did a video blog on when my fifth grader got into detention, here's the book I sent the teacher. And it's Glen Latham's Behind The Schoolhouse Doors, it's actually free. We'll link it in the show notes here. It's a free 20-page guide. It's about managing expectations. Walking around. It's a great, great. Especially for teachers and for people that are in the school. So we will definitely link that in the show notes. I'm glad I could give you that resource.

Mary: But yeah, and you know, with typically developing kids like we have to be careful. Like we know the power of ABA for kids with severe autism and high functioning autism, whatever you want to. But you know, all along the spectrum we know that it works. It works even better for typically developing kids. And

when I see people like inadvertently... Not anybody, you know, trying to harm their kids, these are well-meaning parents, but they don't know the basics and they're actually, you know... my video blog is kind of like a tongue in cheek. Like when my fifth grader got like, had to put his head down, didn't get recess, him and a bunch of boys who were laughing in library classes... Like if you can't control kids in the library and manage expectations and like you don't just punish them for nothing.

Mary: And like basically in the video blog is like, I was working so hard to get Lucas, my other, my son with autism when he needed that, I didn't want the school to be messing up Spencer. And I think, you know, not that anybody's trying to mess up kids, but when you use coercion threats and punishment, you are actually messing up kids.

Mary: So if you're doing that, if you're threatening and I'm going to take away... Whether it's your Legos or your car keys, you're probably digging a hole that's not going to be great for your relationship, not going to be great for the longterm success of your kid, no matter what the age is.

Leanne: And I think that's the piece that people get a little bit confused about ABA. They think that um, our ABA has a stigma sometimes about, you know, being very cold or robotic or just not about the relationship and the connection. And you and I are both here to say that's not what we're talking about here. You know, all of your courses for the more severe needs are about connecting and engaging with your kid. They're not about being a teacher and sitting across the table and being mean. They're about to let's build this relationship together and get to know each other better. And using positive reinforcement does that. It doesn't, you know, put you like the role of the taskmaster and being mean to your kids. But it's like you're saying in the grocery store or in school or wherever you're building that relationship and engaging and connecting. And I think sometimes our field gets a bad rap and we need to keep putting it out there that no, we're building relationships, we want to engage with our kids, we want to connect with them more. Whether they're our clients, our own children. That's why we're using all the positives.

Mary: Right. And it really, you don't have any other option. If you don't use positive reinforcement. I mean you really don't have any other options.

Leanne: What are you going to do instead?

Mary: You have to, otherwise you know you're going to be miserable. The child or clients are going to be measurable and it's just, I think we're kind of preaching to the choir here.

Leanne: Yes.

Mary: My podcast is for parents and professionals who want to turn autism around. Who want to lead happier lives. Like we're preaching to the choir because anybody that's, you know, 20 minutes into this podcast is not, you know, probably spanking their kids or... But you know, timeout is really rampant. So you know, time out I think is one of the most overused things and... In both schools and homes. And so what are some things to talk about in terms of timeout? Like if a listener is true, you know, their clinic or their school or at home, they're using time out. What are some things to kind of tell them that might talk them out of, you know, or try a different way?

Leanne: I think that timeout is, you know, it's always well intentioned. All these people who still use it but, you know, you say, you know you're trying to teach something, but it's more about the loss of reinforcement. So if they are having a problem behavior, like my two-year-old hits right now and we're working on that, she's two, it's life. I'm not going to run an FBA on her but I'm trying to teach her not to hit. And so if she had then she needs to be removed from whoever she hit because she wants that attention. And so she is removed from her sister. She has to be moved because that's who she hits mostly. So yes, I remove her from her sister, but I don't make her sit in the corner for five minutes. And that's the difference. You do remove the reinforcement. We are making sure that we're not reinforcing the problem behavior.

Leanne: And that's kind of the idea behind timeout that people are trying to go for. But we're doing it wrong by saying go sit in your room, go sit in the corner for 10 minutes. Go sit in those cute timeout chairs that people paint. That makes me absolutely crazy. But we do want time away from reinforcement. So if I am reinforcing to them and my child has problem behavior than either she needs to go to another room or I do. Well, it's easier to control my own behavior so I usually just walk away. And so she is time away from mom, who is the reinforcer until we've got that behavior under control. And that's the difference between a break from reinforcement and timeout. Go sit by yourself by five minutes. Because if you're just going and sitting in the corner for five minutes, what are you learning?

Mary: Right? And then it's if they're supposed to sit in the corner, or supposed to sit on the stairs or whatever. Especially if a child has autism, like good luck with that.

Leanne: They're not going to understand that at all.

Mary: They're not going to understand it. They're not going to do it. And then you're just going to be like fighting. And, you know, I have used time out a few times, like hardly ever, but you have to really know what you're doing. And like you

said, it is just the removal or enforcement. So you know, if they hit, you know, take them, kind of hold them back, you know, till there was a brief period where they're not hitting. Maybe if the child has the cognitive ability to understand, you know, you could talk about these are the expectations, put them back, maybe monitor them a little bit more closely for the next however long you think it's going to take and deliver some positive ramparts and get the child back. Because Glen Latham says everybody needs eight positives to every negative. So you know, she's hitting her sister probably because her sister's ignoring her, or her sister's using the toy she wants and so you know, and you're maybe in the next room cooking or something, you know. And so her hitting is basically saying I'm not getting enough reinforcement.

Leanne: Yes. Also prompting them to do the right thing. So we'll remove reinforcement then say, are you ready to try again? And then we'll go back to sister or whatever the issue is. And you want the toy? Yeah. Okay. Then say, can I have the toy? You know, giving it to them, not expecting in that moment for them to remember the right behavior. Because obviously, it's not on the front of their minds if they're having a problem.

Leanne: Maybe they know it. You can say yes, I know they know it, I've seen them do it a million times, but it's not there right now. So help them out and fully promoting it, say these words, do this thing, okay, now you can have it. And really focusing on the positive. Sometimes they need that extra help to get to those eight positives and so give it to him. We're not promoting all day, every day. We're promoting when they need it. And when, right then, if you're having a problem behavior, you need some help. So instead of sending you to go sit in a chair for five minutes, why don't I help you? Once you're calm enough to participate and you know, fully prompts and model and supports that they can get the access to whatever it is they're wanting right then.

Mary: Right. And another good strategy, I think that's an excellent example. Another good strategy to use as a form of timeout is a court and mand procedure, which I talk about in chapter two of my book. And I've even developed another very, wimpy court and mand procedure called the shush and give, which basically is, you know, for kids that don't have any language or don't have a lot of languages, don't have the ability to understand the complex rules of the situation. You know, if they're crying or hitting or whatever, you don't want to give them, you know, say the water. But so you do a brief timeout where you say, you know, hands quiet or fold your hands or shush, you know, if they're screaming, get them in a quiet state, count to three or five in your head and then prompt if they can say water or sign water.

Mary: If they can't, then you just deliver, oh you want water, here you go, water. The shush and give is just basically you can't get them quiet for three to five seconds.

So you basically just shush and give. That way they, you know, and then over time, you're going to want to space that out. So there is a break in between the problem behavior and the delivery of the reinforcement. And so basically court and mand procedure is a form of time now, so we're not bashing time out. It can be used, but a real time out in your room and that sort of thing that that is very hard to pull off and very hard to do right. So one of the... Just a little bit more on time out because I think this is a really important issue for our listeners.

Mary: I went into a preschool once, I mean this is years ago and it was a typical preschool. The child was not yet diagnosed. But probably was on the spectrum somewhere, and I think you've got a time out when I was there. Yeah, he did. And I was doing like an independent evaluation or something. And so I went in and he gets this timeout and he's sitting and he's like popping up the desk like he's supposed to sit at this desk. It wasn't even like really, you know, a timeout or whatever. He was just told like, you did something wrong. Go sit at the desk. And he's like, so he's like fidgeting with the desk instead of sitting quietly. Right. So now we have that problem. So then I'm like, okay, so what, what leads to timeout? What are the criteria that lead? Well this is a preschool, but I don't know, they're just like, well, when he gets on our nerves so bad that we just can't stand it anymore and then we put them in timeout.

Mary: Okay. How long does time out last? Oh, it depends. When does time at the end? When we, you know...

Leanne: When we get tired we go talk to him.

Mary: It's like, so if you are using timeout, like timeout room or timeout procedure, make sure you, you have a plan, there's a criterion of data, there's criteria of what, you know... When I have used as a true timeout, it's like verbal aggression, yelling and stuff that doesn't lead to a timeout. But like hitting, I remember only probably a handful of times I use a timeout for my own typically developing son is when he bit, you know, at home because biting as you know, is a huge deal. I mean, nobody, you know, biting, we'll get you thrown out of the best of places. So, you know, if you are going to use timeout, it's gotta be for something severe, you know, hitting or bathing or something like that.

Mary: And you have to really do it right. But there need to be criteria, there needs to be a timeout where they're supposed to go, how long they're supposed to be there and then data and if all that criteria... And then you also have to have a full positive behavior support plan and FBA and it just can't be used willy nilly.

Leanne: I think that the big statement here is you shouldn't be using punishment procedures without a behavior analyst on your kids. Yeah, I mean, and that's what I always say: I'm never going to blanket recommend a punishment. I will

blanket recommend positive behavior supports all day long and that's what I do. But if you have severe problems, if you have a self-injury or severe aggression like you said or something, punishment might be appropriate but that's not for you, the mom or even the special ed teacher to decide, that is for a behavior analyst to help you craft. Like you just said with the FBA and everything, it's not just we're going to use it here and there. Punishment does have a time and place. A timeout has a time and place, but we can't just do it as parents effectively. We need to use it with the help of a professional who knows what they're doing.

Mary: Yeah. Because it can backfire.

Leanne: Yes.

Mary: And it can make worse behaviors. It can definitely make worse behaviors before they get better. And you really have to know what you're doing and you don't, you know, want you to want to protect the child. So that's why I think your philosophy, my philosophy, we are all about just loading kids with positive reinforcement. And I don't even tell parents in my online courses or professionals I never recommend as a full time out, but I will recommend, you know, the court and mand procedure, things like that because those are kind of easy strategies.

Mary: So if you haven't read my book, chapter two of my book goes over it. My online courses definitely do. You can go to a free workshop to learn about my online courses marybarbera.com/workshop. So we do... because we're making this sound easy. And for typically developing kids, it is a lot easier. But when you had the language deficits and the academic deficits, and social deficits, it does get really complicated.

Mary: So if you are a special ed teacher without BCPA support, if you are a mom listening and you don't have any behavioral analyst support and everything, you are going to need to learn more and not just listen to podcasts and video blogs and stuff because it is complicated. And every day that goes by where you don't really seriously intervene with more of a step by step plan, that's more time that your child is maybe falling behind and risking injury to themselves or others. And, and so I think we're both definitely on the same page in terms of getting out the positives.

Leanne: Yes. I like to, when I speak to parents groups and moms groups, I say if we're building up the good behaviors, there's not room for the problem behaviors anymore. If we're spending so much of our energy doing those eight positives to every negative, you know, and it is a lot of energy for the parent or the teacher to get out there all the time. But on your fake smile when you're in a bad mood

and make it positive for the kid, then there's not room for the problems anymore. They kind of take over and we're replacing it with differential reinforcement. But in non-ABA speak, there's just not room anymore. If we're filling up all that space with good behaviors and praise and reward, then that's not even our issue anymore, it's, Oh, here's another small problem, I know how to handle it. I'm going to use positive reinforcement on this. Oh, here's something other, as we change and develop over time, you know, more problems are gonna happen but we know how to fix them with building up the positives instead of having to resort to punishment.

Mary: Yeah, I think that's great. So part of my goal of my podcast is to help parents and professionals be less stressed and lead happier lives. So do you have any self-care techniques or anything that you could recommend for parents and professionals?

Leanne: For my own self as a parent, I get super stressed when we get in these cycles of problem behavior. When I am having to remove one child from reinforcement or remove myself, and we're all in bad moods all the time, and it's more of a negative experience. And so if we have a system to rely on, so when I am worn out and stressed out and irritated and don't want to, you know, yay, happy, fun, let me give you eight positives. We can go back to a sticker chart, a token economy, a marble jar. We have a puffball jar, we've done all of them, Of course, the BCBA house. We go back to a system, we have a sticker chart app on my phone and I can lean on that app. I can lean on that system to be the positives for me when I just don't feel like it when I need more self-care for me.

Leanne: And so that helps. Really my phrase I use all the time is to turn it positive. And so that's how we turn it positive in our house to say, okay, this is not working. You've been in trouble a lot. I've been irritated. Nobody's in a good mood. It's time to change things. Let's start a new reward system. What system would you like, for my five years old? She knows this stuff. Do you want a sticker chart? Do you want the app on mommy's phone? Do you want the puffball jar? Okay, what are we going to earn? Are we going to go out for frozen yogurt? Are we going to take some money out of your piggy bank and you can go shop at the dollar store? She likes to get her little purse and make a whole big day of it.

Leanne: And we try to do activities and events and things so it's not like earning candy and prize bag. Although those can be helpful too. But having that and leaning on that system within a day, I'm better. The kids are better. I feel happier. I feel lighter. I'm not laying in bed at night going, oh gosh, I screwed up my kids today. Like all moms do with our mommy guilt. I'm like, no, we did pretty good. You know, I made sure to give them all their little stickers on my phone or whatever they're working on. So having a system and a plan that you can fall back on. And so if, you know, even just the definition of positive reinforcement fall back on

that, just let the science hold us up. And so I'm not having to think on my toes and how do I get this under control? These children are terrible. No, they're not. They just need more positives and I need some help getting there cause I'm not in the mood to do it. The token economy does it for me.

Mary: Yeah. Great. Do you get... Do your girls have babysitters or how do you get free time for self-care for yourself?

Leanne: For myself, really with my husband. My kids only go to school one and a half days a week. So today's my five hours a week of kid-free preschool time. But it really is my husband and with a network of friends. And so especially if you're a stay at home parent or a part-time work parent, if you don't have daycare, if you don't have childcare arrangements, you've got to work hard to make those other friends who are in the same position as you. If you only work a half day, find friends that work half days. If you work full time, find friends that work full time and being able to share and say, you know what, I'd really like to go to the store by myself. Can My kids come to your house for an hour? And having that open relationship with multiple people, and it's almost like dating when you're making new parents friends, you're like, hey, how are you? Can I get your number? You know, you're trying to meet people that you'd click with and that your kids will click with. Building a network for yourself. If you're an autism mom, then you need to make friends with other autism moms through your community. I'm sure through your courses you can meet people, you know, finding people in the same position as you and leaning on them and asking them for help. And giving them help and being able to just be yourself and be vulnerable of whatever stage of parenting you're in, find other people in that stage.

Mary: Yeah, I think that's great advice. Okay. So how can parents find you and find your work?

Leanne: Okay. ParentingwithABA.org. Everything is there.

Mary: Awesome. Awesome. Well, it's been great to have you on. Like I said, hopefully, we'll meet in person one day. I think they're on a similar mission to help spread the positivity around the world and to make things better. I appreciate your time today and for more information about my online courses and community, go to Marybarbera.com/workshop. And thanks for listening to all of you out there and we will... You'll hear again from me next week. Thanks again, Leanne.

Leanne: Thank you.

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