

Ep20 - Independence Beyond Aut...sm_A Transformational Journey

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SPEAKERS

Michelle Rogers



Michelle Rogers 00:04

Welcome to the autism mommy's potty talk Podcast. I'm Shelby Rogers, autism mom and life coach. I help parents of children with autism who are pre verbal to start communicating potty train guarantee. You're listening to the autism moms potty talk Podcast, episode 20. Hey everybody, Michelle here and I have the honor of not one but two guests today. Now you've already heard from Armando. Armando, if you didn't already know we I had rebroadcast our original interview that we had done and it was not a dry eye in the house that night when we did it. Armando is one of the coaches in my champions for our children masterclass. And if you don't know anything about the masterclass, you want to work with us. We have a workshop coming up on November 14, that 6pm eastern standard time it's called unlocking autism, the path to independence. So I'm going to share the three secrets to help your child with autism get to that level of independence that my child is going to have and Armando has his story is an inspiration to all of us. And today with Armando we have a very special guest, which is the number one I remember when I talked to Armando the first the one of the most important questions I knew I wanted to ask him and if you don't know our Mondo story, I'm gonna give it to you in a nutshell, we have another podcast episode called a miracle story that's possible for you. So you want to go back and look for that. But just to give a quick cliffnotes edition of Armando story is Armando was diagnosed with autism, I believe it to two and a half. And his mother was told that he never speak and that he needed to learn sign language. And fast forward today, Armando. potty trained, I believe at five and you guys are gonna correct me if I'm wrong. He started speaking fluently at seven. And then he went from the most you know, he went from life skills classes, I believe, from kindergarten to to, to general education classes, he graduated high school, he speaks beautifully. Now. He went to college, he got his master's degree, he got married. He owns his own company now. And we have the honor of having him as one of the coaches and the champions for our children masterclass. He is officially a board certified behavior analyst he believes so much in this work, even though he didn't have access to ABA, when he was a child, he believed so much in this work, that he wanted to become a BCBA. So if you don't know him, you can watch that episode. He's going to talk today as well. But we have a very, very special guests, because one of the questions I asked him that first time we talked, as I said, and of all the things that you were exposed to all the therapies, the

teachers or whatever, and I'm gonna have you answer it again, right now, what was the most needle moving thing, the most important thing that helped you go from where you were to where you are today?



02:47

It was my family. I could not be where I am today without my mom, my sister, my father, truly, and I say this a lot of the times in my classes that the family as a support system for these kids that that means more than anything else in the world. And it's just, I couldn't be anywhere without your mom. Ah, and



Michelle Rogers 03:08

that's our special guests with our mind do today is his mom, Sara. Sara, thank you so much for being with us today. We're so happy to have you.



03:15

Oh, you're so welcome. I'm glad to be here. Awesome.



Michelle Rogers 03:19

All right. So I'm going to talk to both human asked lots of questions. So I hope you don't mind really want to pick your journey, Sarah because your journey is a lot like mine in the sense that Sarah wasn't accepting of what people were telling her was going to be the future for her son. So first, let's talk about Armando when he was born, and up until the age of two, was he hitting all his milestones? How did it look?



03:38

No, he was not. He walked pretty much at the right time. But as far as speaking there, no, he did none of that. He had a few words. He had probably 12 words. Probably by the time he was close to three. Okay. He He's social skills were not up to par. Okay,



Michelle Rogers 03:59

so let's talk about let's talk about from zero to two so so zero to one was solid like he was he crawled when he was supposed to rolled over or he started walking at one. What did that look like? Oh, actually, there was no crawling, and there was no product so he went from not not just not crawling to walking. Yeah, he did walk. Yeah. And what? What age did he walk?



04:22

was nine at the me. Baby I don't know. He bought Yeah, he did walk at nine months.



Michelle Rogers 04:34

off early. It Was he your oldest at that time? Or he had he already had a child. I had



04:38

a child. She was 11 years older than him. Oh,



Michelle Rogers 04:43

I didn't know that. Okay, so at that point, you knew what a neurotypical experience should look like?



04:48

Yes, I did. When he was not following that. But



Michelle Rogers 04:52

so How old was he when you started to realize maybe something didn't feel right? Probably



04:57

close to three,



Michelle Rogers 04:59

close to three. Okay,



05:00

my husband and I both knew something wasn't right. And of course, you have the relatives to say, no, he's not talking because you're handing him everything. warlingham Because we knew we weren't.



Michelle Rogers 05:13

What year was that? Was like, was it the 80s and 90s? I don't wanna, I was



05:17

about nine. He was born in 93. So it was close to 9619 96.



Michelle Rogers 05:21

And at that point, and you're like, you know, you know, something's up, but you're not sure. Did you know anything about autism at that time? Or no, not at all? Nothing. Okay.



05:31

So there wasn't something right. Okay, so So what happened? Sorry,



Michelle Rogers 05:36

you both knew something wasn't right. Your family's like, Oh, he's just spoiled. That's what's going on here. Stop spoiling. But you and your husband like note something doesn't feel right. What happened next?



05:44

Well, I took him to a, got a referral to come to a doctor and I got a referral to a huh, I think it was a neurologist. I'm mad at you in the Medical Center in Houston. Okay. And I took him there. And then they did all the tests, and he wasn't meeting that at all. And then they gave him the diagnosis of he was on the spectrum with verbal apraxia.



Michelle Rogers 06:13

Actually, yeah. Okay.



06:16

And then that's when he gave me his opinion.



Michelle Rogers 06:20

Okay, so at that point, did he have some language and lose it? Did he have like some words, it just wasn't progressing. When it looked like he



06:27

11 00:27

had, he was saying, words like juice and girl. He did have some words, and then all of a sudden, it just stopped. He didn't he didn't say anymore. Got it. He basically had about 12 words. And the rest of it was Donald done. And now we had whole conversations with him. But it was all done with sounds. And his hands. Got



Michelle Rogers 06:52

it was that before the diagnosis or after what was before?



06:55

That was? I mean, it didn't change. The diagnosis just gave me the prognosis that the doctor thought that would happen, which I didn't believe at all. So what did he tell you? He told me that kids with what he had, how usually ended up not speaking at all, that I should try to learn sign language at this point. That they, in some cases they cover, they will stay under their bed or cover their faces and not show themselves that that might also be something he'll do. He may never develop his social skills. I mean, he gave me such a negative diagnosis that I was crying when I left the office. Yeah, I can see that as a lie for him at all. Got



Michelle Rogers 07:53

it? Did it make it feel like whatever the doctor had said at that point was that he was going to need forever care.



08:01

He acted like this. This was he was not going to go get any better than what he was. Right at that moment. Yeah, that's the kind of diagnosis he gave me. That can't be. I mean, I looked at my son and on the way back, you know, my son was in the backseat having a whole conversation with me using his hands and using sounds and I thought that is that cannot be he's trying I don't know what this doctor was trying to tell me. But I basically did not did not believe in



Michelle Rogers 08:34

God, it Alright, so you went home? You have this in your head about what the doctor told you what made you start to like, want to believe something different for him? Well,



08:44

actually, I people with a lot of education. I tend to take in retrospect anyway. Because first of all, he doesn't know my son. First of all, he doesn't How can he judge someone at three and diagnosis for the rest of their life?



Michelle Rogers 09:05

Yeah, do you were thinking that instantly? Or it took some time to kind of get over the pain and what he said it took me



09:11

an afternoon? Yeah, I'll say and then I thought, You know what, I'm gonna go find out what this autism thing is all about. So I took myself to the the downtown library, the biggest library we have downtown, and I asked the lady at the library, I said, we're where are the books about autism? When she told me way in the back in this area that was definitely not used. There were like six books there in 96. And I looked at all of them, and a lot of them had a lot of medical jargon, which I didn't understand. But there was one bit there that had case studies in it about someone who followed kids with autism from childhood to adulthood. And in one of them, they had this boy who had autism, but at 17, he read a sailing manual and took his father's sailboat and sailed it for two weeks all alone, all by themselves. And that was the turning point for me. I said, No doctor is going to tell me my son 15 years or however many years from now isn't going to sail that sailboat. If he wants, so I that's when I made the decision that I was not going to go learn sign language, and not to say it would pigeonhole him. But not to limit his whatever he could do. By taking that avenue, at that point,



Michelle Rogers 10:51

amazing. So we do a lot of mindset work in my program. And one of the things that we talk about, or I tell my moms all the time is that, you know, I remember walking into a doctor's office, and I saw on his window, a mug that said, Don't mistake your Google search for my medical degree. And I chuckled, and I said to him, I said to the receptionist, said, tell your doctor, to not mistake his 120 minute lecture for me living with this child 24/7. And I think one of the biggest things you just hit home with that I tell my parents is how many times have we all been to a doctor or a therapist or a teacher? And they've given us some program prognosis and have been wrong? Yes. And there was something about when you left that office, and you heard him making sounds in the backseat and using his hands that made you think that this can't be possible, like you can't be able to predict he's not a fortune to doctors, and there isn't like autism isn't like, you know, you test positive like for a pregnancy, right? You're you know, it's that's pretty cut and dry. Autism, I think is a spectrum for a reason. And nobody, I don't care where the child falls on the spectrum, even moderate to severe, no one can tell you where that child will be. And 510 15 years from now. And when and when you left that office, you knew you know Armando inside. Now up until that point, he had met him for one time I made this grand prediction of what his life was going to look like. And Sarah chose not to believe it. Yeah, just in that, just that mindset, she doesn't know she doesn't have the tactical yet she doesn't know what to do to help him. She just knows that that's not what she's choosing to invest her thoughts. And one of the biggest things I tell my moms is like, listen, as you know, as human beings, one of the greatest gifts we have is we can hear our own thoughts. And this is my quote, but I absolutely love it. And I read it somewhere I said, the mind is like a furnace, it could burn our house, or it can warm our house or burn it down. And what she had here was a thought that could have really burned everything down and she could have just been like, okay, white flagged it and just kind of like let autism wash over their family. And she knew when she

got back in that car even though she felt slayed and devastated that she believed in something more for her son. And our monster just said it and we're gonna have Armando talk to on what she's sharing. But like he he's been she's tried a lot of things with him. A lot of stuff didn't work. But she didn't see that as fails. These are all things they were learning steps to tell her what would work. So I think this is really fascinating. And then she read this book, there was only what you say six books, more books in the library about autism, probably six



13:21

or seven.



Michelle Rogers 13:24

Yeah. Yeah. And all she read was and this is what you can you get to choose every day what you want your child's autism to mean, do you want it to mean forever care signing away my house to a group home. And when I think that when a child's only three years old, when she gets this information, I'm setting myself up that even if I do want to treat teach them to talk, or do want them to potty train, then I'm already in the mindset of a fail, that we're going to end he's going to be forever care anyway. When I take action from that energy from that mindset space, I've already lost before I've begun. But if you make the choice, you read something about a boy reading covered a cover or sailing manual, took his father's boat out and sailed successfully for two weeks. I can choose what I attach to I can choose to attach like my boy can do it. My son can live a life. And he could do things like that to why couldn't that be possible? And that's what caught fire here. And I think that's what's so big here. And so important because Sarah doesn't even have half the access to the shit we have now today. She had nothing actually Charlie had nothing zero. At that point. You had no note ABA through insurance I know officially came around when Juliana left early intervention. So Armando was a much older at that point. So tell me what I wanted. I wanted to interject him so excited to hear more. So tell me what happened. You leave the library, and then what happened? You're like, Alright, now let's go.



14:46

Well, I Googled Google's a lot of stuff. I also went to the school, and I said, you know, I wanted to put him into pre K. And but he didn't speak So they said he had to go in PCPD, which is a special special city PCB. Yeah,



15:06

one of them. It is. Yeah.



15:08

But anyway, so I said, Okay, if that's all he can do, then we'll, we'll put them in there. He had a wonderful teacher who saw him for who he was. She didn't she didn't pigeonhole him either. She didn't put him in that hole that said, Well, you can't speak like not even going to work with

she didn't put him in that role that said, well, you can't speak I'm not even going to work with you know, she saw that he actually had those whole conversations or interacted with with her without ever speaking. So she, she capitalized on that. And she got him move in. She worked on his social skills. I mean, I have to give it to you. There are some great teachers in the school system. Some are not. Yes, he met some that weren't. But that Pete, that special education teacher was in and she actually did him a great service.



Michelle Rogers 15:58

Amazing. So let's say on some of the I believe I have this philosophy that any child on the spectrum, no matter where they fall, they have three life skills, three foundational life skills, their chance of life independence increased greatly. First one is potty trained. Second one is to be able to communicate. And third one is minimal to zero problem behavior. So you could sit in attendance school. So let's talk about those three with Armando. Which one did he land first? Was it potty training, communication or stopping his problem behaviors? Where would you kind of say they fall? Well,



16:30

all three were slow. Thanks.



Michelle Rogers 16:36

To fetch she had nothing back then.



16:43

Um, social skills probably were a year behind his optimal grade. So I guess they were faster, you know, the communication skills.



Michelle Rogers 16:56

So what am I right in saying he got pi three to five? Is that right?



17:01

That is about right. Yeah. You remember, like,



Michelle Rogers 17:03

what it what it took to get it done at that point?



17:08

Got really, it was a struggle, I know that. I tend to forget the bad things in life. But I want to give you a, it took me Well, I started at the appropriate time. Okay. That was probably around between three and four. So, I mean, we began the normal way. And then of course, the normal way doesn't always apply to every child. So we tried different things. And we all three of us, my daughter, my husband, and myself. We all worked at it. And it did. It was delayed. But he did catch on. And you did learn that?



Michelle Rogers 17:52

Was there any time during that? It was probably an almost a two year period. Now. Obviously, my programs 90 days, we get potty training, no fast. I'm very unlike the potty whisperer at this point. You didn't have that. So that's fair. But what I think is so interesting about what you're saying is that you started out around three, he potty trained at five, was there any time we were like, You know what? I just don't think he's ever gonna learn.



18:14

Oh, no, no, that wasn't an option. Why



Michelle Rogers 18:18

wasn't that an option? Well, because I mean, every



18:21

child can learn. I mean, I didn't, I thought that there it was, I thought it was on me. Because every child can learn it. It's only a matter of thinking outside the box and finding a way to get them to do it. That's the key. Amazing. We just tried other ways. We tried getting him, you know, colorful things to where we tried anything that that he would key into. Okay, do it.



Michelle Rogers 18:56

Did you ever think that autism is a reason that it couldn't happen that autism was making this like this? Maybe that just won't be able to happen? Because he has autism? Oh,



19:04

no. In fact, I want to say this when I went anywhere. I never the first thing out of my mouth was not here is my son. He has autism.



Michelle Rogers 19:14



Michelle Rogers 19:14

Ah, interesting. Nobody. Ever. I



19:18

never told anyone that. It wasn't in fact, he didn't even find out. When did you find out a long time?



19:25

It was a long time. There might be like high school or something. Yeah,



19:28

I never took that to now he did have his ARDS. And you know, of course, everyone knew I didn't know about but as far as Yeah, as far as him knowing or me introducing him as someone I'm sorry, he's running a month. He is because he has autism. No. I just, it was just a child that ran them up and run after him. You know, he did run off a lot. I mean, he's unpredictable, but I just treated him as a normal child. And it wasn't something we ever told anyone When in fact he went and have swimming lessons, never told him he had autism. He went and had he went to doctors never mentioned he had autism. I mean, it wasn't something that I brought up.



Michelle Rogers 20:12

Was that that was a decision, though. Yeah. Yeah,



20:18

it was a decision. It just it wasn't something that I counted is something he had, because I wasn't going to, I was not going to utilize that and let that hold him back. Got it.



Michelle Rogers 20:32

Yeah, when we say he was gonna go



20:33

in, and do what he would, with whatever he meant, got, it was not going to be a factor in how they treated him. Autism was not going to be a factor in how he met them.



Michelle Rogers 20:47

Got it. And I want everybody to really understand this, because it's not like she's a denier. She knew that he had this. But she made a decision and I'm going to be honest with you share you when I Giuliana got diagnosed, I thought I could cure of it. I thought I could cure of it for a couple of years. Now I know now, that that probably wasn't a helpful thought in the long term, but not an unhelpful thought I would say that wasn't a it wasn't true that I thought that I don't believe now that I can cure her of autism. I think she'll always have autism. And I'm okay with that. Because but but but here's the thing, when I thought I could cure of it, it was fine. Because I did not stop. She had so much progress between diagnosis to when I had that evolution of like, well, maybe she's gonna have autism forever. It served me well. And everyone's journey is gonna be individual with this on, you know, who you share your diagnosis with how you want to the world to perceive your child, believe it or not, we don't really fly our flag publicly around friends and family because I don't want her to be identified. Because I think the social conception about autism right now, it's just like, it's a handicap. And I don't see it that way. I think that my personal belief is that autism is an evolution of the brain, like kind of like X Men. Right? And that, because there's so many things a lot of our kids on the spectrum can do at a heightened state that Nora, typical kids can't do. And she's got a memory. I mean, she can recite every capital and she can do the alphabet backwards. I mean, she does a really great, she has a crazy good memory. So like there's things about her that are amazing. I said, Geez, if she's if autism is just different, and it's not less, and I look at her brain, I say geez, just operates on a different frequency than the neurotypical brain, then I just need to learn that language, and then I can teach her anything.



22:31

Right that I agree. I think autism is limit lis. Limited. Yes.



Michelle Rogers 22:40

I love that autism is limit less, not limited. And when I choose to believe these things like right, so Sarah chose to not like Shell, she showed the autism diagnosis, in essence, and like, Listen, he's a child that runs away. He's not a child with autism and runs away. He's just child that that's, you know, feisty and runs away. That served her to show up for her son and keep working at the the skills that he needed to live an independent life. But if I start thinking, and that was her journey, everyone's journey is gonna be the difference. Mine up until kindergarten was like, I'm going to cure my daughter of autism. Now I went through this moment where we were at a she's probably still about a year and a half behind and social skills. And we went to a birthday party with a girl she swore was her best friend. And it turned out that that really wasn't the case, it was almost looked like a little bit of a single white female situation. And I'll never forget it. Because she was crushed. She screamed in the middle of this play in the middle of this birthday party saying that the girl kept running away from her that she didn't want to play with her. And I remember thinking, she like it would be obvious. I'm watching now, I was sitting in the pool, but it was like a hot day. So I wasn't even paying attention. But then once I watched I saw the girl kept running away. And she was missing all the cues. And everything in my head. I'm like, Oh my gosh, this is autism. And it was so interesting to think that whether it was or not in hindsight, I think there is a social component. That's always a work in progress for Julianne, I believe she will catch up though, I believe it's coming. Like I think she just needs a lot of reps with this. And I remember thinking in my head, like oh my gosh, you know, what if this is always going to be with us, and then I said, Okay, what do I want to believe about it? If it is

going to be always with us? And I swear to God, I was like, Okay, what if she could have autism and live an amazing life. And within a couple of months, I heard Armando story on another podcast and I was like, I listened to a podcast in the shower. So I'm like, what's out and I tracked him down. I messaged him for every platform that I need you to come in and talk to my mom's because I thought that this is this he was my he helped me cement the belief that Juliana will live his beautiful life is Armando is living and she's just behind him age wise. That's it. So it's very similar in the way that you think is the way that I thought the way you chose she Sarah was so intentional with her thought creation. I want you guys to understand tactical is 5% of the game 5% 95% of the game of helping Your child go from where our kids were to work to where they can live an independent life is 95% mindset. It's what I want to choose to believe about autism. And you know, we I mean, Armando has been working with me for I don't know, it's got to be close to two years now, a year and a half now. And he sees it. It's not about the tackle, I tell them all this. It's not it's about starting to believe different things like what if autism isn't less, and if it is different, and I can teach different just as I could teach a neurotypical child, then that means that it is limitless.



25:27

Yes. Absolutely love that. Card. There the wild card and wild. Oh, I



Michelle Rogers 25:37

love that the wild card. Oh, she's got a lot of settings here. And I think we're gonna I think we're gonna do that limitless on a mug or something. I absolutely love that. All right, so let's talk about Alright, so two years, almost about two years to lose fully potty trained.



25:50

Yes, yeah. That's about what yeah, in my



Michelle Rogers 25:54

program, we do it a lot quicker because I have a lot of strategy Saturday didn't have that back then. I'm gonna ask her about this in a minute. Right. But But what I think one of the biggest takeaways to Sarah was never there was never an option in her mind that he would be wearing diapers forever. He was doing this. It wasn't a matter of if it was a matter of one. Yeah. Awesome. All right. So let's talk about the next one, which is communication. So when did he actually I want to talk about his problem behaviors and communication, because Armando had mentioned a couple of times, I've heard him say it where he used to, he remembers being nonverbal. And he remembers biting himself, like at frustration, because he couldn't, like people didn't understand him. First of Armada, do you remember potty training or that was you don't remember that. I don't



26:32

remember the potty training. But what I would do regarding the behavior thing, I would bite

remember the potty training. But what I would do regarding the behavior thing, I would bite between my thumb and my index finger, when I was really frustrated, and yeah, and I still had behaviors, up until maybe a couple of years ago, I tell your mom's about that, that I had self injury, that it would just make me feel like a relief of pressure, when I would do that. And then just, you know, probably a couple years ago or so I learned how to manage that and regulate that appropriately.



Michelle Rogers 27:05

Amazing. So we're gonna talk about that in a minute. But so So when did the Saturday remember these self injurious behaviors? Or tantruming? Or you don't remember that? That's good.



27:16

I really didn't know he did that. What did



Michelle Rogers 27:18

he do? Like? What were the problem behaviors that you think were connected to his inability to verbally communicate?



27:25

Well, he there were a lot of misunderstandings between students. And him in the line, you know, in lines, that there was a lot of misunderstandings, and a lot of and he was bullied a lot, because he didn't have the responses that were necessary as he got older. You know, how kids will say things and you're supposed to report back?



Michelle Rogers 27:50

Yes, this is what we're working on. Juliana, this is the things versus things that we think and things we say is a lesson. Like understanding sarcasm when somebody like if somebody says, you know, Hey, can I play with, you know, what, I guess you know, right, they're rolling their eyes, she just takes it for what their voice is. And we have to teach this. So this, this, this is what I kind of call next level autism training past basic wants and needs. So basically, where we want to go with communication is that we want them to be able to functionally Express wants and needs and what we do with our pre verbal babies. And this is where the sign language came in. It wasn't a last stop it actually what I see is like if voice is on one side of the room and thought is on the other, and there's a neuropathy, a neural pathway that connects the two with our kids on the spectrum, it's asleep. So that sign language if he had explained it this way, you wouldn't be so adverse to it, that sign language starts that neural pathway and it's study tried and true, whether you sign language AACs or pecs, that your child will more likely be able to be verbal if you put that in place. So it's interesting because you know, Armando didn't start

becoming more becoming verbal until about the age of seven, but it could have fast track if Sarah had had it. But what's so amazing about Sarah's story is that it was never and you tell me, was it ever an option your mind that your son would never speak?



29:09

No. Yeah, I mean, I didn't rush him. Yeah. But I knew he was going to get



Michelle Rogers 29:21

it. Do you remember how you did that? Like what was the process to doing that? Well,



29:25

I put him into a speech. He actually took speech. Early, I went after school, I took him out to school for speech classes. To help him with pronunciation to help him form his vowels and blends. He had trouble with vowels and blends when that first started. I mean it gradually he gradually began to verbalize, but at his own pace.



Michelle Rogers 29:52

So did you see a connection between him being able to verbalize like more articulate like being able to ask for anything he needed? and maybe like behaviors going down? Yes.



30:03

As his social skills went up, so did the verbal. Got it met, they seem to meet in the middle God, Google was behind his, his social skills were slightly, I would say a year to a year and a half behind where they should have been. And gradually as he moved up in the grades, I saw that the verbal caught up. And the social skills meant that



Michelle Rogers 30:30

when you saw problem behaviors with him as a child, what did it look like? You don't remember him self harming, but what do you remember? Do he tantrum a lot?



30:38

You him? Running off? Running off? Okay? Yeah, you can, you could be standing there, and then all of a sudden, he would just take off, like, we'd be in the store on an aisle. And he would just run off to another aisle. Thank goodness, my daughter ran after him. Because that was the only way to keep up with him. I know, when we went to doctors offices, he would change all the furniture in the office and put it in a line. Every single chair that no one was sitting in would be

in a line in the middle of the office. By the time we call we were called in. And no one thought anything of it. I didn't say anything. I mean, I let him do it if no one was, you know, looking. But I mean, there were different behaviors. Most we didn't really go a lot of places. I mean, we were a family unit. Where we went, we went together. We went to family parties, we went to family barbecues. But it was all in a family area. We went out to public places unless it was a grocery store.



Michelle Rogers 31:50

Would you say that when the more verbal he came, the less you would see, like eloping and that types of those types of behaviors. Would you say there was a connection? Yes, yes. And when I think I tell my families is that for for all human beings, I believe our first language is behavior, right? And we know this, like, we'll meet people in the world and they'll say stuff, but then their actions will be different. And we don't weigh them on what they say we weigh them on how they show up, right? So with our kids on the spectrum, this is so important because verb vocal language doesn't come through osmosis, like it does for a neurotypical child behavior is their language. So we again, this is like where I think about their brain. Like if I'm learning their fluent language, which I believe is behavior first, I learned to communicate through behavior, then I can teach them anything, including to communicate. And I think that's one of the biggest things that you're kind of expressing here. So okay, so let's fast forward when I want to go to Alright, so he goes into, he's in life skills class, I believe until grade two, is that right? Armando? I have the story, right?



32:52

Oh, in first grade, he went into general, yeah. Oh, first grade. Okay.



Michelle Rogers 32:55

So whose decision was that? Was it a collective decision? And it felt like he was ready. How did that happen?



33:01

Well, basically, they are getting out.



Michelle Rogers 33:04

Oh, okay. So they said, Listen, we think he's ready. Yeah,



33:08

they tested him. And he had a certain amount of language. And they said that he could that he was ready to go. The tests they gave him they said he was ready to go into general with

speech. And I think that was probably he probably should have stayed longer. But I think the school system itself, we're, we're trying to move him up. Got



Michelle Rogers 33:30

it. So do you struggle at first? He did.



33:35

He had modifications. He had to sit up front. The teacher had to repeat the question for the test. He had to make eye contact with her in order to receive that question. I think a lot of those modifications weren't done. A lot. He had a teacher that really wasn't doing the modifications.



33:59

How long do they have that modification for repeating questions?



34:02

Ah, you had that for a couple of I think it continued on until probably the last year. In the art that's really funny.



34:12

I just like I'm now I'm sorry. This is a little. Like, I'm just like reliving some of my memories from school. And I remember all of my teachers repeating the questions.



34:23

Yeah, we had to repeat the questions.



34:26

I just thought they did it. That reason?



Michelle Rogers 34:35

Okay. So when you do you remember first grade Armando or no? I





34:39

did not have a good time first or second grade. That being very difficult for you. Yeah, I didn't get along with anybody. I was like, isolated. I didn't have really any friends. And then I was switched to another class. I did that. Did i Hey,



34:57

I did that on purpose. Okay, tell us, he was on there were two tracks in that school and one track had the kids moving up all together all the way through fifth grade. And the other track was in a totally different track, you know, with different students in this track. The boys were bullying him. He wasn't making the appropriate responses. It was just going to be a nightmare for the entire five years that he was there or however many years. So I said, You know what, this isn't working. And the teacher it was saying it was his fault. Oh, my goodness. Yes. Because he wasn't responding appropriately. And I'm like, you have modifications, lady. There's a reason for that, right? No. So I said, Okay, so let's switch him. Is there somewhere we can switch and let's switch him to another class. And that's the best decision I ever made. Wow. Yes, lifelong friends that he still talks to from that class.



35:55

One of them was the officiant for my wedding. Oh, my



Michelle Rogers 35:59

goodness. That's crazy. This is just another example of of parent advocacy, not just sitting on our hands like, well, they must know better than I do. Right? Never



36:09

know. And, and the teacher that he had was actually taken a year off from medical school again, a doctor. To me that thought she knew better



Michelle Rogers 36:21

is amazing. All right, so then he thrived. Yes, he's done that. Yes.



36:28

Actually, actually, I think that's when your verbal started



36:32

to pick up too. Yeah, cuz I had friends. Yeah, that was cool. When you



36:36

converse with someone and have friends, your verbal will pick up. That's right.



Michelle Rogers 36:41

The the, the yet understand, like when I think of when we're looking at communication from a behavioral standpoint, right? We always start with wants and needs first, because if I asked for the cookie, and I get a cookie, that's like a little dopamine hit for our brain is like, oh, that worked. Oh, every time I use my voice, I get a cookie, right? Every time I use my voice, I get something in return. That's your first level of communication, the next level of where you kind of get that natural payout, right, that natural reward is when you have friends. And when you start having conversations and playing games, and you're getting interaction and that's what was missing. And his mom knew that was missing. And she went back to the school so we've got to figure something else out. He's not he's floundering here, he's not thriving. And by doing that, who knows, you know, it's just a decision like that one decision, that's where there's always every day we have opportunities to make decisions we have we want to think about autism. How we want to show up for potty training how we want to show up for communication do I want to quit believe that this is never gonna happen. And just put the diaper back on or just give them a cookie without creating you know, either a bridge form of communication or requesting a sound even Giuliana love goldfish. And she couldn't say either she she can say goldfish, and we go, and she would get it just building on those foundations, every decision, one decision could make or break and just her up her stepping forward for him advocating for him in that moment. I mean, it was it was a pivotal moment because it literally changed his projectory of his life.



38:07

I think that was the main decision. And I'm so glad I'm every day I'm so glad I made that. Yeah, that wasn't



Michelle Rogers 38:15

a therapy. That wasn't ABA that wasn't speech that was his mother speaking up saying something's not right here my boys and doing well we what are my other options for him? And that's what I want to kind of really hit home for everybody is that the the if if the parents are the gatekeeper, to make or break a child's progress, how do you want to show up in this life as far as we only have one life to live right? And we don't know how much time we have on this earth? How do I want to show up every single day to help the baby that I created thrive?



38:47

Make sense? Yes. Good job. Perfect sense.



Michelle Rogers 38:50

I love it. All right. So Armando goes on to thrive happy gets married. Now want to think at this point? Were you feeling like his future was so different than what you had been told now? Yes.



39:01

Now, was he a little difficult to deal with on a day to day basis? Thanks. No different than any other difficult child?



39:21

The compliment you think it is?



39:26

Every child, every child you have has their own idiosyncrasies. Yes, you can. You can meet them at the door and they have they have something to say they don't have something to say. It's, you have to base it as he's just another kid. Yeah, it's nice when he



Michelle Rogers 39:45

has his own. Another kid? Yeah. When we told Giuliana about her autism, we made a decision, right? Because my husband was I don't want to tell her and I'm like, Well, I don't want her to go through life, having challenges where she's not seeing other tools. and have challenges and not understanding maybe like, what might be behind that not that she can't master those challenges does her mastery is going to be different than maybe her brother who's who isn't on the spectrum. So we finally had made this decision to tell her we told her probably a couple of years ago, we had her create a book, it was called an all about me book, and she put in all the things about herself, what she loved what foods she liked, toys she loved to play with. And my head, I had my neurotypical son do it too, he did all the things about Cody and what he loved about boba, and then they presented it to us and we created pages to add to each of those books. And when she presented it, we presented like, okay, and just want you to know, these are other things about you too. And we talked about, like how much he weighed, and she was born and, and what it was, you know, when she walked and then I also mentioned that she had autism. And I showed her all the famous people who had autism at the time, and I was like looking at it and she's an actress, and this person is a scientist, and it's just as everybody has something. And the same thing with Cody. Cody has allergies. So I say Mommy's got asthma, Cody's got allergies, you have autism, everybody has something. So it's like it's what you it's really the sauce you put to it right? I can make it feel like the shit thing. And it's a huge problem, or I couldn't make it like this. Everybody's got something. And that's kind of what you're saying. Let's every kid's got something. Yeah,



41:20

I mean, he is who he is. I love him for it. I mean, it's just I wouldn't change the thing I love. It would not change has been



Michelle Rogers 41:30

amazing. All right. So I'm going to be opening the doors to my masterclass on November 14, we're having a big webinar. I'm inviting everybody here if you're hearing about if you want to hear more from Armando, he's going to be live on that webinar with me. It's called unlocking autism, a path of life a path to a life of independence. And if you want to come it's a free workshop. You can just email me at Michelle at Michelle B rogers.com. That's mi ch e ll E. At Michelle with two L's B is in boy Rogers, r o g e r s.com. So I want to invite everybody if you want to come and you don't know where to where to get your invite, just send me an email. We'll send that to you. But I wanted one of the things we're going to talk about is we're gonna talk about the masterclass, I'm gonna open the doors for everybody to join the masterclass who want to work with me and Armando in the champions for our children masterclass. I'm gonna ask you, sir, because at that time when Armando was diagnosed, you had six books in the library to pick from and only could read one of them because the rest of them are medical jargon, right? So let's tell you what the program is. And I really want to know so basically the way the program works, it's a 90 day group coaching program for parents of children with autism. We guarantee results in this program, and it has a three pillar approach. The first part is knowledge. And when you join the masterclass, you get lifetime access to my study vault of courses and our courses on everything potty training, communication problem behavior, we we have an envelope being picky eating mindset for the parents social skills, you name it, you get lifetime access to that. Then you also get the second pillar that I believe every child on the spectrum needs and that's our group coaching calls a week so that's three to four group coaching calls a week, ones with me and autism mom and a life coach, I'm going to help you to strategize blueprints to get your child officially potty trained and communicating. And each week we meet and we keep stacking on that progress that we make each week. So that's inevitable you get what you came for in the program. You also get a mindset called mindset coach call which is where basically like your therapy session in a box because you know, while you're doing this stuff, sometimes you have shitty thoughts and we want to think positive things if we want momentum for our child and then the third session each week is with a behaviorist. So that's a you know behaviors like Armando Armando was one of the one of the coaches in the champions for our children masterclass, and he's also an adult with autism. He knows exactly what our children are going through. And in addition to all of that, we have monthly specialist calls. We have a speech language pathologist that's an autism mom and she's a graduate of the program, you get to talk to her. You have an occupational therapist, we have a nutritionist that's an autism mom, because I think gut health and cognitive ability kind of go hand in hand with some of our kiddos and you also have a feeding therapist. And on top of all that the third pillar of my program is support. So when you join the masterclass, you get lifetime or you get you get to join my Facebook group for just the students in the masterclass. So, if you have questions in between calls for me or the coaches, you want to support each other sport the other families that are like you, they're forward thinkers. You get to post in there, send me a DM, send me an email because when you join your baby becomes my baby. So my question for you Sarah is now that I've kind of listed out exactly what the masterclass looks like, would you what if something like that have helped you when you were going through this with Armando? Yes, yes, it would have what's the biggest now that kind of explain what's the biggest draw? What would you think he would have liked the most?



44:40

The lopi also the diet, because I have to say this, we had a terrible time feeding him. He would not eat anything that did not have a shape. Oh, interesting. Probably. Yes. Yes, mashed potatoes were out. French fries were in wieners were in a chicken with a bone in it was not in stone.



Michelle Rogers 45:13

It doesn't like that year.



45:16

Until we figured out that we could get a dish that was divided.



Michelle Rogers 45:21

Ah, so the food's in touch. Yeah, so the



45:25

food didn't touch and also it made it look like it had a shake. Then we were good. Amazed three years where he looked like an emaciated. Big because there were things that you would only eat chicken nuggets he would only eat so yes, the food thing would be great. The food thing alone



Michelle Rogers 45:44

would be worth it would have been. I love it. What about being able to talk to professionals? Talk to the coaches? Yes,



45:52

that would have been great.



Michelle Rogers 45:54

So you weren't alone, right? I think a lot of my families because we deal with we serve families now all over the world. And I think a lot of families even though there are so many children being diagnosed with autism feel like they're on an island and nobody understands what they're going through. And you must have really felt like that back then. Because I didn't know



46:10

one other child that had autism. I didn't know one other child I thought I honestly thought he was the only one Yeah, I had no way this there's no way of knowing you know, I mean, I didn't know what signs or anything to look for and other children either lots of other children out there. I didn't know or



46:30

you didn't have like access to internet like a Facebook.



Michelle Rogers 46:33

Yeah, there was nothing Imagine having all of that like a tribe. That's Armando calls us a tribe. Yeah, yeah.



46:39

Love it. Yeah, really? We could have used all that back then. Amazing.



Michelle Rogers 46:43

Alright, well, it was such a pleasure to talk to you guys. This was so helpful for me to get to know you Sara's the first time I was talking to her I taught didn't even have a script they just kind of knew what I wanted. I was thinking about in the shower this morning like I want to take through a chronological of what she thought and from day one for about an hour she cried when she left off the she cried when she left the office and then she got right back to business and did not stop until you see the Armando that you see today. So Armando any like thoughts about what you shared before we stop anything that you that she thought was like that she said, shared was I



47:16

feel I've always seen my mom as a fighter. Right? And, and, like there's nothing the same thing with her if there's anything she puts her mind to, then she'll she'll do it. And I, again, I could not be anywhere without you without Jane, my sister, my father. Family is without a doubt one of the biggest support systems you could possibly have.



Michelle Rogers 47:40

Yeah, family could make or break the trajectory for art. But not the doctors, not the therapists, not the not the teachers, you as the parents are the



47:51

diagnosis don't use them for anything other than that.



Michelle Rogers 47:55

To the diagnosis, that's your ticket. That's right after that it's gonna do everything's all on you and you learning and learning these skills of teaching your baby. This is what my program is all about. I really took all the face first hit Sarah did to she took all the hits. This program is about helping you to bypass all of that. Use our experience to go from zero to finished for all the goals that you have to get you there the fastest. That's why you hire a coach. And that's why you join a program like this. So awesome. Amazing. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to speak to me, guys. Thank you. Pleasure. Thank you.



48:28

Take care



Michelle Rogers 48:35

everybody, welcome back to the moms financial podcast. If you don't know it already, November's a big fucking deal around here. Japan is turning 11. We've been in the autism club for nine years. But she got diagnosed, her life was over I got mine was to fast forward today. We're celebrating loving this year. And they just can't believe that this is what 11 looks like somebody told me that they should diagnose that this is what 11 could look like. I don't know if I would believe and so far, and we want to celebrate her in a big way. So we're having a big webinars celebration. So it's a free training. I'm running on November 14th. That's a Tuesday night at 6pm A day after her birthday in decree workshop called unlocking autism the passing. So I'm going to share the three secrets that I did that helped Juliana go from having language and using it teach her sign language. Making your mixdowns word approximations my training was assigned to speaking she went from the most restrictive autism classroom and 614 to where she is today a thriving happy chatty, 15 year old fifth grader and a general education class with minimal support. Lots of friends who just came back from a big birthday celebration. Do you don't want to miss this remember prizes. Special guest she's going to talk she's excited about it's like, you know it's her spotlight moment. So she's really excited about that. So if you want in on this celebration, you want to end on being Part of this workshop, you will want to email me at Michelle Am I ch e ll e at Michelle M R ch e ll E. B as in boy Rogers or g ers.com. And tell me I want to come to the workshop, and I'll send your link to sign up. You have to be signed up to have access to this. We're gonna give away we're gonna do raffles. She got to be there to win. Now we're gonna celebrate and also be opening the doors to the masterclass. So you want to check that out? Come to the workshop, we're gonna have fun, and it's gonna be a big celebration.