

Ep 227. Happiness Set Point



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 227, Happiness Set Point.

This podcast is for people who know that living an extraordinary life is not easy or comfortable. It's so much better than that. This is *Better Than Happy*, and I'm your host, Jody Moore.

What's up? I got a new microphone. You probably can't tell, but I can. It takes up less room on my desk and it has a mute button that actually works, unlike my last microphone. So pretty fun for me, just letting you know so you can enjoy the excitement. Can you feel it?

Alright, what's happening, you guys? What's going on in your world? I've got to tell you, I'm having so much fun in my world. Last week was Be Bold Masters, which is my five-day deep dive intensive small group live coaching experience. So I have people that come from all over the country – I don't know if I've had anybody come foreign yet. Who's going to come from Australia? Come on, I know you're listening. I want you to come. Get on an airplane, come and see me.

Anyway, we have people that come from all over and I bring in some other coaches and we just spend five days deep-diving on all of this work, really understanding it and we do tons of coaching. Everybody gets lots of coaching. And so, by the end, people leave feeling like they've had these huge breakthroughs.

It can be emotional, I won't lie. It's a lot of fun and we just laugh a lot and I get to get to know you guys, which I don't get to do here on the podcast and I don't even get to do it in my coaching program Be Bold because it's all online. So selfishly, it's really fun for me to get to know you guys. And anyway, I'm just still on a high from that event and loving and missing all of you who were there.

I'm also so excited about 2020. I have so many things I'm working on. I've got my videographer coming out in a few weeks to film all the videos for me that we're going to use next year in Be Bold, so all the classes we're going

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to be offering, they just are going to keep getting better because it's not going to be me at my webcam next year, imagine that.

And we're working on a bunch of other things we're creating and putting together. So anyway, that's what's happening in my world. I hope your world is going amazing.

Today, we're going to talk about happiness set point – and sorry, I forgot, I've got to mention that we have the Be Bold annual membership pass available for sale right now. It's the 2020 Be Bold pass and it gets you a whole year in Be Bold. And maybe this is something you want to buy for yourself, or you want to ask for as a Christmas gift, or you want to give it to someone. It's the best gift you could give, to give somebody the gift of emotional and mental health and learning this work and working with me personally.

If you get it for them, they're going to qualify to come to the VIP events so they could come spend a day with me live, all kinds of amazing benefits. I'm not going to go into detail about Be Bold because I don't want to bore you if you're already in there or you're not interested, but go to jodymoore.com, click on Be Bold Program, you'll learn all about it.

I should say thought, to get the annual gift, you'll want to purchase it through that because you'll get a nice letter to give them and wrap up and some other bonuses. So go to jodymoore.com/gift and you can get that option.

Okay, now we're going to talk about happiness set point. Are you ready? Okay, so a set point is not a term that I coined, of course. It comes from the idea that our nature as human beings, sometimes it's physiologically even, our bodies have set points, but we have certain zones at which we are comfortable at.

So, for example, maybe you've heard the term weight set point, which has to do with the weight that your body is most comfortable at. Now, it doesn't mean it's necessarily your healthiest weight. It might be, but it might not be.

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For many people, it's not. But it's the weight that your body is used to being at. It's the weight that you've been at probably for a little while, if not a long while, and sometimes, if you lose weight really quickly or you gain weight really quickly, it will be easy to either gain back or lose that weight because your body kind of wants to be at its natural set point.

So for somebody losing weight, we're trying to always lower your weight set point and get your body used to being at a lower weight. I'm not going to spend time on how to do that. I want to talk to you about your emotional set point today.

I believe, and I notice this from the years of coaching and from watching my own self and my own emotions, that we all have a happiness set point, which is the emotions that we're used to feeling on a regular basis, the way that we typically feel most commonly feels the most comfortable to us, even if the emotions that we experience on a regular basis don't feel good, quote unquote.

Maybe they're not – all of them anyway – are not positive emotions, we would say, it's still more comfortable than feeling differently than what we're used to. So there are lots of studies out there on happiness which I find to be really fascinating. I love to read the studies, or even more enjoyable, read a book that somebody wrote about a study or watch a Netflix documentary or something about happiness.

It's kind of fun to see all the things that we've studied and that people have experimented with when it comes to happiness. One of probably the most common popular studies that you may have heard of has to do with lottery winners and people who are in a paralyzing life accident, okay. So what they've studied is that people who win the lottery have an uptick in their level of happiness immediately after, as you can imagine.

You win a bunch of money, you're going to buy some stuff or quit your job or whatever it is you're going to do. You start feeling happier because you're thinking about how your life has changed and maybe you are changing circumstances, which makes it a lot easier to think positive happy

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thoughts, and we start feeling quite a bit happier after something like winning the lottery. Okay, this was common in the study.

And conversely, somebody that has been in an accident that caused some paralysis of the body feels a huge decline in happiness shortly after that accident, as we can imagine. Again, our brains would start going to the place of all the limitations and what this now means and all the other thoughts that we would likely have after an accident that would cause unhappiness for us, right, lower our happiness level.

Now, here's the interesting part; within a certain amount of time – and I couldn't tell you offhand what that time frame is, but probably a lot shorter than any of us would guess, those lottery winners who were so much happier eventually came back down to their regular pre-lottery level of happiness.

The high of winning the lottery didn't last super long. Eventually they found reasons to settle back in. And people who had been in an accident, a paralyzing accident, even though by paralysis I mean permanent paralysis of two or more limbs of their body returned to their heightened, or what was "Normal" level of normal level of happiness within a certain amount of time as well.

So in other words, the sadness, the decline, the drop in level of happiness didn't last forever for most people either. They sort of found reasons eventually to become happy again in their lives and settle back in at their regular, what I'm calling, happiness set point.

This is pretty amazing. I don't know about you, but I think, no, for sure, if I won the lottery or if this thing changed in my life, if my child were happier in this way or if my body were skinnier or if my house were always clean – this is my brain lately, it's like, if your house just looked more like the house at the end of Fixer-Upper, if Joanna Gains could come and redesign my house and purchase all the furnishings and make it look amazing and we didn't mess it up ever, then I would be happy forever, my happiness would be so high and it would never drop. That's what my brain believes.

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And there are all kinds of terrible tragic things that could happen that I think, for sure, I could never recover from that. I would be sad forever. But what we know is that, as human beings, our brains want to settle in at whatever our happiness set point is.

Now, let's bring this back to kind of more everyday application because while there are sometimes big life events that are really amazing and there are sometimes big life events that are really tragic or challenging that occur, we also have the day to day things that just give us little opportunities to have an uptick in our happiness or a little downtick in our happiness.

And I want you to again just think about what do you think is your happiness set point right now? And are you comfortable being outside of that zone? Can you be comfortable with the discomfort of being outside your happiness set point? And I want to offer to you that the way to first of all increase your happiness set point but also just to live a more extraordinary life in general is to be comfortable with the discomfort of being outside your happiness set point.

Okay, so stay with me, I'm going to give you some examples and try to clarify what I mean by this. So, first of all, I began noticing this and sort of trying on this idea that we have a happiness set point when I started working on my nutrition and trying to change my eating habits.

And what I noticed is that, while I do want to eat sometimes when I'm bored or frustrated or experiencing some negative emotion, I noticed and hadn't realized before that I also want to eat when I'm feeling positive. When I'm outside of my happiness set point, when I'm above it on the positive side, it sort of feels uncomfortable.

Now, some of you might be able to relate to this. But maybe you're not saying, "I feel uncomfortable being happy." You might be wording it in a different way. You might be saying things like, "I just want to celebrate this. I think I deserve this. I think I've earned it."

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So maybe it's your birthday. I happen to be recording this on October 30th and tomorrow is my birthday. So I'm thinking about, it's going to be my birthday. My birthday, yes, is on Halloween, I know, spooky, right? But I'm thinking about, what do I want to do on my birthday?

I like my birthday, personally, and I know some people don't, but I like it. I like thinking about my mother and how she gave birth to me on that day and how grateful I am to her. And I like to use it as an opportunity to be grateful to myself and reflect on myself too and have some positive thoughts about myself.

And I know that my kids like to make it a special day and it's fun to watch them try to experiment with that and my husband too, who's very thoughtful. And so, for a lot of reasons, I like my birthday. But I notice my brain being like, yeah, and normally we don't eat cake on the regular, like on a normal Thursday, I wouldn't have a big piece of cake, but it's my birthday.

And again, nothing wrong with having cake on your birthday if you want to. Please don't think that's the point of what I'm saying. It's not the point at all. What I'm saying is, like, why do I really want cake on my birthday? Is it because I feel more positive emotion on my birthday than other days and that's uncomfortable to me? And I'm trying to actually buffer away from that level of happiness with cake? Isn't that fascinating?

I notice this when I go to a movie too. I'm like, it's so fun going to movies. I love to sit in a dark theatre, I love to be entertained and sort of escape my life for a couple of hours into some kind of story. I love the emotions that I experience as I watch that story. I love being with friends or family, which is usually who I go to a movie with.

Now I need liquorish and a Diet Coke. Why do I need liquorish and a Diet Coke to complete that experience I wonder? And again, if you want to have liquorish and a Diet Coke, do it, zero judgment from me, but it's an interesting question. Like, is it so enjoyable being at the movie that that's uncomfortable to me, that I'm used to having a little bit less entertainment

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or less excitement or less relaxation, or less of all those positive emotions I feel at the movie, and so I need something to take the edge off that level of positivity? And liquorish and a Diet Coke gives me a little dopamine hit and it numbs my emotions just a little bit.

Interesting, right? So I don't know if you do this or not, and food is just the example buffer that I'm giving you, but many of us have many other buffers, like when something goes really great, we want to go out and buy something to celebrate, or whatever your buffer might be, notice – and buffers, by the way, there's other podcast episodes on buffers if you don't know what I'm talking about. But it's basically just how we escape emotion.

And it's interesting to me that so many of us want to escape positive emotion because it falls outside our happiness set point, so it's uncomfortable. Isn't that crazy?

Now, of course, this happens with negative emotion, right? I think it's more obvious with negative emotion but the same thing is happening where it's uncomfortable to feel down or stressed or disappointed or bored and so we tend to want to escape it in some way. We want the little dopamine hit that we get from whatever the buffer is, that because of the false pleasure of that thing, numbs the negative emotion and feels like it's bringing us back to our happiness set point.

So, back to what I said, which is if you can get comfortable with the discomfort of being outside your happiness set point, you will raise your happiness set point and also create a more amazing life. So let me speak to both of those points.

Raising your happiness set point means you have to be comfortable with feeling more positive emotion more frequently. Again, I know this sounds crazy because we're like, who would not want to feel more positive emotion more frequently? But I'm telling you, watch yourself and notice, probably even obviously in many of the people around you, how we are uncomfortable with it, we want to escape it in some way.

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We want to sometimes beat ourselves up and say, well, this isn't going to last. This is what it sounds like for some of my clients, "We're just waiting for the other shoe to drop. Surely this can't last. Surely this is a fluke. Surely something's going to go wrong."

That's your brain's way of trying to bring you back down to your regular level of happiness, which is just a little bit lower than what you're experiencing in that moment. Or we get what we call imposter syndrome, right? Which is, "Okay, your life's going really well and people are really loving you and respecting you and thinking you're doing a great job. Let's not let them find out that it's all pretend, that you don't actually know what you're doing, that you're really a hot mess."

Again, your brain's like, let's get back down to our regular level of happiness because this is very uncomfortable feeling so proud and accomplished and loving ourselves this much. It feels really awkward, let's do something about it, let's beat ourselves up, right?

So to raise your happiness set point, you have to get comfortable with feeling those emotions. They have to start to feel more normal to your brain and more normal to your body even. And sometimes, the way to improve your life, is to be willing to feel negative emotions that you're not used to feeling on the regular, to feel fear, to feel discomfort, to feel – let's just go back to food again because I used that as an example – I might have to be willing to feel a little bit more hunger than I'm used to. I might have to be willing to feel some deprivation that I'm not used to feeling.

So again, I'm not saying that you have to do any of these things, but if you're willing to and if you can just know that the main problem with feeling those emotions is that we're not used to feeling them on the regular. And so the brain says, this is terrible, something's wrong, we need to solve for this right away. And usually the solution is available and easy. It just might be sabotaging our long-term goals.

So if you're willing to sit in the discomfort of it and to know that it's fine and you're perfectly capable of some negative emotion and to know that it might

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be helping you to get to where you want to go in your life, then that is the way you achieve goals. That is the way you create a more extraordinary life, right?

So, I view this as a twofold sort of mission that I have when I think about this tool of happiness set point. I want to be raising my happiness set point. I want positive emotions to feel more normal to me at some point. And many of them do feel normal to me, but I still think we all have opportunity to raise that. Like, self-compassion and peace and love and curiosity and kindness, if that felt normal to you, then your brain would easily settle into those more frequently, wouldn't that be useful?

That's step number one. Step number two is to be willing to fall below my happiness set point when I think it's going to serve me to do so, when I think it's going to help me get to a place I'm trying to be, to become a person I'm trying to become or to achieve a goal I'm trying to achieve a goal in my life. Then being willing to live, at times, below your happiness set point could be really, really useful.

So, what is your happiness set point right now? I think the best way to answer that question is to ask yourself, what are the three emotions that I experience on a regular basis, like the top three emotions? I have a whole worksheet I do on this with my clients, but what are the top three emotions that you'd likely experience on a daily basis?

If you're not sure, keep track. Get out a notebook or someplace where you can write down, for the next 30 days every day at the end of the day, ask yourself, what were the three main emotions I experienced today? Maybe there were more than three. That's okay, just pick the top three, and start to keep a log. And let's identify what your happiness set point is. And then, if you want to raise it, let's do the work together to figure out first of all why you're creating the emotions you have, and what are the ones you want to live with more regularly?

By the way, they don't have to all be positive. I'm not saying that. I'm not saying let's make sure you have three positive emotions that are top

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emotions, but could we go from peace to happiness? Could we go from neutral – because a lot of my clients tell me they feel neutral a lot, just sort of a lack of emotion about certain things. And that feels a lot better than feeling negatively about things, but could we go from neutral to joy? Could we go to gratitude? Could we put some excitement? Could we put some passion in there? Could we put a little bit of motivation? That would be fun.

So again, no right or wrong way to feel, but your emotions are yours to own. And raising your happiness set point and being willing to live outside of it when necessary is a key to an extraordinary life.

Thanks for joining me today, you guys. I will see you next week on another episode. If you like the podcast, I would love it if you would leave me a review and make sure you subscribe in iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts so that you don't miss a beat. I will see you next week; take care.

If you have a question about something you've heard me talk about on this podcast or anything else going on in your life, I want to invite you to a free public call, Ask Jody Anything. I will teach you the main coaching tool I use with all of my clients and the way to solve any problem in your life, and we will plug in real life examples.

Come to the call and ask me a question anonymously or just listen in. Go to jodymoore.com/askjody and register before you miss it. I'll see you there.