

Ep 232. False Pleasure



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

Ep 232. False Pleasure

I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, Episode 232, False Pleasure.

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.

Hey everybody, welcome to Episode 232. What's happening? I'm going to be teaching a live call, webinar you might call it, in a couple weeks, coming right up, actually. So, if you haven't come to an Ask Jody Anything call, you really should, because I will answer your questions there.

But being that it is going to be first week of January when I'm teaching this call, I decided I wanted to talk to you guys about why goals are unnecessary. If you've been setting goals, New Year's resolutions for a long time, and that's not working for you, at least not in a certain area of your life, than it may be that you need to try a different approach.

So, I'm going to talk about that on the next Ask Jody call, so come and check it out. You can come and ask me a question. You can come and learn about Be Bold, if you're thinking about joining me there. So, go to jodymoore.com/askjody and sign up, and let's do it.

Okay, so we're going to talk about false pleasure. Somebody messaged me when we were taking podcast requests and said, "Can you do a podcast on Diet Coke?" Because they hear me talk about Diet Coke. Maybe some of you have heard me, but certainly my clients have heard me talk about it a lot, about my struggles with Diet Coke, my love of Diet Coke, and then going off of Diet Coke and back on Diet Coke. And I'm still on that roller coaster a little bit, to be honest.

And I thought, you know what? I don't think it makes sense for me to do a podcast on Diet Coke, but certainly a podcasts on false pleasure would apply to a lot of people. And Diet Coke fits in that category. So, that's what we're going to talk about today.

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We're going to talk about false pleasures. What are they? Why are they so challenging to walk away from? How do we make some progress in there? What's really going on in the brain?

As you guys know, I'm a huge believer that awareness is the key. I'm trying to give you guys more knowledge and more information, because when we understand why something's happening the way it is, what's going on, then it becomes, first of all, less of an opportunity to beat ourselves up and feel bad, or feel stuck or trapped, or feel like we're just at the effect of this thing. And we get sort of some leverage and perspective over it.

So, that's what I want to offer you today when it comes to false pleasure. Now, it is coming up on the New Year, and so many of you are going to think about trying to change some of your habits. Maybe you have some bad habits you want to quit, maybe you have some good habits you want to start. We're going to talk about false pleasure and how that relates to the way that we behave in our lives, okay?

So let's begin by just talking about habits in general. A habit is something that we do as humans that is so, so valuable. Like, our ability to memorize a process or task or routine or skill, and then delegate it to the lower unconscious brain, which uses less energy, which requires less focus, is amazing. It helps us accomplish so much as humans, okay?

So, you have many habits that you do, like brushing your teeth, driving to wherever you drive every day, your kids school or work, or church, or wherever it is that you go on a regular basis.

Driving to Target, you're probably in the habit. You know how to do it. You don't have to stop and think about it. You don't have to pay attention to the street signs of how to get to Target, because you've done it so many times, if you're like me, that you know how to get there. And your car just goes there without you paying attention. You could be listening to the radio. You can be listening to a podcast. You can be talking to whoever else is in your car.

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So this is the power of the human brain, habits. Awesome when the habits are serving us well, challenging when they're not. Okay? So, the goal is to break bad habits and add in good, healthy, useful habits. And here's sort of what I like to think about when it comes to habits. I know it's a habit when it becomes more uncomfortable to not do it than it is to do it. Okay?

So maybe you're in the habit of drinking lots of water. That's a good habit that most of us are trying to develop, right? The doctors say we need, like, half our body weight in ounces every day of water. So I don't know about you, but that's a lot of water for me. So, I'm always trying to get in the habit of drinking more water.

So, when I get to the point where not drinking that much water feels bad to me, and sort of throws off my routine and makes me feel sort of out of sorts about my life or my day, then I'll know that's really a habit. Right? It starts to feel better to do it than to not do it. Because that lower brain wants to do the same thing it's always done. It wants to rinse and repeat.

I used to run a lot. Now I run just a little. But when I would run a lot, I remember, if I went too many days without running, I felt restless. I felt irritable. I felt, actually, like a combination of restless in my head, but also fatigue in my body. I could tell I wasn't as energized, because I wasn't getting those exercise endorphins. And I could tell I hadn't had this stress release that running provided me. So, I was in such a habit of running that it felt worse not to run than to run. Right?

You have things like this in your life. Like, I always am in awe at how my kids, I always have to get them to brush their teeth, especially my little kids. Like, hey, it's bedtime. We've got to brush our teeth. And they're like, "Can't we just skip it tonight? Please, I'm too tired. I don't want to brush my teeth." I'm like, "No, you've got to brush your teeth." We already have a cavity problem, so we're brushing on those teeth.

And I'm like, I would never want to go to bed without brushing my teeth. The handful of times that I've done that in my adult life, I wake up in the night and even though I still have nasty, you know, sleep mouth in the night

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when I do brush my teeth, when I don't, it's extra bad. It's like something just feels off. Something tastes weird in my mouth, something's not right if I don't brush those teeth, because I'm so in the habit of doing it. So, this is what we want to develop with healthy habits.

Now, let's get back to false pleasures for a moment. The habits that we develop that are sabotaging us are often in the name of false pleasure. I call it false pleasure because it's not that it isn't pleasurable, some of the bad habits we engage in. I would say that most of them probably are, but it's a false pleasure because it feels good in the moment. It's enjoyable in the moment, or at least it prevents us from feeling the struggle or the pain or the overwhelm or the challenge in the moment.

But in the long run, it's not creating the life that we want. It's not giving us the long-term joy that's available to us. It's a short-term, false sense of our life being good. Okay? So, is your life good? Do you feel the way you want to feel about your life? Do you have the things that you want? Do you have the health that you want? Do you have the feelings and emotions that you want?

Or, do you have false pleasure? Do you have temporary release from stress and pain? But there's actually still stress and pain there, and whatever is causing that in the first place hasn't been solved for. You just have this false sense of relief or escape from it.

All right, so that's what Diet Coke is for me, my friends. Like, I will be going about my day, doing my job, maybe I have a minute in between calls or in between tasks that I have. And that transition time is sort of uncomfortable, because I have to refocus my brain, and I have to figure out what I even should be doing. And maybe what I should be doing, or what I have told myself I was going to do, I don't really want to do.

And that sort of restless feeling gets taken care of with that first sip of a cold can of Diet Coke. Who are my Diet Coke friends out there? You know I'm talking about? Get a can out of the fridge. It's ice cold. Crack it open. Take the first sip. So good, right? That's what my brain tells me, anyway.

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Now, every sip after that gets diminishingly less good. So why do I drink a whole can of Diet Coke? I shouldn't. I should just have the first sip and then throw it away. But I'm in the habit of drinking that whole can of Diet Coke.

So, did my day get better? Did my work become easier? Did I feel less stress or restlessness or overwhelm or resistance to what I have on my calendar that I'm doing? No. I just covered it up with a sip of Diet Coke. That's it.

So, what's the problem with a false pleasure? You might be asking. Well, there's not a problem, if you are okay with it. If it's not creating a negative, backend effect in your life in some way. If it's not creating a problem for you somewhere down the road, and you want to keep that false pleasure, do it. It's totally fine with me.

I have zero judgment of people who are engaging in false pleasures. I don't really know if I've met anyone who doesn't engage in some kind of false pleasure, to navigate being a human being in the world. It's pretty tricky to do, right? But, if that false pleasure is preventing you from having what you really want in your life, maybe it's preventing you only by blocking your awareness and access to the root problem. Right?

If I could stop having a sip of Diet Coke, every time I have to transition tasks, maybe I would actually learn how to transition without the restless feeling. Maybe I would learn how to set my calendar up differently. Maybe it would actually solve for that problem, or I would get really good at focusing my brain when it doesn't want to focus, right? Instead of getting up and walking away, and grabbing a Diet Coke, that's just a possibility. That's all I'm saying. Right?

So I've quit Diet Coke several times, because it does cause health problems for me. I feel like, for me, my body doesn't respond well to it. Of course, there's tons of studies about how bad it is for us, but I even feel physically the effects that it has on my body and know it's not useful.

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So, what is the false pleasure? Or what is at least a false pleasure that's preventing you from accessing what's really going on in your life? Okay? I had this thought about movies, too. I probably talked about this one before, because I realized it this year, and I was like, what?

Where, when I go to a movie, again, I like to have a Diet Coke and some kind of a snack. And one day I thought, what if I go to the movie and I don't have a snack? I don't have anything to eat or drink. My brain was like, what? It sort of twitched, like, why would we do that? What's the point of that? That's ridiculous.

Because I love movies so much, I love going to a movie theater. I love the reclining seats and the dark theater, and I love stories and I love the visual and the music and the loud sound of the movie. I just love the whole experience of going to a movie. It's different than watching a movie at home, right? I love just being in somebody else's story and somebody else's world for an hour-and-a-half to two hours.

And so I thought, well, do I really love the movie though? Or do I love a movie with some peanut M&Ms and a Diet Coke? Or some licorice and a Diet Coke? Like, is the movie really that enjoyable? Not that I want to make the movie less enjoyable, but can I really just love the movie? And in fact, am I missing out on part of the movie experience by having to have that false pleasure on top of it? I don't know. It's kind of interesting to think about, right?

Now, false pleasures can be these sort of minor, more acceptable things that we do, or they can be more extreme things, right? We have people engaged in highly addictive, toxic drugs. They take drugs in order to have that false pleasure, that false sense that their life is good, that they like themselves, that things are going well, that false sense of peace, that false sense of pleasure, joy, excitement, whatever they get from the drug that they're taking, it's a false sense of it.

We have people that are looking at pornography, that are gambling, that are drinking alcohol, right? All kinds of behaviors that are false pleasures.

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But we also have much less obviously toxic ones, such as online shopping, scrolling social media.

Again, Target is like a false pleasure for many of us. Just getting a big red cart and walking up and down the aisles, and seeing what's new there and then buying some crap that we didn't need in the first place. Like that's a false sense of, my life is fun. My life is exciting. I have new things happening. I'm discovering new things.

That's what human beings are wired for, you guys. We're wired to achieve things. We're wired to pursue new things. We're wired to create. Like, that's why we go into Target and we like seeing all the pretty stuff, is because we're wired for creation.

But going in and buying stuff that somebody else made is a false sense of pleasure. It's a false sense of fulfilling your creation need. What if you actually went and made something? That's a lot harder to do, but a lot more real sense of fulfillment when it comes to our need to create in the world. Right?

How about video games? Right? Video games make us feel like we're winning. They make us feel like we're being challenged. They make us feel like there's something that we have to figure out and we can put our brains to work on a strategy, and we can be competitive. All of those desires that live within us are part of the human experience. They're part of what drive us to be better, to create a better world, to invent, to grow.

And so, we can fulfill that in a real way in the real world, or we can fulfill it in a virtual way online in some format. Now, again, I have no judgment for anybody who wants to play video games. Do it. My son plays video games and I'm glad that he does that. He likes them. He connects with his friends who live in California over them.

I'm not saying video games are evil, Diet Coke is evil, Target is evil, none of that. I just want you to know what's going on. Remember, this is about awareness. I want you to know that this is your brain fulfilling one of its

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needs in a way that, if it's creating a problem in your life, it's a false sense of fulfillment of that thing. And if you're willing to go through the discomfort of cutting out the false pleasure, then what's available is 10 times better. I promise you, okay?

Because achieving something in the real world, overcoming a real world challenge, and strategizing to solve for it is so much better. It doesn't even compare to doing that in a video game. The sense of fulfillment and pride that you will get is magnified in a way that I can't even describe. Okay? And so that is true for every false pleasure that we are engaging in.

That's it. That's the truth. That's the reality. Like I said, I still have my false pleasures. So, let's talk about why it's so hard to cut them out. Okay? When you decide, hey, I'm going to stop that false pleasure, or maybe I'm going to minimize it a little bit. Maybe I'm just going to cut back on it a little bit. Maybe I'm going to just decide this is the appropriate amount and I'm not going to engage in it any more than that amount. Or, outside of these timelines, or what have you. Okay?

Then, here's what will happen. You will probably do pretty well at first. Like, if you're like me, a week to two weeks, you'll be like, hey, this is good. I think I can do this. I'm starting to feel better. It was a little hard at first, but it's getting a little easier. I think this is going to last.

And then you'll have that little voice in your head, worried, "But what if it doesn't last? It's probably not going to last. It's probably going to get hard." Okay?

So, here's what I want you to know. It's going to be hard, for sure. Maybe it's hard right away. But expect that it's going to be hard. That at some point, your brain is going to really resist it. Your brain is so brilliant. Your brain will trick you like you would not believe. It will tell you "No, listen, here's the reason why." It will give you all kinds of justifications. It will create the most compelling case for going back to that false pleasure.

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And you'll want to believe it. You'll say, maybe it's true. Maybe this is just not necessary. Maybe it doesn't really matter. Maybe it's too hard to quit. I'm not that kind of person. Everybody does this. It's not a big deal. Right? And maybe you will give into that. Most likely you will, at least some of the time.

Let's just plan on that. You will. At least a little bit, maybe even a lot, give in to that. Maybe you'll do what we call falling off the wagon, which is just a made-up term, because there's no wagon. But, we'll call it that, because a lot of you call it that, right? Then, let's just plan on that happening.

And then what? What do you want to do? Are you going to get back on the wagon? Are you going to view it, this is how a fellow coach of mine sort of explained it to me one time. She's like, "Instead of falling off the wagon, why don't we just view it like, we're on the highway and we just pulled off at a rest stop for a moment. But now we're going to get back on the highway." Okay?

Maybe you have some rest stops that happen along the way. That's okay. Let's not beat ourselves up. Let's not say, "See, I knew this wouldn't work. See, I knew I can't do it." Let's just get off at the rest stop for a minute, and then we get right back on. And maybe that happens over and over again. That's okay.

You have to retrain your brain, because here's the thing. The brain is just responding to dopamine hits. False pleasures give us, typically, concentrated hits of dopamine. And the brain is supposed to take note and say, Dopamine equals survival. We should seek as much of that as possible." So that's why when you eat peanut M&Ms, the brain says, "That was amazing. That'll keep us alive forever. We should do that all the time." Right?

Which we know is not true. Peanut M&Ms will not keep me alive forever. They taste good in the moment, but they're definitely not something I should seek on the regular, as much as possible. Nor is Diet Coke. So, I

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just have to be on to my brain, right? "Oh, I get it brain. You think this is very important for my survival, but you are wrong about this."

"Yes, it's very pleasurable. Yes, we get a huge dopamine hit. Yes, it's very fun. And now that I'm not answering that craving or urge that you're creating for me, I'm in all of this discomfort, and that's okay." Right?

What if it's okay? What if you're willing to be uncomfortable? Here's the thing. False pleasures are super hard to get rid of, because not only are you denying yourself the pleasure and the joy from the whatever the thing is, but now you're in discomfort because you have unanswered desire, unanswered urge. Right?

But it's totally doable, my friends. I promise you. The drama that we create around an unanswered urge is the intolerable part. The drama of poor me, this is too hard. I can't do this. This isn't fair. I shouldn't have to suffer like this. Whatever other thoughts you're believing, that's the intolerable part. And that part is available to you to clean up, right?

It can be, I do want this, but I want something else more. It's okay to want this. I can be uncomfortable. There's something better available to me on the other side of this. I wonder what it is. That's the thing, you guys, you don't even have to know what it is.

But if you can understand and believe that there is something better, because in the first place, you're trying to solve for a part of being human, and every part of being human is designed to help you become your best self.

Your desires, your interest, your urges, are trying to drive you towards your best life. And if you stop trying to satisfy them with false pleasure, then you will find your best life on the other side of it. Are you willing to be uncomfortable? Are you willing to be patient with it? Are you willing to have unanswered desire? That's the question. I don't know. It's a tough one.

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Okay, the last point I want to make is I want to talk about abstaining versus moderating. Okay? So, there are people out there who will tell you that you should just abstain from whatever the thing is that you're trying to cut out. Like, just don't do it at all. It's easier. Let's just use sugar as an example, because I've been talking about sugar and Diet Coke, which I know upsets some of you, and I'm genuinely sorry. You can just not listen to this episode.

But, at any rate, let's say you're trying to stop eating sugar, okay? Abstainers will tell you, just don't eat it. Ever. It's easier than having to negotiate when you're going to eat just a little bit, because then you're going to start rationalizing and justifying and that's a harder thing to do in your head.

Because to someone who's an abstainer when it comes to sugar, it is harder for them, and that might be you. Abstainers are pretty convinced that everyone should abstain. They'll tell you this over and over again.

And then there are moderators. For a moderator, it's a little bit easier to just have a little bit less of that thing, and to just plan in advance and have just a reasonable portion. And that's easier than the noise that the brain creates when we try to cut it out altogether. Okay? I learned this concept from Gretchen Rubin. This is the way she teaches it, and that made total sense to me.

Was, if you're a moderator, you try to convince everybody that they should all be moderators. They're like listen, if you just have a little bit, then you sort of satisfy the biggest part of that desire, and then the brain settles down, and then you can just still be healthy around it and go on your way.

Here's the truth. You have to decide for yourself. Is abstaining easier than moderating? Or is moderating easier than abstaining? Decide and commit to what you're going to do. Don't let other people tell you what you should do. Don't let them tell you that you should just have a little bit, or you should cut it out altogether. Only you know.

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And the thing is, is you're not an abstainer in every area of your life, or a moderator in every area of your life. This might be specific to specific areas of your life. Maybe there's certain foods that you can moderate and others that you need to just abstain from altogether, because maybe they create even more desire.

So, whatever the false pleasure is, decide in advance if you're going to abstain or moderate, and then make the decision in advance. Expect that the brain will not like it, it will get mad, it will create a real solid case for why you should change up what you're doing. Expect that you're going to fall off the wagon, and be all in for being on this journey.

That's what the journey looks like of cutting off false pleasure, by the way. It doesn't look like I tried this one program and then everything went amazingly well. That just does not happen for very many people, right? It looks like trying and failing and falling and getting up again.

So, are you in? Let's do it, you guys. 2020, this is our year. All right, thanks for joining me today. I will see you next week on another episode. 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.