

Ep 255. Examining Racism



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

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Ep 255. Examining Racism

I'm Jody Moore, and this is Better Than Happy episode 255: Examining Racism.

Welcome to *Better Than Happy*. I'm your host, Jody Moore. I'm a mother to four children, I'm a huge Taylor Swift fan, and I'm a master certified life coach. I'm here to teach you how to manage your brain and manage your emotions so that you can create a life that's even better than happy. Are you ready? Let's go.

Hey everyone. Thanks for joining me for this episode. Wow, could 2020 get any crazier? This year just keeps on getting better, right? So I haven't been super vocal about this topic. I talked a little bit to my clients in Be Bold about it this week, but I haven't been saying a whole lot about it otherwise.

And I wasn't sure if I was going to talk about it on the podcast or not, but I stopped and considered my reasons for not speaking up about what's going on in our country and I decided I didn't like those reasons.

And so I'm recording this episode, but I do want to begin with a qualifier, which is the reason I haven't spoken up a whole lot about it and the reason I was hesitant to do this episode as well is because I know I am not qualified to speak on this topic.

I know that I don't have any idea what it's like to be at the receiving end of racism. And in fact, I don't have anybody super close to me that's affected by it. I am a white woman living a privileged life and I understand that that means I am not the best person to speak up on this topic.

I also understand that when it comes to this topic, I am uneducated and naive. So I just want to begin with that disclaimer, but I also want to say that the reason I did decide to speak up about it is because I think not speaking up when I have a pretty large following, a lot of people that listen to me on the regular, and I think not speaking about what's happening right now in our country sends a message in and of itself.

And I do understand the human brain and I do have some thoughts I want to share that I think might be useful. I want to share what I am going to do

Ep 255. Examining Racism

personally to try to be part of the solution. But again, I in no way am claiming to be the expert on this and I'm all ears.

So I really want to invite you to send me messages. You can come and comment on an Instagram post or DM me or however you want to reach out to me. I'm all ears about anything you want to share with me that will help me to further educate myself and maybe help our listeners as well on how we can best be part of the solution to this problem that we've experiencing in such an intense way right now in our country and has been around obviously ever since our country was founded.

So here's what I want to do first of all. I want to just read to you a couple definitions that I found for racism, just by a quick online search. We have the Merriam-Webster definition of racism, which says racism is a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

Next definition that came up for me here was from Wikipedia. It's a very long definition but I'll just read the first sentence. It says racism is the belief that groups of humans possess different behavioral traits corresponding to physical appearance and can be divided based on the superiority of one race over another.

So what stood out to me in both of those definitions is the word superiority. Now, that is something that I know some things about. That is something I coach on a lot. Now, I don't mean I coach on people saying that they're racist and that they think that one race is better than another, but I do coach a lot of people who are struggling to understand at the deepest level that every human being is equally complete, equally worthy, equally lovable.

You guys know I talk about this a lot on the podcast. And I have found that most people, I dare say everybody, has some thoughts rattling around in the brain that say, "No, these people are better than those people."

And it might be based on race, it might be based on gender, it might be based on sexuality or appearance, attractiveness, fame, money, mental

Ep 255. Examining Racism

health, how righteous we deem them to be, whether or not they're living their lives the way that we think a "good" person should, how much they accomplish, how much success they have or just how much they get done in a given day, whether or not they use language that we approve of, what their education level is, and I could go on a long time like this.

But we all have thoughts rattling around in there that say, "No, someone who is this way or does these things or acts this way or looks this way is a little bit better than someone who doesn't." So I think it's very rare to find an exception of someone that doesn't have some of those thoughts rattling around.

Now, here's what I want you to know. Those thoughts, many of them, for many people exist in your subconscious brain. Your subconscious brain is a complicated part of you that has been conditioned throughout your entire lifetime. When we're born as babies, we don't have opinions. We don't have thoughts about what makes somebody more valuable than somebody else.

But as we go through life, we develop those opinions. I'm not exactly sure what age it starts. I did not take the time to research what a child development specialist would say, but my guess from the little bit I do know and from observing my own children is that it starts somewhere between ages five and eight, depending on the child, depending on how quickly they mature and things.

But the brain develops well enough and the child become mature enough between five and eight to grasp this idea that maybe some people are just a little bit better than other people or a lot better than other people. In my seven-year-old for example, it looks like him wanting to be cool like his siblings are cool. His older brother and sister. He wants to fit in with the big kids. He wants them to accept him. He wants to feel like he is enough.

And he realizes that when they don't want to hang out with him and they make fun of him, that it makes him feel like he's inferior and those older siblings are superior, which is where we first start developing the idea that

Ep 255. Examining Racism

there's such a thing as human beings who are superior to other human beings, which is a lie, but we all have a version of those thoughts rattling around in there.

So this conditioning again is so complicated. It's made up of so many layers. It's not just what your parents told you. Your parents might have taught you that that's not true, that everyone's equal and lovable and that we love all human beings. But your parents were just one tiny part of all the stimulus that you've been receiving throughout your lifetime.

We have things that we watch on TV, on the computer, at the movies. We have articles or things that we read, books that we read, stories that we read. Countless conversations with people, starting again from a very young age, from all the conversations we've had with our friends at school, all the conversations we just overheard somewhere, and on and on from there.

So again, the brain is a complicated web of thoughts and it holds onto some and it forgets others, but within that subconscious brain are more thoughts than any of us could possibly become aware of. Now, what happens is something happens outside of us, we take in stimulus through one of our senses, we see or hear something, and the brain sends a thought up the thought elevator is how I like to picture it.

So imagine my subconscious brain is kind of like the basement of my house. We have the storage room in the basement and it has some stuff in there that's useful that we want, like the Christmas decorations and the luggage if we can ever travel again and things like that. And then there's a whole bunch of stuff in there that we don't want but we just don't even realize is there.

It's shoved in a corner, it's on the back of a shelf somewhere, we've totally forgotten what it even is, and if we were to pull it out, we'd be like, "What? That's junk. Why do we have that? Let's get rid of that." So that's kind of how the subconscious brain is too.

Ep 255. Examining Racism

You were taught things at a different point in your life that your brain took note of but you don't even want to keep those thoughts. So when we bring a thought up from the unconscious brain, like when your lower brain sends a thought up, then now it's in the conscious brain. It's in the prefrontal cortex part of your brain, which is where you have the ability to decide if you're going to believe that thought and if you're going to keep that thought, or if you're going to question it and examine it and try to do some decluttering of the basement.

So the goal in coaching and what I'm trying to teach you guys here is that we have to gain awareness. We have to bring some of those thoughts that are in the subconscious up into the conscious brain so that we can take a look at them. That is where your power lies. That is where your authority lies.

And just because a thought gets sent up the thought elevator doesn't mean you have to believe that thought. It doesn't mean that you really think it's true even. But if it still exists down there, if it's hiding in the basement, we want to call it up and take a look at it. So how do we do that?

Well, like I said, we have to become aware of what the thought even is. We have to expose it to the light. And we have to be slow and cautious about doing this because as soon as we tell ourselves that it's terrible to have that thought, don't tell anyone I have that thought, or we deny it or repress it or push it away, we just send it right back down to the basement.

So I'm going to talk more about that in just a minute. I just want to give you, first of all, three things that will sabotage your ability to really examine your thinking and take a look at it. The first thing is not recognizing that it's a thought. Believing that it's just something that's true will cause you to lose awareness of that thought. It will send that thought right back down to the basement.

So you have to be willing to question your thinking, to question things that you just think are facts. And I do it by just asking myself, what if I'm wrong

Ep 255. Examining Racism

about that? It's possible that that's not true at all. It's possible that I'm wrong.

Now, if we're talking about a racist thought, if you notice a racist thought come into your mind, then my guess is that any of you listening to this podcast probably don't believe the racist thought that comes up. You probably have it come up and you immediately go, "What? That's not true at all." But you might move into number two, the second thing that will cause you to lose access to it, which is guilt and shame.

As soon as we tell ourselves, "No, I don't believe that, that's terrible. I can't believe that thought even popped into my head, I don't believe that for a second," we try to push it away, we try to shame it, try to tell ourselves that it's terrible and don't ever say that out loud, don't let anyone know that popped into your head, again, that sends that right down into the basement.

Now, it's better than just believing it and acting out on it, but it still doesn't help you get access and awareness to it. So this is why I'm seeing a lot of people post on social media right now saying, "If you're a white person living in the United States, you have racist thoughts." Some version of that, right?

And I'm noticing a lot of white people getting upset, saying, "Why are they accusing me of having racist thoughts just because I'm a white person living in the United States?" And what I want to say is well, maybe they're right. Maybe it's true.

Because if you look at the way this country was founded when we signed the Declaration of Independence, it was designed to help straight, white men get ahead. And women didn't have rights, and African Americans certainly didn't have rights. They were owned as slaves and treated horribly.

And the idea, the thought back then was that straight, white men were superior to anything else that goes against that. So to think that some of those ideas haven't been passed along through our culture is probably a

Ep 255. Examining Racism

little bit naive. It probably has been. We probably do have some of those thoughts.

So instead of beating yourself up and sending it back to the basement, I like to call out a thought like that to myself when I notice it. Doesn't mean I believe it. I definitely know it's not true, but I like to pause and go, "Huh, this is interesting. Why do I have this thought rattling around in my head?"

I wonder what that's about and I want to explore it. I want to question it and I want to understand it because that is how you bring it into the light long enough to actually help it dissolve away. And I don't know, maybe it won't ever go away altogether. Maybe it will always come up and I'll always have to catch myself and notice it, but the goal is to unravel those thoughts, to clean out the basement a little bit.

So that's the second thing that sabotages us. The third thing, which again is probably not going to apply in this situation but I just want to give it to you because you can use this any time you're trying to clean up your thinking a little bit is if you hold onto the thought really tight.

So again, there are people in this country, I'm not saying that there are not people who don't believe racist thoughts and hold onto racist thoughts. But my guess is those of you listening to this podcast are not those people. You're loving, kind, Christ-like people.

But there are other instances in our life when we hold onto thoughts tightly. We just don't want to let them go. It feels useful or necessary. I find my clients do this sometimes with their own self-loathing thoughts, their own guilty thoughts, their thoughts about how their kids shouldn't lie or their husbands shouldn't stay up watching video games or a lot of judgmental thoughts of others are sometimes hard to let go of.

And that will sabotage your ability to really expose that thought to the light and get rid of it. Now, I do want to mention that the goal is not to just stop having thoughts. I want you to have thoughts. We are human beings, we're supposed to have thoughts. We're supposed to have opinions about things.

Ep 255. Examining Racism

We're supposed to have thoughts that we believe and that we want to keep.

And what I like to ask myself that helps me find the truth - because I always tell people the goal isn't just to have thoughts that feel good all the time. It's to have thoughts that serve you, that help you be your highest self and your best self, which means sometimes I want to have thoughts that don't even feel good like, "Murder is bad. Violence is not necessary."

Thoughts like that. Those are just my opinions, but sometimes I want to keep a thought like that that still causes me to feel sad when someone is murdered, anxious when there's violence. These aren't great feelings but I don't want to change my thoughts either.

So how do we know what thoughts are most useful? Well, of course it's your decision to make, but I like to ask myself, what would Christ think in this situation? We always talk about what would Jesus do, which is I think also a useful question, but I like to ask myself, what would Jesus Christ think about this?

And how would he then feel about this, which is what's going to drive what he would do. So I have to always begin with myself, and that's what I want to encourage for any of you listening. We have to be willing to look at our thoughts, whether they be racist thoughts, sexist thoughts, or any of the other things that I've listed. Any other judgment that we have about other people, anything that makes someone else superior to others.

Even if that's, again, that you're making other people superior to you. It's still reinforcing the idea that there is such a thing as a hierarchy of people and goodness, which is just not true. So what I like to do is begin by examining my own thoughts.

And I know to know that I'm going to find some in the basement that I don't like, that are not Christ-like, that are not who I want to be, that I don't believe really, my logical brain, but they're there. So I have to be willing to acknowledge and examine those for myself.

Ep 255. Examining Racism

Now, that's, I think, one of the most important things that I can be doing to contribute to the solution, but there are a handful of others that I think are useful. And like I said, I'm totally open to your suggestions about what else anyone in my situation can do. So that's number one is I'm examining myself, I'm working on rooting out racism within me or any other judgmental thoughts, which is ongoing work that I will always have to do my entire life.

The second thing that I'm doing is making sure that I'm showing up as the mother I want to be by teaching my children about this topic. Talking about it in our home, teaching them what's true. There's an excellent video that I will link to that does a great demonstration of how people in certain situations in this country start out so far ahead of the game.

So don't think that you're winning in the sense that you did so much better or that you're better than someone else. You started so much further ahead than so many people. And not that it's wrong that you started ahead, but we just want to be aware of it.

And what I told my children when we watched this video is like, you haven't done anything wrong. I'm not getting after you, but I do believe that where much is given, much is expected. Read that in the scriptures. And I want you to know that we are very fortunate and blessed, and I think the Lord expects a lot of us.

Get involved politically if you want to. Sign petitions, go to peaceful protests or however you feel like you can make an impact politically. I'm all for you taking action in that way. Be willing to have conversations and talk about it. I think some of us are so scared, like I said, nervous to talk about it because we know we're going to get it wrong.

Because we're going to say it the wrong way, or we might accidentally offend somebody, or we might not be educated enough. I think we need to be having conversations to be able to educate ourselves, to be able to get to where we're trying to go.

I think number five, I want to really better understand other people's stories. I want to know what it's like to be at the receiving end of racism. I want to

Ep 255. Examining Racism

be more connected and closer and more understanding to those who have been affected.

And then number six - actually, I just thought of one more. I was going to say the last one but I thought of one more. So number six is we can serve. Maybe you give of your time, maybe you give of your money, maybe you give of both, but you spend time in service.

And then number seven, final thing is to educate ourselves. I'm going to be doing some reading, I'm going to be doing some learning about this topic and about how I can positively make an impact. I'm a huge believer in responding with love. I think that we cannot improve the judgment and hate in our country by judging and hating people for judging and hating.

I think we have to be curious. We have to be open to understanding it, and we have to internally examine ourselves. That doesn't make anything that people do that is bad behavior okay. That doesn't mean there shouldn't be consequences. But I'm always asking myself what is the most loving way that I can respond here. That's the goal.

Alright you guys, thank you for joining me for this episode today. Have a great weekend. Stay safe. I love you. I'll see you next time.

Who is your life coach? If you don't have one, I would be so honored to be your coach. I created a virtual coaching program called Be Bold that I want to invite you to join me in. We can address challenges, we can work on goals, and we can do it in so many ways.

We have group coaching, individual private coaching, and online chats, along with hundreds of hours of courses and content that I've created just for you. When you're ready to really take what you're learning on the podcast to the 10X level, then come check out Be Bold at jodymoore.com/membership.