

270. How to Say Hard Things



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy* episode 270: How to Say Hard Things.

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 gang. What's happening? Hope you're having a great week. I'm having so much fun this week. I have been teaching coaches who are working with me on some advanced coach training. And we're having so much fun, at least I'm having so much fun, some of them are, I think most of them are.

And then I also got to do a call with all of you all in Be Bold, all my lovely Be Bold peeps. Got to think of a name for you guys, I don't know what the name should be. If you have a name suggestion please DM it to me on Instagram. I don't want us to be Be Bolders, it just sounds not right, so send me a name.

But anyway, we did a Q&A call because in the month of September we are working on self-confidence, self-connection, relationship with self, super fun work to do, that was fun. And by the end of that two and a half hours of talking my voice was nearly gone. So I took a little break and I think it's back enough to record this podcast for you all.

Here's the thing, got asked this question a couple of times on Instagram, some version of- how do I say this? So I got asked, "How do I tell my family that I love them but I'm not really ready to gather due to concerns over the pandemic?" And my reply was, "Family, I love you but I'm not ready to gather due to concerns over the pandemic." Now, that was a little bit smart Alecky of me, but I did it on purpose because I wanted to show the person something. And I don't know if they saw it or not. It depends on how familiar they are probably with what I teach.

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But the next time I did a Q&A box it was the same thing, I got someone said, “How do I tell my husband whose home working at home right now that I need a little space?” And my reply was, “Husband, I need a little space.” Okay, so every time somebody asks me, “How do I tell someone this?” I always just repeat their words back to them because what I want to show them is that how do I say this is the wrong question.

Now, we all ask each other that question all the time. How do I tell my child this? How do I tell my husband that? How do I tell these people this? Why do we ask that question? Well, because what we mean is a whole lot more loaded. Now, here is the best part, normally when you ask people that question they’re a lot nicer than me. They don’t give you a smart Alecky just feed your words back to you. But I’m only doing it out of love as your coach to try to show you your brain. It’s the simplest way I can show you your brain.

But normally our friends say, “You know what you should say, you should say this, or you should try that, or you should wait until they’re in the right mood, or for sure, don’t say these things, don’t say that. That’s the wrong thing to say.” Lots of people out there telling us what not to say, and we all give each other this advice.

But again what we really mean, what’s really behind it is how can I say it in such a way that they won’t feel offended? How can I say what’s really true, what I really want to say, what I’m really thinking and try to control their emotions, their thoughts, their reaction, their opinions of me, how do I control other people and still say this thing that’s true for me? Isn’t that what we really mean?

Isn’t that what we mean when we give our friends advice if they say, “How do I approach my child who I think might be smoking pot?” We give them advice. And what we mean is, try saying this because this might control the child, this might get the child to open and be honest with you. And at the same time not cause the child to be super upset, or mad, or all the things.

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Now, nothing wrong with us human beings when we do this. There's nothing wrong with us thinking that if we say it in the right way it might change the outcome. Because sometimes that does work, sometimes we alter ourselves and it alters the way the other people feel, think, behave, react etc. So I'm not saying we have to mix that part of us all together. I just want you to pause with me for just a moment and notice that we don't need help knowing what to say. We all know the words. The words are in the question.

What we need help with is understanding what is my role in terms of how I influence other people and how do I feel good about myself on the other side of this conversation? How do I still feel like I'm a good person, a good family member, a good wife, a good daughter? How do I feel like and believe that I'm the person I'm trying to be and still say this thing that I want to say given that they may interpret it in such a way that they feel hurt, sad, mad, judgmental etc? That's what we really mean.

That is so important to know, you guys, what we really want is to be comfortable with other people having their emotions, opinions and for us to be able to feel good about ourselves, period. That's kind of what we always want by the way. It's at the root of everything I talk about on this podcast.

So sometimes when I point this out to my clients they say, "Oh, so why are we so in their model?" I like to say. I did an episode not too long ago on other people's models, you can go check out.

But the idea is like we spend a lot of time imagining what's going on for other people. And trying to manipulate what's going on for other people, and trying to control, or at least having opinions and judgments about what's going on for other people. The reason I recommend we minimize that is only because other people have agency, dang it. If only they didn't then we could control them, but they do.

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So other people have agency, they get to choose what they're going to think, they get to choose how they show up. They even get to choose how they're going to feel and they're supposed to, of course. I'm being sarcastic when I say we wish they didn't, of course we're glad they do, that's all part of God's plan. And we want them to have that and so us spending a lot of time in their model is not useful. We don't get to control them.

Now, sometimes when I offer this to my clients they say to me, "Oh, so I just shouldn't care about what other people think? I should just let my family be super mad at me? I should just tell my husband the truth which is I need space for a new husband that's working at home. And if he feels really hurt or offended I should think, well, that's his model, that's his thought creating his feeling."

So I think I said this before recently even but I will say it again. Those are not our only two options. Why do our brains do this? Why do we go from one extreme to the other? Why do our brains go from I'm going to try to manipulate you and dance around you and maybe even lie in order to try to please you? That's one extreme. Or I don't care what you think. I don't give a crap what you think. Excuse my language, dad. I don't think he likes that. Anyway, he's not listening, so it's fine.

Okay, so those are the two extremes. We don't have to go to either extreme. There are about a million other options in between. And what I am always trying to coach you guys to is the middle. Do you know what the middle looks like? Extremes are both not healthy, they're both fear based, if you will. The middle is based in trust, and love, and confidence, and clean thinking.

And the middle says – and as I was making notes for this podcast I was like how am I going to sum up the middle? And what kept coming to my mind is what my friend, Rosemary, who is the Joy Warrior on Instagram, I have never met her but I just know her from Instagram and I love what she posts. And she always, often anyway, at the end of her captions, signs off, "I love

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you, I love me, I love us.” That’s the middle. That’s the cleanest, healthiest place to be, I love you, and I love me, and I love us. And that’s tricky to land on.

So instead of asking your friends, “How do I say this? What should I say?” I recommend that you start asking people, or at least asking yourself, what feels like love for me, and love for them, and love for us? What feels most like love? First of all, before we even worry about what to say, how do I get myself to that place? How do I get my head into that middle place of I love me, and I love them, and I love us? Get your head there, okay?

Now, I’m going to give you four sort of tools that you can keep in your little toolbox next time you have to say something that you think is going to be hard to say. And the goal with each of these tools is to get you to the middle of the continuum. We don’t want to be on the far left. We don’t want to be on the far right. We want to be in the middle, that’s the healthy place. So keep that in mind as I go through these tools.

Tool number one is the tool of allowing emotions. Allowing emotions is an important thing that you do for yourself, first of all. We have to open up to emotions.

Sometimes when I say what feels most like love, love for you, love for them, love for everyone? People look at me with blank stares. I don’t know, I can’t imagine how I could be loving of everyone in this scenario. Because instead of asking what looks like love, what their brains are hearing is what equals happiness for everyone? What would make everyone happy? And sometimes there are situations when someone is going to be unhappy.

But I want you to know that disappointment or whatever other negative emotion, does not equal lack of love, it doesn’t mean that there’s not love there. Heavenly Father sent us here to Earth and he loves us beyond what we can comprehend. And yet we’re disappointed all the time, how could He have done that? He did it because He knows that being disappointed

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doesn't mean somebody's gone wrong. Even being anxious, and stressed, and worried, and fearful, and all the other negative emotions, doesn't mean something's wrong.

He didn't send us here and let us experience all that because He doesn't love us. In fact He knows that experiencing all of those in some way helps refine us and helps us become more like Him. That's my thought anyway.

Okay, so number one, allow emotions for you. So what emotions are you feeling as you get ready to tell your family, "Hey, I'm not coming to the family reunion, or I'm not coming to that family trip because I'm not comfortable gathering right now in the midst of the pandemic?" What emotions are you feeling? Are you feeling nervous? Are you feeling insecure? Are you feeling disappointed and sad? Are you feeling worried? What are you feeling? Allow yourself to feel all of your emotions.

Now, yes, you're the creator of them with your thoughts, but remember, it doesn't mean you shouldn't be thinking what you're thinking, it doesn't mean you shouldn't be feeling them. So allow emotions for you.

Number two, we're going to allow other people to have their emotions. Isn't that so nice of us? As though we could take them away from them, we can't. So we're going to remember that it's okay for people to feel however they choose to feel. It doesn't necessarily mean I've done something wrong. It may or may not mean I want to change my behavior. We'll talk about that in a minute. But it's okay for other people to feel however they want to feel. So we're going to just allow emotions.

When I say it, it sounds so simple but I remember learning this in the beginning and it was so life changing to me, to think wait a second, I don't have to run around trying to control how everybody feels and try to keep myself happy all the time. I can just allow emotions. Why did nobody tell me this when I was in fifth grade? I think that's when I should have learned it.

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Obviously I wouldn't have been able to comprehend it then. But now you know, okay?

Tool number two, keep more focus on who you're being and less focus on who they're being. It doesn't mean that I don't care what they think. It doesn't mean that what they think or feel is not relevant to me. Of course I want to know. But we tend to have the scales tipped completely the wrong way.

We have so much focus on what they're going to feel, or whether or not they're doing it right, or whether or not they're going to judge us or be mad at us. And not nearly enough focus on ourselves, on how we want to feel, or what we're going to think, or who we're going to be, what we're going to do, even what we're going to say. What we're going to say is an important part of the focus on self. But you've got to tip the scales in your head. I get that in conversations we're like, "Well, tell me what to say."

But again if the reason behind you asking that is because you're trying to manipulate their emotions, then it's still coming from being in their model. So we want to just tip the scales a little bit. Of course I'm still going to consider how I think they might feel, if appropriate, might even ask them their opinion. And I want to hear their thoughts, and I want to hear how they feel. I want to be open to all of it. Remember, it's I love me, I love you, I love us, I'm loving everyone here. So just tip the scales a little more. Start focusing more on what you're thinking, less on what they may be thinking.

Alright, number three tool, be genuinely open to their thoughts and opinions. Now, again, this sounds very cliché, this is not anything new that you haven't heard, is a good way to be the kind of human you're trying to be. But I think a lot of us go into conversations sort of with our guard up ready to plead our case, or ready to try to convince them to feel how we want them to feel.

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And if you do step number one and you do step number two, then you don't have to be on guard, you don't have to try to convince them, because remember, it's okay for them to feel however they want to feel. And we just decide who we want to be, what feels like Jody Moore being the best Jody she could possibly be in this scenario. And then I can genuinely hear them.

I can't hear them if I go into it defensive. All I hear is, okay, this is what they think is wrong, and this is what they think is wrong, so how am I going to counter that? What am I going to say that might convince them to feel differently, or to think differently?

Whether you want to call it an argument or a difficult conversation, if we think we have to convince them of something or change their thoughts or feelings, then we don't listen the same way. We're not listening from a place of openness. We're not genuinely curious. We're just collecting data so that we know what to say next to try to change things, which is not very effective. Because they're listening to us the same way, they're listening for how to counter our argument.

So instead I want to be genuinely open. So it might sound like this, "Hey family, I love you, and I know you're all going to get together in the fall, and as much as I would love to see you, I don't feel comfortable coming right now because of the pandemic. But I would love to hear your opinion about why you think it's perfectly safe to gather. And maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm missing something. Maybe you have information that I don't have, please tell me, I want to hear."

Do you see how I'm genuinely open to, like I kind of want to be wrong even about some things, about this one I might want to be wrong. So listen with openness. Now, it doesn't mean you have to change your opinion. You might say, "Gosh, thanks for sharing all that with me. You make a really valid point. I just don't feel comfortable coming, so I'm not going to come." So be willing to be wrong. Be open to changing your mind if you want to.

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This happens a lot in marriages and things. Any time you're in an argument with someone it's because you're trying to be right. This is always true. If I'm arguing with someone it's because I'm trying to be right. So I like to notice that because I don't like arguing with people. And I can't think of very many times when I've been able to convince the other person that I'm right. But what else also ends the argument is, me deciding to be wrong. So I try to always be open to it, "You disagree with me. Tell me why. Tell me all the things."

And this is why the term 'pick your battles' is so powerful and relevant. If I'm talking about disagreements with my teenagers, or my husband, or people that I might have differing opinions with that I live my life with, that I have a lot of interaction with, I'm going to pick my battles because I don't want to have to fight for all of them. That's going to be exhausting. It's going to distance us and put disconnection between us.

So I'm going to let them be right. And the way I do that is I step back a lot of times and remember that most of the things we fight about don't really even matter, they really don't. Whether or not we're going to hang that shelf up above the kids' bed or above their dresser. I wanted to put some shelves above my kids' bed. And my husband's like he thinks that's dangerous, because if there's an earthquake or something, it could fall on them. And in my head I'm like, we live in Spokane, I don't think we're going to have an earthquake big enough that that's even a concern.

But I'm not going to battle him on that one. It doesn't matter, even though my head thinks so. It would look so much better because it would balance out the room and they have this big empty wall above their bed. And they could reach it. They could stand on the bed and get their stuff. My brain thinks everything matters. It thinks that my opinions really matter but you know what? Mostly they don't. Even about bigger things like whether or not it's safe to gather right now or things like this, that the brain's like, no, this matters, because this is life or death.

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But does it really? Again, I'm not saying you should sacrifice what you want if you don't feel comfortable gathering. But I'm just saying does it matter that I be right that it's not safe? Or can I just concede that maybe it is, maybe it isn't and I'm not going to go? But I don't need to argue about it. You could be right, that it's perfectly safe. You could be right and I choose not to go, we don't have to argue about it. Do you see what I'm saying? So be open to what they have to say.

I want to hear the opinions of all the people I love because if they have a suggestion for me of something they want me to do different, I might be willing to do it. And if they want me to do that and they think that's going to make them happy, sometimes I'm all in. Other times I'm not, but I'm totally open to hearing it.

Tool number four, and this is probably my most favorite tool to use in this situation, when you need to have a conversation, you need to say something that's going to be hard to say. Is to tell, not just tell the truth, tell the entire truth, because here's what I find my clients do is they, again, they're sort of dancing around it, they're trying to figure out, what do I say that won't, you know, I don't want them to know that I'm worried that they might judge me.

Or I don't want my child to know that I'm really worried about his future or that I am stressed about his choices. And I always say, "Why not?" Instead we're going to pretend, we're going to try to smile through it and they're going to read that. We're going to disconnect from one another. And I'm going to disconnect from myself by not telling the truth.

So here's what I mean by tell the entire truth. The entire truth isn't, "Hey honey, I really could use a little space from you when you're home." That's only part of the truth.

Here's the rest of the truth. "I'm sort of afraid to say this to you, because I'm afraid you're going to interpret it as me not loving you, and I do love you,

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although sometimes you do get on my nerves. I like to have a little space. But I love you and I know you need to work from home and this is challenging for me and I'm sure it's challenging for you. And I'm kind of worried that you're going to get mad after it and not talk to me for a few days. And if you want to get mad, you can, and I love you. But I kind of hope you won't get mad." And that's the whole truth.

Now, you don't have to say all of that. I'm sure you're much more eloquent and you will choose your words much wiser than me. But that's the whole truth.

The whole truth is family, "I love you and you're all gathering in the fall and I don't feel comfortable coming because of the pandemic. But I'm kind of worried that if I don't come, you're going to talk about me, and you're going to judge me, and you're going to think that I don't love you. And you get to do that if you want, but just know that's not the reason at all. And I have no judgment of you for gathering but I'm just not going to be there."

That's the whole truth. What if we tell the entire truth, not just parts of the truth, but the entire truth? How often do we tell the entire truth? Not very often. Now, one of the reasons why we don't tell the entire truth very often is because the entire truth is often not very kind.

So this is another thing that we work on a lot in coaching in *Be Bold* for those of you that are in there you see this. When people come on a call they ask me, "What should I say?" We spend very little time on what to say. Because if the entire truth isn't something, kind of the entire truth is, "Hey, stepmom, I wish you never would have married my dad because I liked my mom better and I'm sad that she's gone and I think that you're rude." And if the entire truth isn't very kind then we're not ready to have the conversation.

We need to clean up our thoughts, our judgments and our emotions. So you'll hear that a lot if you're in *Be Bold*. And if you're not in *Be Bold* I don't

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know what's the matter with you, but you need to get in there. Just saying, nothing's the matter with you, I'm kidding. But you need to get in there because I want you guys to hear the real life application of what I'm teaching you here. It really will take everything way beyond what I can give you here.

So we want to clean up our heads until we are in a place of kindness. Remember, we're trying to get to I love you, I love me, I love us. So we have to take a look at your thoughts right now, at the story you're believing right now. And there's nothing wrong with the story you're believing, by the way, you cannot do this effectively if you're going to start judging your story.

Whenever a client comes on and tells me, "I know I shouldn't be thinking this. I know it's just my thoughts. I know this is terrible." Then as a coach what I know is that they don't know any of that. They don't know that their thinking is optional. And the first set of thoughts we have to tackle are the thoughts about their thoughts, the thought that they shouldn't be thinking this. We have to start there if you have that layer.

So the way we dissolve that layer is by remembering, of course I think a bunch of ridiculous not useful thoughts. It's fine; I'm a human being with a human brain. Let's go brain, what else you got in there? Let's take a look at it. So don't start judging yourself, but we clean up your thinking until you're in a compassionate, or a curious, or loving place. And then you just tell the truth.

And here's what's so fun about coaching. When you get your head in that right space then you don't need to ask anybody what to say. Because the truth is, what I would say may not be the same thing you would say because we have different personalities. And I don't know your family and I don't know what your relationship is like with them. And I don't know what words you would choose. But I don't need to know that and neither do you, you know what to say.

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We just have to get your head in the right space first. We have to get you understanding that honoring your desires and your wishes, matters. And you don't even have to have a good reason. And also being curious about their desires and their wishes is probably something you want to do, probably somebody that you want to be as well. And that you can do all of that, and that when you show up and you tell the entire truth with love, and with openness, then you cannot lose, my friend. Because remember, we also allow all emotions.

So there's no way that conversation doesn't turn out beautiful if you implement the four tools I just gave you.

Alright, you guys, we've got this, come on, let's do it. Alright, have a beautiful rest of your week. Make sure you subscribe to the podcast because I put out a new episode every Friday, so you can keep an eye out for them Friday mornings, go in and check it out. If you're subscribed then the app will automatically pull it into your feed, so you don't even have to remember to do it. Alright, thank you for being here. Thank you for sharing all this with your friends. I love you guys. 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 different 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.