

279. How to Avoid Conflict



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy* episode 279: How to Avoid Conflict.

Did you know that you can live a life that's even better than happy? My name is Jody Moore. I'm a master certified life coach, and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And if you're willing to go with me, I can show you how. Let's go.

Hello everybody, welcome to *Better Than Happy*. If you're new here then I want to welcome you and thank you for listening. And I want to let you know that there is a podcast roadmap that will help get you up to speed with all the things that I teach here, and it's free. And it is not only a roadmap of the eight episodes I recommend you listen to if you like what you hear today and you want to go back and just kind of onboard yourself.

But it also has a little mini directory. It doesn't have every episode on there, it just has a handful that relate to some of the most common topics and requests we get. We get a lot of people that message us saying, "Do you have a podcast on this topic and that topic? And do you have one that helps with this problem that I'm having, or this problem that my spouse is having?"

So we created a little mini directory that's on there as well as it lists our top downloaded most popular episodes. So make sure you grab that, it's at jodymoore.com/map, that will get you up to speed on all things *Better Than Happy* podcast.

I also want to send a huge thank you and shout out to everyone who has left me a review on iTunes. That means the world to me when you leave reviews there and when you share the podcast on your social media. So, thank you, thank you, I can't tell you how much I appreciate that. I see posts when you tag me and I love hearing what you're learning and I greatly appreciate you sharing it.

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So today we're going to talk about how to avoid conflict. If you're the kind of person who finds yourself saying, "I just don't like conflict. I'm just not comfortable with confrontation. I try to avoid confrontation at all costs." Then I'm talking to you. Now, some of you sometimes say that with a thought in parenthesis of, "I know that's not good, I know I should get better at confrontation and conflict." And maybe that's true, I don't know, maybe in some cases it's useful.

But today what I want to talk about is not how to get better at it but how to avoid it, how to have less confrontation, less conflict. In fact it's possible for you to have none of it at all, did you know this? So I want to start with that statement, I just don't like conflict or I just don't like confrontation. Do you know what my friends? I don't think anybody really likes it, not when we're operating in a healthy space. Maybe there are individuals who get some validation out of it or maybe sort of the adrenalin rush that it creates.

There might be individuals who are in the habit of going to anger, or argument, or confrontation. And so it feels easier to do that than to not do it. But when we are operating from our highest selves, when we clean up our thinking, when we are mentally healthiest, I don't think anybody likes confrontation or conflict, because it is the opposite of what we actually desire as human beings. What we desire is connection. We desire understanding. We desire to be heard and to hear others. And we desire love when it comes right down to it.

So I think conflict, confrontation is sort of the opposite of that. It's sort of a pushing away from one another. And even if it's somebody that you think you don't like or that you think you don't want to be friends with, it is not natural for us as human beings to want to push away from one another. We are actually social creatures, creatures of connection. And so we desire to bond together. I think the pandemic has shown us that as we've seen the negative emotional and mental affects of not being able to bond together in the way that we're used to.

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So if you think the thought or say the sentence, “I just don’t like confrontation”, I don’t want you to follow that up with the idea, even if it’s just in your own mind, that that’s wrong or bad. That is natural, my friends.

Now, the next thing I want to teach you is that what you don’t like about conflict and confrontation may not be the thing that you think you don’t like. Most people when they say that, follow it up with, “I don’t like it when other people get upset. I don’t like it when people judge me, or criticize me, or yell at me, or accuse me of doing something wrong. I don’t like the feeling of other people being upset with me.”

And that’s where we’ve got it wrong, because when other people are upset with you, you don’t feel they’re upset. When they’re mad at you, you don’t feel their anger. When they’re criticizing you or they’re disappointed in you, you don’t feel any of that my friend, you only feel your own emotions which are created by your own thoughts.

So when you say, “I don’t like conflict”, what you really don’t like is the thoughts that you think and the feelings that you create for yourself. You don’t like being in your own head with yourself. And you don’t like the emotions that you feel as a result when someone else criticizes you, or attacks you, or comes at you in some way. That’s the only thing we don’t like. And here’s the challenging part, we can’t escape ourselves.

So this is why people say, “Well, I just don’t allow her in my life anymore. I just don’t talk to her or text her or him, I just don’t allow them to be in my life.” Because when they’re in your life then your brain gives you thoughts that you allow and then you create emotions that you allow. Now, I’m not saying that that doesn’t mean there aren’t appropriate times to decide not to have someone in your life. You can do that any time you want to. You don’t even have to have a good reason. You’re an adult. You’re allowed to decide who you’re going to interact with and who you’re not.

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But I want you always in the driver's seat of your own emotions and your own experience in the world. And the truth is that you are able to create any experience for yourself that you want to when you understand that you're the creator of it.

So the way to avoid conflict is to choose not to be conflicted. The way to avoid drama is to choose to opt out of drama. Drama does not exist outside of you. Drama does not come from your family members arguing. It doesn't come from people talking about politics. It doesn't come from anything other than your own head, which means you have choices. You have a choice to opt out of it. Now, I get that it's easier said than done.

I'm going to give you some specific things today to try out. But I know the holidays are coming up, those of you in Be Bold know that we're doing lots of work on relationships. I'm teaching some extra classes even this month on it. But if you want to just give it a little testing out, you want to just test out a couple of things here. I want to give you kind of a starting point for how to opt out of drama and conflict.

I love how Byron Katie teaches that it takes two people to have a fight and that defense is the first act of war. Because what she means is if I'm at peace and the person outside of me is upset then there's just one upset person, there's not a fight.

So let's look at some examples. Let's say – let me just make up an example here, one that I've heard in a coaching call recently. Let's say that your mother is very critical of you and you're going to see her. And she's going to point out all the things that she thinks you're doing wrong with your kids, in your home, in yourself, in whatever way she does that. That is not confrontational. That is not conflict. What creates conflict is your thoughts about what your mother is saying.

Now, again, I'm not trying to take away the fact that this can be challenging to do. But you my friend are allowed to not be in criticism about your

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mother criticizing you. You are allowed not to be emotionally charged by it. You are allowed to remember that what your mother thinks or says is about her. And it's perfectly okay for her to be wrong about you. It's perfectly okay for her to offer her opinion. In fact she probably thinks she's just helping out. She's just trying to do you a favor, point out to you how your life could be better.

So let's talk about drama for just a minute. There's conflict and drama and they kind of go hand-in-hand. But I want to give a few examples again that I've coached on recently, or that I hear come up for people. Let's imagine that you have a group of friends and there's some cattiness that goes on. Let's imagine that one of your friends is talking to another friend about you, or spreading rumors, I know this happens in families too.

But let's just imagine this, this is what people tell me is drama. They say, "This person said this about me, and then this person believed her, and then she came to me and she accused me. And then I was upset." So let's just imagine for a minute that you chose to opt out of the drama. It would come from focusing more on what you're thinking, and feeling, and doing, and choosing that more intentionally, and spending a lot less time focusing on what everyone else is thinking, and saying, and doing, because that's where our brains try to focus.

Our brains think if I could just control them, if I could just get that woman to stop spreading those rumors about me, then it would clear up the drama. But remember the drama's not created by what she's saying. The drama's created by your own brain, the story that you tell.

Notice how every time you tell the story it gets a little bit more interesting. If you tell the story to more than one person you get a little bit more practiced at it. You remember a couple of details that make it even juicier and the story gets a little bit more dramatic. And if you have good friends, they feed into your drama. They add a few details of their own, or ask the right questions, or validate what you're saying, making the drama even bigger.

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So this drama is what we create within us. Now, your friend may have some drama happening within her but she's the creator of that.

So here's how you opt out of it. You decide that it's perfectly fine for people to spread rumors about you. I know some of you are like, "No, I just can't get there, what if everybody believes her? So I like to ask myself what if, what if everyone believes her?" You know what? It would be okay because here's the truth. Usually if you go down that rabbit hole of what your brain thinks is worst case scenario, there's a lot of illogical things that most of you knows are not likely to happen at all.

So your friend who's dramatic, who's spreading rumors, who's telling everyone about you, who's gossiping about you, usually those people have a pattern of doing that. So I like to give myself the benefit of the doubt and give my friends the benefit of the doubt and know that they're probably going to take it with a grain of salt. They're probably going to know that this woman has a habit of speaking this way or what have you.

And at least my people, the ones that I really want to be friends with long term, would either give me the benefit of the doubt or know that there's probably two sides to the story. I mean worst case scenario everyone believes her and everyone hates me. Even that doesn't impact me negatively. Remember, I don't feel their hate. I can only feel my own emotions. So if I love me, and I love them, there's no drama for me.

So sometimes I like to think thoughts like you know what, she's just a human in the world doing the best she can. That's it. It's hard to be a human. She's feeling threatened or insecure. She found something wrong with me. Congratulations to her. There's a lot more where that came from. I could help her out if she wants to find things wrong with me. And it's okay. It's okay, it's even okay for her to tell people. Maybe they need something interesting to think about and talk about. I can be the one, I can entertain people. I just love them, people mean well. People are trying.

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People who don't mean well are just coming from a place of a lot of pain. It's okay. I love me. I've got me. It's super fun to love me. And it's fun to even be compassionate towards them. So that's how you opt out of drama. Now, another way that I opt out of drama is I try really hard. I'm not perfect at it, but I most of the time don't engage in the conversation about what happened here and there, and what this person said. And even sometimes it's gossip. Our brains are attracted to that because we're curious about one another.

But other times it shows up in more subtle ways with our kids. What's going on with my daughter and her friends? It's very easy to get wrapped up in drama with that. But I try really hard to stay out of that. I try to remember listen, these are a bunch of girls, or young boys, or whoever we're talking about with your kids. They're just young kids. It's hard to be a young kid. It's hard to be a teenager especially right now. Everybody's doing the best they can. Sometimes they don't handle it great. I get it, sometimes I don't either.

Or their mothers, same thing, these women all love their kids just like I love my kid. And we all just want our kids to be okay. And we all see it through a certain lens which is biased towards our own children. I get it, totally fine. So opting out of the drama is an option you guys, it really is, I promise you. The more emotional you get about what your kids are going through, whatever your kids are emotional about, now you're in the drama, and you're feeding that for your kids.

Let me just kind of wrap up and add a couple of points here. But you have to focus inward, not outward if you want to avoid conflict, if you want to stay out of the drama. What I mean is stop thinking about what everyone else is thinking. Start thinking more about what you're thinking. Now, do not start judging what you're thinking either. You have to become aware and you have to have compassion for you, just like we have compassion for all of them that they're humans, they're doing the best they can, we have to have compassion for us as well.

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When we do generate negative emotion, when we're not feeling great, when we're not showing up our best, we have to have compassion. Next, we allow other people to feel however they choose to feel. You guys, I cannot emphasize this enough, other people's negative emotions are not problems for you to solve. Other people being unhappy, disappointed, etc, is not a problem for you to solve. Now, that doesn't mean you don't want to hear people out.

It doesn't mean that I wouldn't want to apologize. If somebody's upset because of something I did, first of all I know they're not upset because of what I did. They're upset because of their thoughts. But they think that it's because of what I did. I am always up for apologizing. Even if I don't think that I really did anything wrong, even if to go back in time I would do it the same way again, I really still am sorry that they're upset.

So I was just reading an article somewhere about apologizing. And they said, "To say, 'I'm sorry that you're upset', is not a real apology." I guess I agree in that I'm not apologizing for what I did. But I can still be sorry that you're upset. Maybe it's not an apology but I think it's still empathetic, if I genuinely mean it, if I'm not saying it in a sarcastic, "Well, sorry that you're upset." That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about, "I'm genuinely so sorry that you're feeling that way. I don't want to see you feeling that way. I want you to just be happy all the time."

Now, I've had specific instances in my life when somebody's been upset with me and I still stand behind whatever I said or did that they think upset them. When I've apologized that way I've said, "Listen, I'm so sorry that you feel that way and you're allowed to feel that way. And I'm not going to try to talk you out of it or take it away from you. You can be mad at me if you want to and I'm sorry that you feel that way."

I'm purposely not saying, "I'm sorry that I did that, I'm sorry that I said that." Because I'm really not in some cases, but I am genuinely sorry that they're feeling the way they're feeling. I'm sorry that they don't like my choices, but

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that doesn't mean I would necessarily make a different choice. So sometimes I've had people respond really lovely to that. They've said, "Well yeah, I just want to be mad right now." I'm like, "Totally, and you can and I love you", depending on the relationship, if it's appropriate to say that or not. But that's always the energy I'm trying to come from.

Other times people don't like it, they get defensive, they get even more upset. They want me to argue with them. But when I'm in my highest place, when I'm operating from my best self I do not argue. I just say, "I love you and you're allowed to be upset with me and I'm sorry you feel that way." You can see examples of this on my Instagram account.

So allow people to feel however they choose, be empathetic if you want to, be sorry for them that they're feeling that way. There are times also when I genuinely do apologize, when I say, "You're right. That was not me at my best. That was not who I want to be and I'm truly sorry." So apologizing, always a good option too if you agree. Allow them to be wrong about you.

This is so powerful you guys, I did a whole podcast on this, on allowing other people to be wrong about you. It's been one of our most popular episodes. Because that concept, that idea that I learned from Brooke Castillo years ago in coach training, has been life changing for me, and I know for many of you as well, because our brains, otherwise our brains on default think I have to explain to them why I'm still a good person. I have to explain to them why I am smart, or why I am responsible, or why they're wrong.

But that's exhausting because what happens is we start playing tug-of-war. So the other person is pulling on the rope saying, "You messed up." And we pull back saying, "No, I don't think you understand, I didn't mess up." And when you pull back on the rope guess what they do with their side of the rope? They pull even harder. So trying to talk people into changing their mind about you usually has the opposite effect. This is called conflict, this is confrontation.

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So this is why people don't like it, because the emotions we create for ourselves when we realize it's not working, they're not coming with me. There's so much more peace available when you just put down the rope and you say, "You're totally allowed to think that." And a little part of me even thinks she might be right, which scares me. But most of me thinks that that's not true but you're allowed to think that. Again, these are all thoughts I have in my head. I don't necessarily need to say this to other people. I usually keep my responses really brief, that's how I can tell I've cleaned up my thinking.

So I want you guys to notice this in confrontation, it's especially obvious in written format on social media, in posts, or DMs or in email format. I can tell when somebody's coming from a fear based place or a conflict drama place, because they write more, it tends to be longer. The brain wants to argue its case. So I always ask myself, how do I clean up my head? How do I get to compassion and love for them and for me? What would be the short response?

Now, I get in a verbal conversation, this isn't always possible, but as you do it in writing and as you just practice thinking about it, you can get there, I promise, even verbally in a conversation. So somebody might write me a really long message telling me all the things that they think I've done wrong or whatever. And if I clean up my thinking, my response is, "I love you, you might be right about some of this, thanks for sharing." That's the end.

Again, sometimes people respond really lovely to that, and it sort of flips their heart a little bit and they soften up, and other times not. Other times they get even more furious because they want to engage in conflict, they're looking for it. But I choose not to most of the time, I just choose to decide that people are allowed to think whatever they want and feel however they want.

And then also I want you to get more familiar with yourself, with who you are, who you want to be in the world. Because one of the mistakes I see

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people make when they're trying to avoid conflict is they try to adjust themselves to accommodate the emotions of people outside of them. So if I decide, hey, this woman doesn't like when I talk about this thing, or she doesn't like when I show up this way. And that way happens to be who I naturally am then I start adjusting myself to accommodate her. Maybe that's okay, maybe that's appropriate at times.

But there are many cases where I see clients do that and now they become a light version of them. I don't want to be Jody light. I want to be fully Jody. My goal is to become as much of me as I can. Now, here's the thing, the me that I want to be is someone who's respectful of other people. I'm respectful of who I'm addressing. So this isn't just about having no social filter whatsoever.

But if who I want to be is somebody who speaks out about certain things, or has a certain way of showing up in the world, or has certain opinions, and I have to water that down to try to manage the emotions of people around me. Then I'm not really connecting with other people. Maybe they like me, but they like now a pretend version of me. And eventually one of the main problems with that is that in order to try to manage other people's emotions, I'm sacrificing being me.

So now maybe other people like me, but I don't like me as well because I'm pretending to be this fake version of me. Do you see what I'm saying? So don't be you light, be you. The person that you are, is kind and respectful and empathetic and all of those things. So don't go in your head to the place where you just say every terrible thought that comes in your head. But don't alter who you are to try to manage other people's emotions. That does not work.

Alright, now, the last thing I want to give you, and if you're new I hope I don't lose you here. But it's really important that you learn how to allow emotions as you do this work. Because as much as I wish that you could

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leave this podcast and now just be all Zen and peaceful, and never have conflict within you. It's probably going to take you some practice.

Especially if you haven't been practicing this and you're a person who gets easily emotional or triggered. Then it's going to take you some practice just like if I said, "Hey, let's learn to play the piano." I would teach you a little bit about the notes, and about where they are on the keyboard, and about where to place your hands and a few things like that. But it doesn't mean you'd be sitting down playing Mozart's Concerto the next day, you'd have to practice. And this is going to require practice as well. It doesn't mean it can't go pretty quickly.

I think one experience where you are able to stay calm when someone's upset is so empowering. I've seen this happen with clients over and over again that they experience it one time and then they kind of come back to me and say, "Whoa. That was amazing. I am doing that from now on."

So I think just getting a taste of it and experiencing how much better you feel when you control your own emotions instead of delegating them to others is powerful. But when that doesn't happen, especially when you're practicing, it's very important that you just allow your feelings. So you have to allow them all the while knowing that you are creating them. The problem I see is that people resist them and they blame them on the people outside of them.

I want you to do the opposite. I want you to allow them and keep the ownership of them. So for me and the way I do that in my head is it sounds like this, this is defensiveness, I'm just feeling defensive because of sentences in my brain. But I can just do defensiveness. Where is that defensiveness? It's right here in my chest? What does it feel like? It kind of rises up in my throat, notice how it takes my breath away, notice how my head gets hotter, notice how whatever. This is what it feels like to be a woman feeling defensive because of what she's thinking in her head.

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And it's okay that I'm thinking that, I'm just going to feel some defensiveness right now. Do you see how I'm allowing the emotion? I'm processing it. I'm sort of being with it and experiencing it. But all the while I'm attributing it to my own head because that keeps me in the driver's seat. That keeps me from turning into a crazy person who has to fight or yell at the people outside of me. I still, yeah, have a little conflict within me when I'm feeling that way. But it's not so overwhelming that I have to attack people outside of me verbally or otherwise.

So this is your assignment is to decide who you are in the world, especially if you're going to a family gathering, or you're going to see some friends, maybe they're going to talk about politics, or Covid, or masking, or not masking, whatever. There's lots of controversial topics that we have plenty of opportunities to practice this on right now. So you don't have to agree with everyone to love them. They don't have to agree with you for you to love them. And they don't even have to be happy with you for you to love them. Did you know this?

I'm telling you, you will never feel more peaceful and more powerful at the same time as when you allow yourself to be peaceful when somebody else is upset with you. And it's as simple as thinking a thought like I just love him or I just love her. She's upset and that's okay. It really is that simple, that could have been my whole podcast episode, those two, three sentences. But hopefully there is one thing you got out of this that you can practice. I want to hear how it goes. So, listen, come to Instagram or Facebook and engage with me there, that's the best place.

A little confession, I'm sort of addicted to social media right now, I don't know if that's a good thing. But my point is that I am happy to interact with you there. So come and find a post that you want to comment on. I don't respond to everything on there. But I get on there every day and respond to a few things. And so come and post something. There's plenty of opportunities on there to do that. We have lots of different quotes, and

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images, and things for you to learn there. So come and let me know, especially if you try this out. I want to know how it goes.

We usually do an Instagram and Facebook post about every podcast episode. So if you try this out a month from now, come back to Instagram, scroll through, find episode 279, post in the comments there or wherever you want to, you can post it anywhere. But I want to hear how it goes. I want to hear your successes. I want you guys to go read what other people post too because it's so empowering to hear people say, "I did it, this is how it went and it was amazing." I love hearing those stories.

So thank you for joining me today you guys, have a beautiful, amazing rest of your week and I'll see you next time. Bye bye.

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.