

291. United as Humans



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is Better Than Happy, episode 291: United as Humans.

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. Oh my goodness I'm so excited for today's podcast episode because I had the most amazing conversation with a super amazing and brilliant woman named Sharon McMahon who I recently found on Instagram. She calls herself America's Government Teacher. And she is super knowledgeable about all things politics and government.

And I know a lot of places say that they deliver the news without drama or without opinion but I've yet to see someone do that as clearly and as simply – is that a word, and as well as Sharon does it on her Instagram page. So I reached out to her and asked her if she would come on the podcast and she agreed to.

And I'm really excited to share this information with all of us to help us generate more unity, more kindness, more understanding and less of the division, and fear. And all the other toxic things that we've seen circulating and that many of us have been experiencing especially over the course of the last six months to a year here in the United States of America. So if you don't live in the United States this is still going to be I think super fascinating if you've been watching our country going, "What is going on over there with them?"

But also I think you'll be able to take it, and modify it, and apply it to whatever country that you live in because I know we have a lot of international listeners. And I see you out there and I love you, thank you for listening.

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I want to mention that if you're not already subscribed to the podcast you should do that because I'm creating some little bonus kind of mini podcast courses, in other words a series of six to eight podcast episodes that will be on specific topics. And I'll keep releasing the normal Friday episode every week. But in the not too distant future there will be some little bonus episodes on specific topics. So that if you're interested in that topic you can dive in, and if you're not you can just skip it and get your regularly programmed Friday content that's a little bit more broad.

So if you subscribe in Apple, or Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts, that's the easiest way to make sure you get notified when that happens. And also I always appreciate so much when you guys share the podcast, of course only if it's an episode that you love and you think that others would benefit from it. Please do continue to share it however you like to share. Word of mouth is great, email, social media however you want to share it. I greatly appreciate you sharing it. And if you do share on social make sure you tag me @JodyMooreCoaching so I can give you a shout out right back.

Alright, so before we get into my discussion with Sharon I want to just mention that one of the things that prompted me to create this episode. Was I have been thinking a lot over the past six months to a year and noticing a lot the division happening in our country that seems to have been emphasized in the past year. And I think about it. I complain about it. I worry about it sometimes.

And I had this thought recently, within the last month or so that instead of thinking about and focusing on division. I could think about and focus on unity. And I could shift my focus away from what I don't want into what I do want. So it's okay to notice what you don't want you guys. That's the starting point for us to figuring out what we do want. In fact we did a whole exercise on this in the workshop I taught this morning in Be Bold on how to dream big. We take what we don't want, which cues us into what we do want.

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But at some point you have to decide to stop focusing on the problem if you want to focus on the solution. Solutions come from focusing on the solution, not from focusing on the problem. And of course defining the problem is necessary in the beginning but at what point do you then shift your focus into solutions. And not just seeking a solution, looking for a solution that's out there somewhere in the future but at what point do you start noticing that so much of the solution actually already exists.

In other words, our country's super divided is just a thought, but our country is very unified is equally, if not more, true. So finding the solution to division sometimes comes from noticing all the unity that already exists. And from that space we can create even more of it. So you're going to hear some of that in my discussion today with Sharon, you're going to hear not a political agenda at all.

This episode is not about me telling you what you should believe and that's again what I love about what Sharon does. She's not out to sway people as to how they should vote or what they should believe. And not that there's anything wrong with people doing that if they choose to do that, that's just simply not her mission, it's also not my mission.

So you're going to hear what I hope you'll find to be a very non-partisan, non-biased discussion about both conservatives and liberals that's designed to first of all show you how much unity really does already exist. And second of all to help us take that understanding to the next level. So please enjoy my discussion with Sharon McMahan, here we go.

Jody Moore: Who are you Sharon? Tell me all about you.

Sharon McMahan: I am a long time government, a law teacher and I've been an entrepreneur for many years. And that's really the short answer. I mean just spend a long time teaching government and living in the

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Washington DC area and really getting a solid handle on how this whole system works, how to have productive conversations.

When you're in the classroom, in my opinion, a good teacher leaves the class wondering what their personal views are. Because their goal is not to try to convince people to think like me but to try to get them to have an educated opinion for themselves. But you can't have an educated opinion if you have no education. So that's really my goal with what I'm doing now is I don't care if you groove me or not at all. That's not even part of what I, you know, I'm not invested in that outcome whatsoever.

What I do want is for people to have education so they can make their own well educated opinions that are based on facts, that are based on logic, that are based on reasonable things. And so they don't walk around their lives believing things that are not even possible. Do you know what I mean? We're not making decisions based on lies, based on misinformation. Think whatever you want but let's base it on reality.

Jody Moore: And that's what I love about your page is that I'm always trying to figure out what does she think? What is her opinion? Because you really do present it objectively and I know I've seen you comment before that that's the highest compliment you could get is for people to say, "I don't even know what you think and how you vote", because you don't view that as your role.

Sharon McMahon: Right, it's not my goal, I don't care, yeah. No, it's not to try to convince you.

Jody Moore: I love it.

Sharon McMahon: There's plenty of partisan content available.

Jody Moore: That's right.

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Sharon McMahon: If you want to watch a page, watch news, or listen to a podcaster who is conservative and supports your conservative views or vice versa, that is available in spades. But you are not necessarily; it's much harder to come by objective fact based information.

Jody Moore: Yeah, it really is. And I also personally feel like we have been talking for a long time in our country, myself included, about division and how divided we are. And I had this thought a month or so ago that maybe we should start talking about unity. Maybe we should start talking about what we do want instead of talking about what we don't want. And that's when I came across you. And so that's my hope is that – I don't know. I'd love to hear your thoughts on this.

But I feel like as American citizens, but even as global citizens, as human beings we actually want and agree on a lot more than we differ on. What do you think of that?

Sharon McMahon: Yes. We perceive a much greater division in many cases than there actually is. We perceive that one side is extremely far to the left and one side is extremely far to the right when in reality the vast majority of Americans are slightly to the right or left of center. That is statistically and through sociological and political science based studies, statistically most people fall slightly to the left or right of center. And so very often we are not talking about huge disagreements in concepts.

For example both republicans and democrats want to take care of the elderly. Both republicans and democrats want to have high quality education for their kids. Both republicans and democrats want to have a safe country to live in. We want to have a military that protects us. We want to have low crime. We both want to have freedom. We both want thriving small businesses. We actually want many of the same things. We perhaps have a slightly different approach of how to achieve those goals.

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And a lot of times the differences that we're discussing are a matter of percentages. It's not should we pay taxes, it's how much is fair to pay? Because both sides believe we need taxes to pay for things like the military, and roads, and schools. And so we're talking about a percentage difference. We're not talking about a completely different ideological belief of one side says we should have schools and one side says we should have no schools. Do you know what I mean?

Jody Moore: That's such a good point, yes.

Sharon McMahon: We're talking about percentages. We should take care of old people. Old people should not be dying alone on the side of the road. What percentages are we willing to commit to achieving that goal? So when you start looking at it as a matter of percentages, and not the vast ideological differences that I think we perceive, it actually is a lot easier to come together knowing that that's what the difference is in most cases than something that is chasm, we perceive a chasm in reality, it's just like a puddle.

Jody Moore: Well, and that's such a great tool for diffusing emotion. We get so emotional sometimes about our opinions. And one of the tools I learned from Pema Chödrön is this just like me. This person cares about the elderly just like me. This person has opinions about the best way to take care of them just like me. This person, like when we can focus on how we're more alike it does, I think, provide then an environment where we can have healthy discussions.

Sharon McMahon: Yes, I love that.

Jody Moore: Which are important.

Sharon McMahon: Yes, I love that.

Jody Moore: So I wanted to kind of walk through, I took some notes on your Instagram story that you shared and I have them here. So I thought

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we could walk through them and you could expand on, for everybody listening we're going to talk first about some feedback that Sharon gathered from conservatives who wish that liberals understood these things about them. Then we're going to talk about some feedback she gathered from liberals who wished that conservatives understood these things about them.

So I just want to encourage everyone listening, it's tempting to listen up for your viewpoint so that you can go, "Yeah, see." But what I want to encourage is to try to listen to the opposite viewpoint and try to find some understanding that maybe you hadn't considered before. And I'm going to encourage all of us, including myself, to do that.

So let's start first, one of the things that it seems came up over and over again in your stories from conservatives was they said, "We love people and we love this country." Why do they sometimes get mislabeled as not loving people? Why would a liberal accuse a conservative of not loving people?

Sharon McMahon: I think some of that originates from the idea that sometimes conservatives are maybe less willing to pay for the social programs that liberals believe indicate caring for your neighbors. So again, I'm speaking in gross overgeneralizations here, and this is not going to apply to every person who labels themselves as conservative or liberal. But a lot of times the idea of being a conservative means fiscal conservatism. You spend less money, pay lower taxes, the government does less for you, you take care of yourself more.

And that is sometimes perceived by liberals as saying, "You actually don't care about the elderly or about schoolchildren", or pick a group. So that I think is where that belief comes from that if you care you should be willing to pay for it. And sometimes conservatives dislike being told that. They say things like, "I give charitably. I donate money to my church. I help others

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who need it I just don't want the government to tell me I must. And I don't necessarily want the government to be the steward of that money."

Jody Moore: Yes. Okay. So which kind of speaks to the next one where they say, "I care about the marginalized but it's my responsibility to care for them, not the government." And I would assume this is also in many cases you're talking about a percentage difference that there may be cases when a conservative would agree that this government program is necessary and useful. But maybe the percentage of funds that we put towards it causes a different opinion on a conservative or a liberal viewpoint.

This one came up I know on both sides but it says, "Not every view I have is conservative just because one is."

Sharon McMahon: Yes. And this speaks to this larger topic that I love to talk about that politics are nuanced. Very few people lie solidly in one camp or another. I know a lot of conservatives who are against the death penalty and yet the Conservative Party platform in the United States has often held that the death penalty is a necessary and needed tool. So that's just one example.

I personally know many conservatives who view themselves as being pro life from a womb to tomb, that they don't believe in abortion, nor do they believe in the death penalty. And yet the Republican Party that is often aligned with conservative values does support the death penalty.

So there are many instances in which somebody labels themselves a conservative or a liberal but doesn't 100% line up with those beliefs and they just kind of have to – we do often find ourselves in this country, we do often find ourselves picking the lesser of two evils in terms of candidates. I don't like these things about this party or this candidate and yet it is more closely aligned and so I'm going to go with it.

Jody Moore: Okay, that's an excellent thing to keep in mind. There's several – and I know this story you ran prior to the recent presidential

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election. But there were several comments that came in from people saying that they didn't necessarily support Donald Trump. Or some people said, "Trump is an embarrassment, not all of us voted for him or like him." And obviously there are many conservatives that do support and voted for Trump but could you speak to that a little bit?

Sharon McMahon: I think there is this idea that it is okay to be, you know, conservatives want liberals to know, I can be conservative and not necessarily align with any one specific member of my party. I can be conservative and not vote for Trump. I can be conservative and not vote for Mitt Romney. I can be conservative and actually choose to vote for Joe Biden because I have my reasons, whatever those reasons are.

So the idea that being a conservative does not necessarily mean you must align with one party. And that is absolutely true on the liberal end of the spectrum as well. You don't necessarily have to align with a candidate that a specific party promotes. And I think there is this idea too that it is true, that in the 2020 election, liberals were pretty united in their dislike of Donald Trump, pretty united on that, you could be hard pressed to find somebody who leans to the left who did not feel that way.

Whereas there was kind of, and we're seeing this even more now today a split in the Republican Party of people who strongly aligned with Trump and liked what he did and liked him as a person. And then people who maybe voted for him but did so with hesitation and would have preferred that he not be the candidate. Do you know what I'm saying, that there's kind of a fracture, fracture in the Republican Party between Trump supporters and non-Trump supporters and again whether or not you voted for him or not.

Whereas with the Democratic Party there wasn't currently that fracture around one person that centered around one individual.

Jody Moore: Yeah, interesting, okay. I think I'm just going to read some of these others, they sort of go along with what you have spoken to already

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but I do want to share them, if you want to add anything, feel free to interrupt me. There's things on here like we don't dislike the LGBTQ community or people, excuse me, of different racial backgrounds. We've taken time to research and made an educated choice. We're not all a bunch of conspiracy theorists. Again, we don't all love Trump as a person.

You're not defined by your vote. It is impossible to align a 100% with your candidate. I vote republican because of fiscal policy, foreign policy and less government, not because I hate people. Let's see, we are not unfeeling and we would rather rely on each other and not the government. And then obviously like you said, you had hundreds of more comments echoing those things. Let's talk about liberals now, what liberals told you they wished conservatives understood.

So it says here we don't all hate law enforcement. And we are not communists or socialists. What can you elaborate on that for us?

Sharon McMahon: Well, I think there's that, there's some frustration on the left that somehow they're being mislabeled as communists who want to do away with private property and who want to completely eliminate religious freedom. And who basically want to take the American way of life, the 'American way of life' and trash it. And I feel like a lot of liberals are saying, "That is not at all true and not even sure where that came from because we don't think that. We own businesses. We like private property."

In fact a lot of Biden's biggest campaign supporters are billionaires who absolutely believe in private property because they have billions of dollars. So the idea that liberal does not mean communist is something that I think liberals would like to dispel the idea of.

Jody Moore: Okay. There's the issue of pro life, pro choice often gets slung both ways. And so this next one says, "We don't want innocent babies killed, just like you prefer less government control, we prefer less government regulation of our bodies."

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Sharon McMahon: Yeah, I think that's really one of the biggest ideological differences in the area surrounding abortion is whether or not the government has the right to regulate what women do with their bodies. And liberals feel like it's my body and I will choose whether or not I'm willing to be pregnant right now for my own reasons. And you should not be involved in that decision. And conservatives feel like but it's not just you involved in that decision, there is another life to protect as well.

So obviously everyone that is listening to this understands their own beliefs about abortion, understands that it's a nuanced conversation. The thought is something that liberals want conservatives to understand that they are not in favor of just slaughtering babies. The idea that they want to slaughter babies is not something that they align with at all. They view it as a personal medical decision between an individual and their physician.

Jody Moore: Yeah, okay, thank you. A lot of people are saying that they wish that conservatives would understand how their policies are harming their communities. And I feel like that's an argument I hear on the liberal side a lot which is I understand that you don't want government telling you, you have to help people. But we have systemic problems that require systemic solutions. Is that kind of what that means?

Sharon McMahon: Yes.

Jody Moore: From a liberal standpoint?

Sharon McMahon: Yes, it's not enough to just say communities, churches, individuals will fix the problem. And they would point to the idea that that's currently in many cases the situation we have now and the problems have not been fixed. That's how they would view that. But if we were going to just step up and as a community take care of the elderly we wouldn't need Social Security, we wouldn't need Medicare. And so we need these programs because we have decided as a country that we don't want old

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people dying alone on the side of the road like we were talking about before.

So yes, the idea that systemic problems of what should the elderly do to care for themselves, those kind of systemic problems cannot be adequately addressed by private organizations, and by private individuals, and by just charities and churches. That we need something that is a bigger safety net than what private industry and religious communities can offer.

Jody Moore: Okay, I see. This next one, I'm going to lump these kind of together but there's versions of this. Saying things like, "I like gay people" is not the same as supporting them or even not being racist is not the same as supporting antiracism. And we saw a lot of, I think, confusion this year around the Black Lives Matter movement.

So there were lots of comments on the liberal side saying, "Black Lives Matter doesn't mean that all lives don't matter. Supporting Black Lives Matter doesn't mean that I support a 100% with that association or organization." Maybe you could speak to some of those.

Sharon McMahon: Yeah, I think it's like we were saying a few moments ago that if you voted for x candidate, it doesn't mean you like everything about x candidate. And I think sometimes liberals feel like I support the idea that black lives matter in this country. I don't necessarily support every single thing that an organization has done or will do, but I support the idea that black lives matter and that that is an important idea to convey.

Again it speaks to the idea that politics are nuanced and we can't just pigeonhole people into, well you gave money to this and so you align with everything they believe. It also goes back to the idea that liberals feel like it's not enough to give lip service. That you need to put your money where your mouth is in terms of creating policies, creating programs that actually benefit the communities that you say you support.

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And again the flipside of that is conservatives say, “I will give my money. I will just decide how to give my money instead of giving my money to the government to decide for me.” That’s really the difference there is who actually should be spending the money and allocating the money.

Jody Moore: Right. And making the decisions about where the money goes and how much, yeah, okay. Fantastic. So let me just again read a few of these. I think we’ve spoken to most of them but I’ll just make sure we cover the liberal side here. We are patriotic and love America as much as you do. I hold conservative Christian values. I choose to vote Liberal. Just because you don’t see how Republican Party policy, excuse me, is hurting marginalized groups doesn’t mean it isn’t happening.

We need to listen to the people actually in those marginalized groups. I don’t support rioting. We need to believe and trust science. So that brings up a kind of interesting one. It seems like science became politicized, some would say I guess I should say that science became politicized this year throughout the pandemic. What’s your observation of that?

Sharon McMahon: There’s really been a little bit of a dichotomy in this country between really just a very small fringe group of people who just think all science is suspect. And so that’s a very, very small fringe group because that is just their belief system. And then almost the entire rest of the country believe science is real, believes that yeah, we know how to have heart surgery. We know how to fix somebody’s broken bone, that’s all science. But then the difference is what do we do with that scientific information?

That is the public policy dispute. I think the vast majority of Americans believe in science, they just disagree. They differ on what best to do with the scientific information we have acquired. So you saw that a lot with the pandemic, so we know we have this novel virus. We know that it can kill people. We know it doesn’t kill everybody, it doesn’t kill most people but it

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can kill people. And so what should we do about it? That is where the difference lies.

Jody Moore: Yeah, you're right.

Sharon McMahon: It's not is it a fake thing or does anybody die, because we probably all know somebody who's been affected by it. It's truly, what is the best public policy to handle this? So I kind of want to discount the idea that republicans don't believe in science or liberals are way out in left field with the science. The science is real, only a very tiny percentage of people believe the Earth is flat and that birds are government drones.

Jody Moore: But there are people that believe that, yeah.

Sharon McMahon: Yeah, there are, but it's a tiny, tiny little percentage. The vast majority of people just want to have real public policy discussions about what the best way to handle it is.

Jody Moore: Yeah, that's such a good point. And with all the information and all the complexity, and our basic human desire to simplify everything and just make it black or white, left or right. It's so easy to buy into the headline and start just simplifying what are truly complex things, which is people, policy, government, it's all so complex, right?

Sharon McMahon: Yes. And I don't envy anybody who has to make these decisions right now. If you put yourself in their shoes, walk a mile in the shoes of a governor, or a mayor, or a president who has to deal with these extremely complex issues. When you know, okay, if we have – if we take x action it's going to create y reaction, and y reaction is very undesirable. And yet also taking no action creates z reaction that is also very undesirable.

In many cases it truly is choosing between a rock and a hard place. Pick one because they both are very, very difficult. And you know whichever you choose you're going to be making a lot of people angry. What a difficult

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position to be in as a leader right now. It's not choices that I would personally relish making. I would not relish the idea of people dying, nor would I relish the idea of killing people's businesses. I don't like any of my choices.

Jody Moore: Right, that's right.

Sharon McMahon: Yeah. And so I really have a lot of compassion actually for people who are in leadership right now because it is, these issues are so remarkably complex and there is no simple solution. And the 24 hour news networks are going to rip you to shreds no matter what you choose.

Jody Moore: That's right. That's right. Yes, I feel the same and that's why I really do try to support our leaders even though sometimes I have opinions based on my little world and my few friends, my anecdotal data that says, "What, they shouldn't be doing this." And I remind myself they have access to data that I don't have. And even though I might look at that data and make a different choice, I am not in their position. And I trust that they know more than I do about the bigger picture.

Sharon McMahon: They're doing the best they can in many cases, they truly are just doing the best that they can. And we may very strongly disagree with the choices they make but frankly I would not want to be the person to make the choices either.

Jody Moore: Yeah, that's right, yeah. Well, I do just want to add that along with Sharon being a whole awesome wealth of knowledge and information. And you're on – I follow you on Instagram, but maybe you're in a lot of other places. I don't know. Where are the best places for people to find you, is it there?

Sharon McMahon: It really is Instagram, yes.

Jody Moore: Okay, so sharonsaysso, we'll link to it. And she's constantly on there, people will ask questions like, "Hey, now this thing is going on

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with Trump's trial and people are saying this and is this true?" And I just love how you cut through all the drama and noise and you give very factual non-opinionated answers. Well, and I also want to add that you're super fun and entertaining because it's not just all heavy government stuff. My favorite was when you changed your name on your husband's phone to Cat Fact.

Sharon McMahon: Yes, I started texting him Cat Facts Ad Nauseam.

Jody Moore: And he was so frustrated. He thought it was like some subscription that he'd been signed up for. And anyway, Sharon is the kind of person you guys that not only you want to learn from but you want to hang out with her. And so anyway, I just...

Sharon McMahon: Thank you.

Jody Moore: I really appreciate the work that you're doing.

Sharon McMahon: Thank you.

Jody Moore: And is there anything else you want to share with our listeners?

Sharon McMahon: I just really, really love the idea and I cling to this so strongly that we cannot work for each other's mutual destruction, that no side can or should be working for the destruction of the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. Because each of our best ideas make this country what it is. And each of our best ideas that created this country, so the goal can never be to say, "This party needs to get out of here", or vice versa because that's a very dangerous and destructive way to think.

We must have each other and we must find ways to work together. And that is how one way that we protect our freedoms is by having an opposing political party. So we cannot work for each other's mutual destruction.

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Jody Moore: Yes, beautifully said. I completely agree. Thank you so much Sharon.

Sharon McMahon: Yes, yes.

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.