

317: How to Stop Judging



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

317: How to Stop Judging

I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 317: How to Stop Judging.

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 the podcast, episode 317. What's going on? How's your week? I have had the busiest week. And I want you to know that when I say that I feel kind of ashamed. And I don't know that I should feel ashamed but I do because I really pride myself on not being busy. I personally believe that for me anyway, when I feel busy it's my fault. It's a lack of managing my time of course, but also a lack of managing my mind. A lack of just really being on top of my schedule and making decisions intentionally and living my life the way I want to.

I don't want to live my life from busy. I just don't enjoy that feeling. And I don't think that it's necessary or important to be busy. But I'm not always good at doing the things I want to be doing. And so, this week I haven't stayed on top of it. Of course, it wasn't just this week, we end up there from not staying on top of managing our minds and our schedules and all that for a period of time and caught up with me this week. But that's alright, lesson learned.

My point is it is Friday evening past 7 o'clock and I'm just sitting down to record this podcast episode for you. And I usually do it much earlier. I've got to have it into my producer a week before it goes live. But this time it's a last minute. But the good news is I took a break from working and went to dinner with my family and we had the most amazing time. We were sort of loud, I think everyone in the restaurant was glad when we left. But my daughter was doing a Gordon Ramsey impression, she critiqued the food. And I'm feeling really good.

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So, I'm excited to talk to you. I want to talk to you about how to stop judging because I coach on this a lot and I notice that it seems like most of us recognize that we don't want to be judging others. We know that it's not useful. We know that it's not Christ like. It's not really who we want to be. I don't think I have to sell you on the idea that judging other people is not going to serve you or create the feelings, or relationships, or connections that you're going to want to have.

But people ask me all the time. "I don't know how to stop. How do I stop judging?" So, I want to begin my mentioning that judgment is not only detrimental in terms of your connection with other people. But it has a negative impact on your relationship with yourself as well. Because judgement is sort of a state that we get into and then we just start judging. We don't really necessarily differentiate. We don't judge other people and not judge ourselves at the same time, usually it's both.

I always know when a client comes to me and they're critical of someone else in their life that they're at least at times being critical of themselves. Or vice versa, I know if they're hard on themselves they're going to at times be hard on other people. So being judgmental is just something that we all do at times. But it is coming from this idea that there's a right and a wrong way to be, or a right and wrong way to act. A right and a wrong way to do this thing called being a human. And again, our brains at their most primitive level are there to protect us, to keep us alive.

So, it's perfectly natural and normal that judgement would be a part of that. I need to have judgement when it comes to things like should I go down that dark alley all by myself? Probably not, judgment would say no. Even when it comes to judging other people. We judge other people, again, at the most foundational level to determine whether or not they may be dangerous to us. Unfortunately, sometimes other human beings can be dangerous. So, we need to be able to quickly assess and judge is this person dangerous?

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So, it's not coming from a bad place, it's actually an innate part of our mortal experience. But it's also quite out of hand at times for many of us. It goes from just what's going to protect me? And by the way, protection is physical and emotional protection. But it sort of turns into just our opinions, our ideas about how the world should be, how people should be, how they should behave or what they shouldn't do. And that's when it becomes disconnecting, when it's simply opinion-based and not designed to protect us, then it sort of has that diminishing returns at that point.

Where we actually then become many of the things that we judge other people for. For example, if I have judgment of somebody thinking that they're just so negative, I likely become negative about their negativity. Maybe I do it verbally outright to others, or maybe it's just in my head. But us thinking that they shouldn't be so negative is us being negative about their negativity. And we see versions of that all over the place. We all do it at times.

So, if we understand that it's not who we want to be. We don't want to be judging unnecessarily, then how do we get out of it? So, the first place I want to begin is that if you notice that you're judging other people and you're judging yourself, and again, that's almost always the case, so look for how that's true first of all. But then you can start in either place. Start wherever it's the easiest.

Is it easier for you to be kinder and less judgmental of yourself? Because if so, you're going to start to step out of that fog of judgement. And you will naturally eventually get better at not judging others if you can get good at not judging yourself. Or is it easier for you to begin with not judging other people, minimizing anyway your judgement of other people. If so, start there, and that will again start to take you out of that fog of judgement and you will naturally get better at not judging yourself.

So, if you notice that you're judging yourself for judging others then you've got to start there, that has to be the first layer. People come to me sometimes and they're like, "I just feel so bad because I'm so judgmental of

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all these people, but I can't help it." And I say, "Okay, step one is we're not going to feel bad about being judgmental." That has to be where we begin. That's the only way we get access to it.

So that's why I kind of prefaced this the way I did with the reason we do that is because our brains are trying to protect us. They think it's useful, but it's just a little overdone. So how do we do that though? What do we do next? Again, either start with yourself or start with someone else.

I'll tell you my most favorite way. And for me it's easier to start with not judging others usually. My most favorite way to get out of judgement is to move instead to curiosity or fascination. That's it. Because I can't help it, my brain thinks that my way is the best way. Our brains are just like, "Why is everybody not like me? Why doesn't my husband notice that the dishes are dirty like I do? Why does my sister not raise her kids the way I do? Why do all these people not think like I do? Why didn't this person think that that would be important to me?"

We just think that everyone should be like us which is kind of ridiculous when we slow it down, but that's what our brains think. We're like, "Isn't it just commonsense that you would think that?" Well, no, it's not actually commonsense. It's just the way that you think about it. So, instead of all of that judgement I notice that I can be fascinated or curious about people because people are fascinating.

Listen, everybody has a good reason for what they do, and they do, by the way. And everybody has a good reason for the thoughts that they're thinking and the way that they're feeling, because they all do, we all do. We all have valid reasons for it. Even if you don't see it, even if you think it makes no sense. I promise you, they have a reason. They have a thought that creates a feeling that drives their action. They're operating from a model as are every one of us at all times, operating from a model. A thought that creates a feeling that drives our action.

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And all of it makes perfect sense in some way. We may not know why. We may not know how, but I promise you that every human being no matter how they behave, what they do, what they say, what they think, it's coming from their brains. And their brains are first of all wired a certain way at birth. And then they go throughout life and they become informed and they adapt according to the experiences, or the exposure, or the things that they're taught. That's it. And that's how we end up where we are at any given moment. And it's really fascinating to watch. It is.

So, let's say I have somebody who's really critical of me, or judgmental of me, or says not very nice things about me. It's tempting to want to be critical and judgmental and not nice about that person at least in our heads probably to a few close friends. But if instead you can be curious, I wonder why they feel the way they do. I wonder why they act the way they do. I wonder what it's like to be them, I wonder what's going on in his or her mind.

I wonder what experiences he or she has had that have caused them to draw those conclusions. I wonder what they're afraid of. I wonder what kind of pain they might be operating from. I wonder in what way this feels useful, or justified, or important to them. It's so fascinating how people think, isn't it? It's so fascinating how people behave. Our way is not necessarily the right way, it's just one way, it's the way we know. Their way is just another way. Other people are so fascinating.

You know who the most fascinating people are? The ones who think differently from me. The ones who feel different than I do about any given circumstance. The ones who behave totally differently in their lives than I would in their same role. Those are the most fascinating people. Those are the people that help me to expand myself. Those are the ones that help me learn how to become more compassionate, more connected to the human race in general, more kind, more giving, more loving, more serving.

The ones that act the way I act, or the way my family, the way I was raised, or the way that I think people should act, I love those ones too, don't get

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me wrong, they're actually way easier to be around. But they don't expand me. They don't evolve me in any way because I'm not forced to take a look at what I believe is true and recognize that it's just my brain. It's just my stories, my opinions, my natural tendencies as well as my life experiences and the way my brain has been evolved, and shaped, and changed over my life.

I want to be open to understanding people better. And that doesn't happen for me from people that behave exactly how I expect them to behave. It happens when I open myself up to people who are different than me. And I try to see where they might be coming from. And this I'll tell you is some of the most powerful work you can do, you guys. I know it's difficult work. If you have someone in your life who's difficult, ideally it's somebody that you see all the time, some family member that's maybe on your side, or your in-laws side, or a coworker that you see regularly, or a boss that you interact with.

Those people are the ones that will help you expand to become a better version of yourself. A more loving version of yourself. A version of yourself that understands humanity a little bit more. But the only way we do that is by opening ourselves up to understanding that our beliefs about how people should be are just stories. They are, they're just stories. They're not facts. Even if most everybody agrees with us. Still, human beings are just supposed to be human beings, that's it. They're supposed to be great sometimes and a mess a lot of the time.

And what is even great and what is a mess is all just a story that's up for grabs. So, this has really been a powerful concept for me to notice when my brain wants to go to judgement and I just go, "No, no, no, let's just be fascinated." Because people are so fascinating.

I want to share a story. I was at one of those haircut places where you walk in and sign up and they call your name to come back and get your hair cut. I took my sons to get their haircut, that's where they go. I'd like to go to some place a little fancier but anyway, that's where we take the boys. And

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my daughter who is five, happened to be with us. And she said, “Mom, I want to get my hair cut.” And she hadn’t had her hair cut in a while, she has pretty long, lots of natural curl in her hair, very, very thick hair for a five year old.

So, I said, “Okay, honey, let’s see. Yeah, we could probably get your hair cut while we’re here.” So, I signed her up. Well, I hadn’t planned on having her get her hair cut that day. So, we probably hadn’t even brushed her hair, and it gets very tangly. So, by the time it was her turn, they called her back, and the woman cutting her hair proceeded to try to brush out the tangles. This was a place where mostly men go to get their hair cut. So, she doesn’t typically get a lot of five year old girls with long tangly hair. But at any rate, she was sort of struggling with getting the tangles and she was getting frustrated.

And as time went on, she got more and more irritated. And she kept sighing. And the girl next to her was trying to help her figure out some detangling strategies. And the woman just kept looking at me sort of irritated and she finally said to me, “Listen, you need to brush her hair out before you bring her in.” So, I proceeded to become judgmental of this woman. I proceeded to get kind of defensive. And I didn’t really say it to her face, but to my other kids and later on to my husband.

I was like, “Sorry, I thought this was a place where you do hair. I thought that maybe you would be able to brush hair at a hair place.” And I sort of in my way, which is to be sarcastic and sort of jokingly mocking, again, not to anyone’s face, just behind their backs, as though that’s better. I started to judge this woman. And when I went home and told my husband the story. I was like, “Oh my word, you’ll never believe what happened, we’re at a hair cutting place, and she was upset with me that she had to brush her hair.”

And my kids were joining in on it now mocking this woman. And then my husband who’s a much better person than I said, “You know what? She probably has a much harder life than we do.” And I realized he’s right. I don’t need to mock people. She’s probably had a much more stressful day

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than I have in a very long time. She is here working hard. Who knows what her situation is? Maybe she has kids at home. Maybe she's just trying to make ends meet at this place that probably doesn't pay her great money, let's be honest to cut hair.

And who knows what else might be going on in her life. So, when my husband lovingly redirected me the way he did, I realized that is not who I want to be. I do not want to mock people just because I feel a little defensive, just because I feel a little bit threatened that someone accused me of not brushing my daughter's hair. Guess what? She's right, I didn't brush her hair probably for days. Let's be honest, that's not me at my best. But certainly, judging this woman is me at very far from being my best.

So, when I shift to curiosity and fascination, curiosity's a really easy one for me in that situation. I wonder what her life is like. I wonder what challenges she faces. I wonder what might be challenging for her right now. I wonder what I could do to lighten her load a little bit. I wonder how she was feeling brushing out my daughter's hair. I wonder if she was worried that she was going to make her cry, or that I was going to be mad at her, or something. I wonder. It's so much more useful than the judgement we want to go to.

Other times, again, maybe people are behaving in what we think is a really inappropriate or bad way. Fascination. I wonder why he or she is so angry. I wonder what they've been through in their life that would have shaped their brain in the way it has to make them struggle so much the way they seem to be. I wonder what it's like to be them. I wonder. It's fascinating.

There's so much compassion available, you guys. We all have the capacity within us to be compassionate and kind. And the same curiosity and fascination that we can apply to other people we can apply to our own selves. I wonder what's going on for me. I wonder why I wasn't able to show up in the way that I want to. I wonder why I'm feeling this way. I wonder why I'm thinking this way.

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If I get curious about the situation at the haircut place. I wonder why I went to judgement like that. Well, because I felt defensive, because I felt like she was accusing me of doing something wrong. Okay, that makes sense, that's why I got judgmental. And I wonder why she got that way. Guess what? It also makes perfect sense. And I don't even need to know the real reason why. I don't need to go in and ask her necessarily. I can just decide in my head that she might be struggling with something. Certainly, in that moment she was, because guess what? We all are struggling with things.

I want to tell one other story here, which I have told before so you may have heard this, but I don't know if I've told it on the podcast. I was pregnant with, I think it was my first child, so this was a little while ago. I was very pregnant, like I was due to have a baby any day. And I went to the grocery store late at night one night to pick up a few things. I remember being in my velour sweatsuit because those were cool back then thanks to J.Lo. We called them our J.Lo sweatsuits.

Anyway, I'm in my velour sweatsuit and huge old pregnant belly, and I'm in the grocery store. And you know when you kind of are looking at something and you're too far out into the aisle with your cart and people can't get by you? It was sort of one of those situations. I'm standing there looking. But I had my back to this gentleman who came down the aisle and he got kind of annoyed with me. And I can't remember exactly what he said, but it was clear that he was annoyed that I was blocking the aisle.

And so, when I realized it I moved over, got out of the way. And as I turned around he saw my big old pregnant belly. And he went, "Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize you were in a delicate condition." It stands out in my mind because he used that phrase. He said, "I didn't realize you were in a delicate condition." Which is his way of saying, "I didn't realize you were about to have a baby. I guess it's okay that you're blocking the aisle."

But I thought about it. I thought about first of all how kind of cool that is that he stopped and apologized and sort of corrected himself. But then I thought about the fact that I was carrying my vulnerability, or challenge, or at least

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discomfort right there on my belly. But we all are in a delicate condition all the time, we all have challenges, or pain, or discomfort, or wounds, we just don't carry them on our bellies in a visible way much of the time.

So, if we just thought that everyone we saw was in some kind of a delicate condition, would we be more patient with them when they make mistakes like blocking the aisle in the grocery store, or up to even much more serious mistakes? Would we be more compassionate, more understanding? I'm not saying that it means you should tolerate people mistreating you. That's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying, could we be more understanding, more compassionate, more tolerant of one another if we shifted to curiosity, fascination>

And you don't even have to know what's really going on for the person, you can make it up in your head. When I see somebody speed by me on the freeway now, and they sort of cut me off, I like to think, you know what? I bet you his mother just got put in the hospital and he's rushing to see her. I don't know if that's true. It's probably not most of the time. It just makes me feel more compassionate and less judgmental to think it. So, make up what might be going on because the truth is these things do happen.

And even if that's not the case, whatever's going on for that person that's behaving 'badly' it is always coming from pain and fear, because as they say, only hurt people hurt people. That is true, my friends. So, the way to stop judging other people is to just be curious, just be fascinated. That will take you to compassion and empathy. And wouldn't it be great if we all got a little better at that?

Alright, thanks for joining me today, you guys. I'll see you next time. Have a great rest of your week. 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.

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