

338: Pretending Problems



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

338: Pretending Problems

I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 338: Pretending Problems.

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. I am so happy that you're here. If you're listening, I have a fantastic powerful message to share with you today that I think you will find to be really useful. Before we do, today's episode is brought to you by Train Your Brain.

Train Your Brain is a five day intensive coaching experience that I will be teaching January 24th to the 28th. It's 2022 so if you're listening to this later then you might have missed it but otherwise make sure you join me. It's 19 bucks and we're going to go deep on the learning and the coaching. And I can tell you from people that have attended in the past it's a pretty transformative experience for your \$19. So go to jodymoore.com/brain if you want to join me and I will see you there.

So today we're going to talk about pretending and here's why. I want to back up for just a minute, pretending we're going to put in the action line of the model. So for those of you who don't know what the model is, I teach it all the time on this podcast. And I'll talk about it a little bit here so stay with me, you'll be fine. I teach it in depth in my book, *Better Than Happy*. So you can learn about it there. But I want to talk about the point of the model. There's still a lot of misunderstanding out there about the point of the model.

The model seems like, and actually I should back up, let me just give you the two minute version of the model. We have circumstances that happen outside of us and then we have thoughts, the second part of the model is thoughts. Thoughts are sentences in our brain meaning that we give to circumstances. Those thoughts generate the third part of the model which

338: Pretending Problems

is our feelings. Those feelings are sensations we feel within us which drive the fourth part of the model, our actions, how we show up, what we do or don't do and how we do it.

And all of that, the thought, feeling and action together creates the fifth part of the model, the result. So the misunderstandings that happen from the model come from things like, okay, so you're saying we should think positive. And I'm saying, maybe. I mean I'm saying you can think positive if you want to and in some circumstance thinking positive might serve you. But I'm also saying there may be circumstances in which you want to think something negative.

And in fact one of my favorite things to discover when I'm coaching people is when they have a thought that we would say is a positive thought because it sounds positive, it has positive words in it, pretty words in it maybe. Maybe it's something people say all the time. But it may or may not be serving you in the end. If it's generating a certain feeling that's driving a certain action that's not getting you the result that you want, then even though many people might call that a positive thought it may not be a useful thought.

Just like there are some thoughts that we might call negative thoughts, that when we put them into the model and take a look at them for you in a particular circumstance. They may be useful even though we would label them negative because they have negative words in them. And there aren't just thoughts that are good useful thoughts and thoughts that are useless thoughts. It's not a one size fits all, it depends on the person, it depends on the circumstance, it depends on what feeling that thought generates for you in that particular circumstance.

So the model, what it does, the point of the model is we are trying to show the part of us that is sort of subconscious, that just happens without us thinking about it in our brains. We're trying to better inform that part of us as to which stories, and sentences, and belief systems are useful and which ones are not because that part of us, that subconscious brain gets

338: Pretending Problems

misinformed. It's misinformed for all kinds of reasons. So it may be that you experienced something traumatic.

And now your subconscious brain has memorized that certain things, or people, or situations, or events are very dangerous when they may be or they may not be. For example, last week we had a snow day and it snowed at just the right time of day. And the temperature was just so that when the sun went down there was a layer of water on the roads that turned to pure ice. And as far as I could tell, every road in the city of Spokane and Spokane Valley was like an ice rink.

So this happened to be the time of day when the kids would be coming home from school because in December in Spokane the sun goes down at about 4:00pm. And the buses pick the kids up about 3:30 and by the time they get home it's getting close to 4:00. So the buses were already delayed from trying to get the high schoolers and the middle schoolers home. My kids were at elementary school. And about 4:15 I get a message saying, 'the bus is still going to be another hour and a half so you may want to come and get your kids'.

So my oldest son and I got in the car to go to the elementary school and get our kids and I did not realize that the roads were going to be an ice rink like they were. And when we got to a particular road in our neighborhood that is a bit of a hill, that has a drop off on the righthand side and no guardrail I suddenly started to panic. We were in my husband's truck and we were just sliding down this hill towards the edge. My son and I were both freaked out. Luckily we did not slide over the edge.

We somehow made it down that hill safely but it was the worst road conditions I have ever been on in my life. And my heart was pounding, and I was sweating, and my face was flushed. And I'll spare you the rest of the story but it was a long night trying to get home. So that particular road in my neighborhood, that hill, the street is called Saltese. Whenever I'm leaving my house now, this was just a week ago, I always think, well, I'm not going down Saltese, I'm going to go a different way.

338: Pretending Problems

Now, keep in mind, right now the roads are in pretty good condition. We still have some snow out there. There's some rain and snow happening and it gets wet. And it's not like summer roads but overall the roads are fine. But my brain's like, we're not going down Saltese possibly ever again. We might never go down that street again because there is an alternative way to get out of the neighborhood and we will just avoid that road altogether.

So there's this part of my brain that says that road is scary and dangerous but guess what? That road is not scary and dangerous necessarily. Maybe it was hazardous conditions when I was there last. That doesn't mean that it is in general. So because of that event my brain has been somewhat misinformed when it comes to making judgments about driving on the road. Now, this is not necessarily a bad thing. In many ways this serves us well because now my brain knows to be careful and to check conditions.

There's so many things that I learned from that experience that are valuable. But there's also some noise and nonsense in there that's not going to serve me, that's going to prevent me from possibly living my life the way I want to. I mean maybe not, I could go the other way. But there are many, many things like this that we go through in our lives that then we memorize and take with us into the future.

Some of you may have had a parent growing up who would easily lose their temper or get upset. And as children we don't really know what to do with that. We tend to take it on. We start to learn, okay, if I behave in a certain way then they are nicer and I'm not scared of them anymore. If I misbehave, this happens. And then maybe we grow up overly trying to manage the emotions of people around us.

Again, nothing wrong with being considerate of other people's feelings. But if you're overly trying to control how other people feel you'll find that holds you back in your life in many ways. Maybe you tried to pursue some kind of a goal and it didn't work out. And you were really disappointed and maybe you were embarrassed. And your brain memorized, hey, don't try things that are too big or new because if they don't work then you feel

338: Pretending Problems

embarrassed, and you feel disappointed, and you feel ashamed and that's pretty terrible so we should just play small and play safe.

Do you see what I'm saying? Your brain memorizes based on your life experience, based on things people tell you, based on movies and TV shows, based on all kinds of things. Your brain is taking it all in trying to decide what's true, what's safe and how you should view yourself in the world. So now enter the model. We take the model and we put things into their proper categories. Is this a circumstance, a thought, a feeling, an action or a result?

And the reason that we complete models when we do this, we categorize things but then we fill in the rest of the model is to show the brain, hey, this is not useful in this situation. For example, if I have a child making decisions I don't like and I am thinking, oh no, he's going to ruin his life and I'm feeling worried, a part of my brain thinks that's useful. So we put it into a model and again we do this on an individual case by case basis.

But it's not uncommon for me to be talking to a parent. And when we find that the thought is he's going to ruin his life and the feeling is worried, then we go to the action line. And I say, "Now, how do you behave around your child? Who do you become? How do you show up from worry because you're thinking the thought, he's going to ruin his life?" And this is where pretending comes in.

Many times clients will say to me, "Well, I mean I sit him down and I try to remind him what these choices might lead to, or I try my best not to tell him that I'm worried, I just go to my room if I need to. I separate myself. Maybe I avoid. Maybe we avoid certain topics. We don't talk about certain things. And I just keep quiet when he or she behaves the way they do." So there can be all different flavors of this. But what I tend to do for my clients is I write in their action line if we're writing out the model, 'pretending'.

I purposely call it that. They almost never say that. People don't say to me, "Then I pretend." They say, "No, I don't act rude, I don't act resentful to my

338: Pretending Problems

husband even though I'm thinking he should be helping more. I don't say what I'm thinking, I keep it to myself. I'm still very nice, and polite, and kind." And I want you to be nice, and polite, and kind. I even think it's okay to pretend sometimes. I just want you to see it for what it really is which is in most cases not useful. And then I'm going to tell you in a minute what are some alternatives to consider.

But if I'm worried about my child, resentful towards my husband, angry at my neighbor, judging my friend, and I have to pretend then I am not being very authentic. Here's the problem with this action line of pretending. First of all it does the opposite of what we probably want in our relationships. I don't know about you but I find that my best relationships that I value the most, that help me feel the most alive, the most connected to God, the most Christlike, the most who I want to be and the best feeling are the relationships where I'm the most connected.

Connection is what we crave as humans. Now, I'm not saying you have to have a deep level of connection with every single person in your life. I get that. There's going to be different levels of connection that are appropriate in different relationships. But I'm just saying, connection is the ultimate in a relationship. That's what we really seek. And it can look a lot of different ways. But connection comes from seeing and knowing the other person and feeling seen and known yourself. That's it, that's connection.

Now, you can have a one way connection where you just see and know that person and they don't know you. And that still can be powerful. In other relationships we are seeking a two way connection where they see and know us as well. So if I show up pretending then connection is not even possible. It's not even possible for me if I'm pretending. Because even if that other person really likes me and thinks that they see and know me, they don't really see and know me, they are seeing and knowing a pretend version of me, that I'm pretending to be.

So I also can't very effectively see and know another person if I'm pretending because I'm sort of guarded. I'm sort of trying to be nice

338: Pretending Problems

because what's really true isn't very kind usually, or it's just not very helpful. The reason we pretend is because we don't want the other person to know what we're really thinking or feeling about them because it's not kind. So connection is a seeing and knowing another person and embracing all of it, not a rejection of the other person.

We don't connect with people when we reject them and judge them. And that rejection may be again, a more pure form of judgement or it may just be worry. So it can take lots of different forms. So it's the opposite of connecting when we pretend. We can't be seen and known and we're not truly seeing and knowing them. When we truly see and know someone else, let's say they're making – again let's go back to the child making decisions that we are concerned about.

To truly see and know them would be, I wonder why they're choosing that. I wonder why. I wonder what's so – let's get a concrete example. I'm going to make this make more sense. My daughter told me the other day that one of her friends has decided to start vaping. So she's saying to me, "I just don't understand, mom, why she would choose that because we're taught everywhere at school and everywhere else about how vaping is so bad for you."

I mean I can see back in the day we didn't realize smoking was bad for us so everybody smoked. But today we know that. I don't understand. So that's her not connecting with her friend. And it's confusion, it's judgement, it's whatever. I said, "Well yeah, I mean I agree, vaping is probably not your best choice but let's try to understand it. Why would somebody choose that?" Somebody might choose that because they're struggling in some way, they're feeling something negative and they don't know what to do with those feelings. And vaping temporarily provides some relief.

Or they're trying to fit in with some other friends or feel included, or that they belong somewhere. And when they vape with those friends they feel connected to those people in that way. So I'm not saying it's a good choice. I'm glad you're choosing not to. But we can see and know that friend and it

338: Pretending Problems

doesn't mean we have to say that we love that behavior or even that we're not concerned about what that might create in her future. But connection comes from, I get it. I get why you would make that choice, it makes sense.

And if I don't get it I want to be curious and open with people, and open to hearing them out so that I can connect. You don't have to agree with people. You don't have to view the world the same way they do in order to connect with people. You just have to stop pretending. Pretending closes us off. We don't have open honest conversations when we're pretending. We just sort of do this surface level act. So that's the first reason, is it's really disconnecting.

It's also actually not very honest, it really isn't. It's us lying. Sometimes I'll do this with my clients as we write out their model. Let's say they say, "Well, my mother-in-law, she's the worst, or my daughter-in-law." I always use mother-in-law examples but I coach just as much on daughter-in-law, so let's use the daughter-in-law this time.

"My daughter-in-law, she's the worst, she doesn't like me, she doesn't appreciate all the things I do for the grandkids." And so we put a thought like that in the thought line. We look at the feeling it creates which is judgment, resentment, defensiveness etc. And then we get to the action. And my client might say, "Well, I just try to be supportive." And I say, "Okay, so we lie basically?" We try to say things like, "Okay, whatever you want." But inside what we're thinking is, that's a dumb decision, I can't believe you don't see it my way.

So it's not very honest. It's not as operating out of the utmost amount of integrity. So I just know that I feel better when I'm being a little more authentic. I am certainly not perfect at it, I have a long ways to go. But those areas where I feel kind of icky, it's because I'm pretending/lying.

Okay, I talked about this a little bit already but I want to elaborate on it. Sometimes people in our lives really like it when we pretend, they do. They would much prefer that we not have a conversation about whatever's going

338: Pretending Problems

on that's difficult. And they would prefer that we just smile and let them do their thing. They don't really care that we're not connecting at times. They're happy with the pretending but here's the thing. They're still not loving you, they're loving a pretend version of you.

I want to go to a different example here. I want to talk about a relationship where maybe you do want to believe that this person loves you or cares about you, or at least kind of likes you. Let's talk about a marriage situation. There is a tool out there that people like a lot called love languages. And I like the love languages too, I don't have anything against it. But what I don't like is when people misuse love languages. I see people all the time use love languages to say, "Hey, spouse of mine, my love language is gifts so could you please give me gifts so that I can feel loved?"

I personally think that's a misuse of love languages. Because even if my spouse says, "Okay, I can do that. I will buy you a gift and give it to you so that you can feel loved." My spouse is now pretending because I asked him to pretend. Could you pretend to be someone who wants to buy me a gift to show love? If that's not his love language then now I'm asking him to pretend to make it easier for me to just believe what I want to believe.

So again what I'm loving now is a pretend version of him and he's pretending for me. I just think that there's a deeper level of work available which is I'm going to do the work to decide whatever I want to decide about what I want to think that you think of me. And you just be you and you show love in whatever way you want to and I'll show love in whatever way I want to.

And I will manage my brain around what I'm going to make it all mean. Because then I develop a deeper level of connection with myself first of all instead of could you just help me pretend to believe this make believe story? And I also then am more available to connect much more intimately with my spouse from being who I truly am. I mean this is what Brené Brown teaches us that vulnerability is, being willing to be seen and known. And

338: Pretending Problems

risking the rejection that comes from being truly seen and known, that's true vulnerability which leads to true intimate connection.

The other thing that I see pretending do that creates problems in people's models is we can only pretend for so long before we start building resentment. A lot of times the reason that we're pretending is because we're hoping for something in return, even if just what we're hoping for is that the person won't be grumpy, or angry, or withdraw from us, or judge us, or hate us, or etc. We pretend out of an attempt to manipulate the other person in some way, manipulate their behavior, manipulate their thoughts, manipulate their feelings.

And when that doesn't work as it often doesn't then we grow resentful. Why do I have to be the one walking around being kind, putting a smile on, just dealing with it, sucking it up and you don't have to change anything? But you don't have to be the one doing any of that either. Don't pretend, pretending will in most cases lead to resentment. And resentment is just a sign that you are not authentically connecting with yourself and meeting your own needs.

Okay, so even if we can do it for a little while and maybe it works for you in sort term bursts but it's a short term fix. It's not really going to connect us in the long run. It's not going to solve problems at the root like we really want to. So what are the alternatives then, Jody? What do I do? Do I just walk around saying all the nasty mean thoughts that come to my mind? Do I tell my child I'm freaked out? Do I tell my husband I'm resentful? That doesn't seem right. And I want to give you some alternatives because you're right. I'm not suggesting you do that either.

So I'm going to try to teach this in three different ways. I'm going to first talk about it the way that Gary Vaynerchuk talks about it. I'm going to tell you a little bit about how Brooke Castillo teaches it. And then I'm going to tell you the way I like to think about it. And I'm hoping that between those three you'll pull something or something will click with you and you'll either take one of these ways or develop your own way of thinking about it. And I

338: Pretending Problems

would love for you to come and share your thoughts about it too over on Instagram.

So Gary Vaynerchuk, in fact this is something he teaches in his company. It's one of the values that they have in his organization which is kind candor. Be kind and have candor. So candor meaning tell the truth, be upfront with people, be honest, even be direct you might say is part of candor and do it with kindness.

So I love listening to him talk about this because for those of you that aren't familiar with Gary Vaynerchuk, he is a very kind of abrupt in your face, super confident, fast talking, fast moving, extremely successful businessman who works really hard, has kind of a foul mouth. And to hear him talk about kind candor is pretty fascinating. You can tell it's authentic. I don't think Gary V has a pretending problem, although I think actually he does at times, I've heard him say, but you wouldn't expect it from hearing him talk.

He talks about telling each other the truth, matters, that we owe it to each other. In our company he'll say to tell each other the truth. And you can tell the truth with kindness, you can do so with kindness. I recently heard him on Instagram too just talk about kindness being something that you do because it's who you want to be. You don't do it expecting something in return. Don't expect return favors. Don't expect that people will even be kind back. Just be kind because you want to be kind.

And I would echo to tell the truth because you want to tell the truth. Don't expect that other people won't pretend, they might. That's okay. We're just trying to be the best version of us because that will serve you in the end. And let other people come along on their own timeline. So that's how Gary Vaynerchuk or Gary V talks about it.

Brooke Castillo one time said to me, "The truth is always the kindest thing." And I remember, I've heard her say this several times since. But when she said that to me it was so powerful because I needed to tell somebody the

338: Pretending Problems

truth and it was going to be hard for me to say because I was afraid it was going to be hard for them to hear. I knew that they would probably have thoughts about what I would say that would cause them to feel hurt.

And I love this person. I didn't want to hurt this person but I knew I needed to tell her the truth. And I just kept saying, "I just feel so bad, I don't want to hurt this person. I don't want to be mean." And she said, "Jody, the truth is always kind." I mean think about it, do you want people to walk around pretending to you or would you rather that they tell you the truth? When it comes right down to it, most of us, we'd rather know the truth.

Okay, so the final way I wanted to talk about it which is the way I tend to teach it is I like to encourage people to, yes, tell the truth, but remember that we get to tell the whole truth. The whole truth isn't just, hey, I wish you would help out more around the house, honey. And I'm resentful that you're not helping. That's part of the truth. You know what the whole truth is? The whole truth is I'm afraid to tell you this because I'm afraid of what you're going to make it mean and then you're going to be upset and that's going to put distance between us.

And sometimes I question whether or not I should be asking you this because I know you work really hard too doing what you do, and I get it, that sometimes I don't do the things I say I'm going to do. So I feel kind of guilty and conflicted. And I'm afraid to tell you this but I'm telling you because I love you and this is what's real for me and I'd love for us to solve it together. That's the whole truth.

The whole truth is, hey, teenager, I love you so much and when I heard about the decisions that you're making I felt scared. It scares me because I've heard a lot of stories about how that can lead to a place that doesn't serve you. And I just love you and I just want you to be happy, and successful, and have all that you desire. And at the same time I know I can't control you. And I'm afraid that me telling you this is going to push you further away and then you're just going to start lying to me and not tell me everything and that would be heartbreaking.

338: Pretending Problems

And you get to make your own choices and I have to wrestle with my own feelings about it. But I want you to know this is what I'm thinking, feeling, and that I'm concerned and can we talk about it? I mean you can sit down and think about what you want to say ahead of time. I haven't done that with this episode. I'm just throwing out examples.

But the whole truth is messy and do you notice how the whole truth is kind of lovable? The whole truth is actually like it's kind of irresistible. Because that level of authenticity and vulnerability when people open up and share it with us, it's tough to reject that. It's tough not to feel a little bit compassionate because we recognize it as the truth. Did you know this? As human beings we're so good at reading one another, we can tell when people are pretending, we can, even my little, little kids can tell when I'm pretending.

The whole truth is just so connecting. And again we can be kind about it. I'm not saying you have to – when I say the whole truth, I don't mean that every thought and feeling happening for you needs to be shared. I'm just saying, don't leave out the parts where you share your own vulnerability, where you share that you're scared or you're nervous, and that you're not sure. That's what we want to do.

We want to go, "Listen, I've made a decision and this is what we're going to do." And there is a time for that but there's also probably more often, times for I have no idea what we should do but I want to have a conversation with you. I want to connect with you. I want to understand you. I want to hear you. And I'm afraid. That's the whole truth.

So listen, when you put your thoughts into a model, you look at specific circumstances, you look at what you're thinking, you ask yourself, how do I feel when I think that? And then you look at your action line, how do I show up? Just ask yourself, am I pretending? Because if so you're probably disconnecting, you're not showing up at your best, you're not even available for true connection and ultimately you will likely build resentment.

338: Pretending Problems

That may work in the short term but it's likely not going to work in the long term.

So instead, try some kind candor, just remember that the truth is always kind and give yourself permission to tell the whole truth, let it be messy, that is how we connect as individuals.

Alright, thanks for joining me today you guys have an amazing rest of your week. I'll see you next time.

Hey there, if you enjoy this podcast or even if you just find that it sort of piques your curiosity, or it makes you think, you're going to love the book that I wrote. It's called *Better Than Happy: Connecting with Divinity Through Conscious Thinking*. And it's available now at Amazon in print or kindle version. Or if you want me to read it to you, head over to audible and grab the audio version. And why not grab a copy for your sister, your best friend, or your mom while you're there too. Just saying.