

339: Life with Adult Children with Jody's Mom Bonnie Lyman



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Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 339: Life with Adult Children with Jody's Mom, Bonnie Lyman.

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, how's it going? Today I have a very special treat, my mom, Bonnie Lyman is on the podcast. And we have a really fun conversation. My mom is a certified life coach like myself. And she works with mothers of adult children who want to improve their relationships, improve their overall happiness and figure out how to live into that phase of their life with more fulfillment and more joy. Especially when some of your adult children have not turned out to behave in the way that you thought they would.

My mom's been a great example of this to me and she just has a lot of wisdom and knowledge. And she practices what she preaches. And so I'm very excited for you to meet my mom, Bonnie Lyman. Let's go.

Jody: So why don't you introduce yourself, first of all.

Bonnie: Well, I want to thank you, Jo, for having me on your podcast. And for those that don't know who I am, my name is Bonnie Lyman. And I'm Jody Moore's mom. But I'm also a lot of other things. I'm Jeff Lyman's wife. I am a life coach. I'm a mother of five, a grandmother of 14. And I guess I should say this is pretty obvious, I am a mother of five adult children.

Jody: Perfect adult children.

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Bonnie: Near perfect adult children, because they didn't come from a perfect earthly mother or father, were not raised by a perfect earthly mother or father.

Jody: Even if we had it wouldn't have mattered.

Bonnie: No, I think you guys are pretty perfect but I think it's because I choose to see you that way.

Jody: Yeah, okay. So you coach people, how do you describe? Tell everyone who you coach.

Bonnie: I coach women, mothers that are struggling in their relationships with their adult children. And I get them to see what's really causing the pain and help them see different perspectives, hopefully more compassionate perspectives for themselves toward their children as to what exactly is going on and what's causing this pain.

Jody: What is it that made you decide to coach on this topic?

Bonnie: I think I decided to do this because I ran into a lot of women that were struggling in this area. But also with you guys, with my own family, with my own adult children there were some things I had to work through that was causing a strain on the relationship. And I came to see that really it was only my perception that there was a strain on the relationship. And really there was no strain at all. So it was a pretty miraculous discovery that I could have a good relationship or at least a good connection. I could have good feelings.

I believe love is the best feeling that we can have and that no matter what's going on in my children's life I can always feel love even if it maybe just starts with compassion. That I can feel good most of the time. I'm not perfect so I do fall in using the tools that I know to use to get myself to that point where I'm not blaming myself, for one thing for my children's

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mistakes. Or they may not even be mistakes but just doing things I don't like.

But it's through becoming curious is the maybe just being aware that it's kind of what's going on inside my head that's causing my discomfort and really not what my kids are doing.

Jody: Yeah. And of course I was kidding when I said we're all perfect. We've all made some big poor decisions in our lives most of us at times. So let's talk a little bit more about some of the main challenges that people see. Because there's a lot of people listening to this podcast that are in that situation where they're raising adult kids. I'd be interested in diving into maybe some of the specifics of what these challenges are and how to navigate them.

For example, I know you've coached a lot of people who have a child who has said, "We don't want you in our lives. We don't want you to see the grandkids", or for whatever reason, have sort of cut them out of their lives. Haven't you coached on that?

Bonnie: Yes, several times.

Jody: So let's talk about that. How do you navigate that with a client?

Bonnie: Well, I try to get them to first of all see, usually they'll tell me why they think that's happening and yet we really are not ever going to know. That child may not even know for sure why.

Jody: So in other words there's a temptation to get into the story of whether or not I actually did do something wrong, or I apologize, or I didn't do anything wrong, kind of the backstory you're saying?

Bonnie: Right, right. The first thing they want to do is they always want to know why. Why is this happening? Families aren't supposed to do this. I didn't do anything wrong or I was just trying to be helpful. And what it

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comes down to I find, it's more about them, the mom and what they did wrong, or why they should be treated differently. And not really trying to understand, what's going on in my child's life? Just getting curious because nobody wants that to happen. And yeah, there is some reason but saying that child, the child that told his parents that may not even know why.

So we're just trying to get curious as to why and not take it personally. So a lot of times I have to back up and maybe start on kind of having some grace, some love for themselves that hey, I did okay and this does not mean really anything about me.

Jody: And don't you think too even if the child has come right out and said, and by child we mean adult child, even if they've come right out and said, "Mom, I'm just really mad at you for this thing that you said", or what have you. "And that's the reason why I don't want you in my life." Sometimes that happens, it's still important to separate yourself, I think, from other people's opinions of you. And even if you agree with them, even if you agree, I wish I wouldn't have done that or said that, or that wasn't my best. If I could go back in time I would do it differently.

It's still that child's decision whether or not they're going to get over it, whether or not they're going to forgive you, whether or not they're going to invite you back into their lives and work through it. I just think that our fixation on controlling what other people think and feel is especially I would think in this situation where you have an adult child that doesn't want to see you, it leaves you really struggling in a powerless place.

Bonnie: I would agree. And so a lot of times I feel maybe there does need to be a little break and you just kind of ponder on that. And you don't take it so personally that you did do something wrong. Or like you said, maybe there was something very obvious. You told them how they should be raising the kids and so their kids flew off the handle and said, "I don't want to talk to you."

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So when you are working on yourself and it kind of goes back to some self-confidence, that's a lot of what I do. That you have the self-confidence to go back and say, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. And you're very important to me." As long as we're expressing our love or keeping it open to us how I feel then it's up to them to decide. And then like anything, we're so impatient. We've got to give the child some time to process and for them, give them the space to come back.

And I find it ironical that maybe this all happened one week, not always. And the next week I have a session with these people, it was just a couple of days later, their child called and apologized and kind of told them why. But sometimes that doesn't happen. And so yes, it's unfortunate and it makes you sad but then I think you as adults, we kind of need to learn how to process those negative emotions.

Jody: How do you still have a relationship with your adult child if they won't see you?

Bonnie: I worked with one client that kind of said her kid said, "And I don't want any phone calls, texts, presents or anything else." And it was around Christmas time and she wanted to send them a present. And yet she felt like she was breaking their boundary. Well, I think one thing, you have to like your reason for doing it. And then I think you also pay attention to how it makes you feel. And so if she were to just send them a little bit of money or something, if that made her feel good, if that made her feel connected then she, you know, I encouraged her to do that.

And I said, "You may never get a response. You may not even get acknowledgement that you received it but so what if it made you feel good." Another thing, there was a time when one of my kids really didn't want to have anything to do with me. Now, he didn't come right out and say that "I don't want to see you." But I kind of knew from you guys and his siblings, some things he was into. So I started – he got interested in – he got a

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motorcycle. So I started learning about motorcycles. And I felt the connection to him even though we never talked about it.

I remember a client saying, "So when he does talk to you, you have something to talk about?" And I go, "No, not necessarily." I just kind of felt connected because he knew something about motorcycles and I knew something.

Jody: Yeah. I mean that connection, it's all happening in your head. Even when you say, "If sending the money makes you feel good, send the money." Well, sending the money is just an action. What makes you feel good is thinking, I like being someone who sends money to my son or what have you. And that's who I want to be. That's, like you said, with respect, I always say be who you want to be. But who we want to be is someone who understands our kids' desires and wishes and respects that as well.

So this idea of connection though is happening in your head. People tell me all the time, they think we're best friends, you just haven't met me, because they listen to me on the podcast. And that's kind of what you're describing. And I get that that's not ideal. We all want to have our children in our lives and be able to talk with them and have that two way connection. But sometimes it's not going to be that way, at least hopefully it's a temporary state, but even if not what you do have control over is how you choose to think about that person, the story you're believing about them.

And it's, I would imagine, got to be really tough work. I don't have adult children yet. But of course that would be heartbreaking if one of my kids didn't want to see me. But what's the alternative? I can sit around and be mad about it and try to change them which never works. Or I can decide, alright, well, I'm going to be connected in any way that I can. And the odds of them coming back around when you choose to focus on your own health, emotional health and happiness go up significantly too.

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You said something on your Instagram that I wanted to have you speak to here. And if you want to find my mama on Instagram, she's Bonnie Lyman Coaching on Instagram and we'll link to it. But you shared some tips about showing love to your adult children. And one of the ones you said, "Find something in life that makes you happy that doesn't require them being present." So can you talk a little bit about why you think that's a helpful tip and how you've done that?

Bonnie: Well, I think one thing that nobody ever prepares us for is being a parent to adult children. We're kind of told teenagers could be rough. So we're kind of geared up and we're looking for things. But we just – nobody says anything and if you notice, nobody really shares a lot of stuff of their adult children.

And so I think that we grow up or we as we raise these children we've got a pretty exact picture in our mind of what it's going to look like with our relationship with these adult children. Everybody's going to have kids, everybody's going to be happily married or maybe not because more and more of that is happening in the world. But I'm still going to be an important part of their life. I mean you are very important and very much needed in your children's life when they're in the home. But when they leave the home they become an adult.

And the more years in between you become more equal. I wouldn't say we become brothers and sisters but we are. We're all brothers and sisters. And those differences get less and less because we're adults. And so if you have tied up everything, all of your happiness, and getting that happiness, and fulfilment, and satisfaction in even serving your adult children and their families. Or your happiness comes from shared experience from them, or maybe you've even – I never even thought about my growth at that time.

But usually there's quite a bit of expectation pain, disappointment, it hardly ever works out like you thought it was going to. And so I think it's a time in your life where you have got to find something in life outside of your

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children and those family, even though you love those grandkids to death. And there are families where they need grandma to come in and full-time take care or help take care of those kids. But even just doing that, there's got to be some other interests, some other pursuit, some other goal, something that is causing you to grow in a way you've never grown before.

So then you just don't, I say put all your eggs in one basket, that all the circumstances that caused me to have those thoughts, to have good feelings just doesn't come from my kids and their family. But it comes from something outside there in the world and life.

Jody: Yeah. I mean this is the same thing that I see people do in their marriages is if your happiness is dependent on other people, that's a lot of pressure for other, whether it be your kids, or your spouse, or whoever. And they are not always going to be able to live up to it, nor do they actually want that responsibility.

The healthiest marriages I see are the ones where both husband and wife have things, whether it be jobs, or it doesn't have to be jobs, often for the husband it is a job, but whatever it is, interests like you said, opportunities to grow, to learn that help you feel that growth in your life, the fulfillment maybe we would call it, the sense of purpose. And I can see where as a mother if we're getting a lot of that from raising kids. And then those kids suddenly become independent, you've got to find something to fill that void, it just creates an uncomfortable dynamic I would think.

Bonnie: Right. And it's kind of like we were expecting our needs in order to feel good you might say, would be to come from our adult children and families or whatever. And we come to find out that it doesn't necessarily. And so just knowing that, I think it's good, I think it was even maybe Brooke Castillo that said, "To have a bucket list of things you want to do, accomplish or just, even just do, I guess, until you're 100 years old." And so that's kind of a good place to start.

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But it can just be some hobby. It doesn't have to be something where you're visible in the world or that you, you know, it doesn't have to be a huge goal but it's just something where I say it kind of lights you up. There's got to be something else that you want to get up for in the morning perhaps to do than to just see your kids and your grandkids.

Jody: So you stayed at home with us, and raised us, and were there for us when we got home from school and things. And then as we got older and started leaving the house you always have been very active in lots of things. So maybe you could share some of those things just to give people ideas about things to explore because one of the common questions I get from women in this situation is, "How do I figure out what that is? How do I find what I'm passionate about or what I'm even interested in?"

Bonnie: Okay. One thing is I think what I tended to do was to start looking around what other people were doing. I think also though the big thing is having that desire. Because when you have that desire I really believe you have told your brain you want this. And so there's all these opportunities out there, you just never saw before. And pretty soon you start seeing them. And so one thing you can do is just start writing everything down. And you go, "No. No. Maybe." And then you just start doing that. I mean I was on a bowling team.

Jody: When I was little I think I remember that.

Bonnie: I know, I know. But it was I had a need, I had to get out of the house we did. We didn't have a lot of money, I couldn't afford a lot of babysitting. But if I joined this bowling team there was a free nursery there. But I mean I just started thinking, what am I going to do? And one day I was in Williams-Sonoma buying a wedding gift. And it just came out of my mouth, "Are you hiring?" And they go, "Oh, as a matter of fact, yeah, somebody just had their baby early and we need someone right away." And two weeks later I had a job.

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But I think it's, if you just start with the desire and just believing, yeah, I'm going to start seeing things, I'm going to figure this out. Because I know a lot of times we try too hard to think of things. But it can also be trial and error, try some things and not like it. But then I didn't even realize, I really like being around people. And that's probably why I was on the bowling league, that's probably why I went to work at Williams-Sonoma. Not that I needed the money or yes, but it was a fun job. But it was being around people.

And so then I started looking for more things that caused me to fulfill that need.

Jody: You also talk about Hoopfest.

Bonnie: That was another thing, I mean that stemmed way back from high school, a teacher that was interested in me was the basketball coach. And because of that, that led me to one of my sons, I would sit and watch basketball games. And I mean that's just another way to connect. Maybe with a child that they're into sports and they don't want anything to do with you; you would feel a connection with them. But I volunteered for an event that goes on in our city every year called Hoopfest which is this huge basketball tournament.

And again, I wanted something just a little more permanent between having jobs and the church, volunteering at school, other things. It was like, yeah, I just kind of want a little more validation as in a paycheck. Did I need the money? No. But that was fulfilling to me. And so I just went in and I said, "Do you ever hire anybody just seasonally to work the event?" And again they go, "Yeah. And we're looking for two people right now."

Jody: You just found one.

Bonnie: It's kind of like you get ready to sell a house and that doesn't happen now but you can say, "Oh my gosh, only three people have come by to look at my house." But you only need one.

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Jody: Yeah. And I do think you've always been good about, you're not afraid to ask people that. And even if, like with the Williams-Sonoma example, it's not like you were at home thinking, I should get a part-time job somewhere. You just, because you were out and you were in that store and you liked the environment, it came to your mind to ask. And you could have easily turned down that job. I think that sometimes we think we have to sit back and have it all figured out and have a plan and then go execute it.

But I like how you think in a more organic way. And you just kind of open yourself up to meeting people and finding opportunities. And some of them are the right path and some of them are not. But that is how I think you end up where you're meant to be. Talk about when you went to coach training. You now have a coaching practice, I don't think that you even planned on that. I didn't even plan on that when I went to coach training, right?

Bonnie: Right. I went to coach training because you invited me to. I didn't know anything about the model. I don't know how I survived. But by going there I just thought, yeah, I've always been fascinated on what motivates people.

Jody: How old were you?

Bonnie: I was, gosh, it was in 2014.

Jody: And it's almost your birthday. And you're going to be how old?

Bonnie: Seventy-four.

Jody: So I don't know, I can't do math.

Bonnie: I can't either. So it was in 2014, but I mean you could say, I didn't start my business, this business till I was 71. And so I go to coach training and yes, I loved it but it wasn't like oh yeah, I'm going to be a coach. And I remember you telling me, "Hey, it's after this week of training that all the

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work is going to have to do.” So I did a little of it. I wasn’t going to get certified but you said to me, “I think you can do it, mom.”

Jody: You kind of thought, well, that was a good experience. I just want to have the experience. And you weren’t going to do the requirements to become certified until I was like, “Mom, come on.” Anyway, sorry, go ahead.

Bonnie: And that’s part of my personality, not everybody’s that way. You gave me a challenge, by golly, I’m going to try to go after it and accomplish it. And so I did. But even then I mean I kind of dabbled. I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I was working at Weightwatchers. And that was just another thing. I think, I really think the universe, God, whatever you want to call it, conspires in our favor. And if we’re just looking for opportunities, things come up. And so I had to lose some weight. And so I went to Weightwatchers and I go, “I can do that, that looks like fun.”

And again it was around people, if it was all online at that time I probably wouldn’t have done it but it was around people and so I did that. I kind of thought I want to be a weight loss coach. But then we went to Africa and yes, the best part about being in Africa again, was the people. I think one thing though that you told me that I think is really beneficial is number one, not to overthink every decision that we make. And number two, once you make a decision don’t go back and revisit it. Don’t go back and keep revisiting, was that the right one or not?

I mean there was one time, my kids were still little and I got this job in a mall. And somebody, one of you kids got sick and I mean after 10 days I knew this was not where I was supposed to be or what I was supposed to be doing right now. And I’m not saying that for everybody but that was just my feeling. And so I quit that job. I wasn’t embarrassed to tell them. And I mean it wasn’t the end of the world that I quit a job. I think it’s different than dreaming. I think we always ought to be dreaming. And I think even just dreaming about things then you start to see opportunities that are out there.

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Jody: Totally. Well, I think again that I recall my childhood as my mom was a stay at home mom. She was always there. But I know you also were doing all these other things. You served a lot in church callings and like you said, all these little jobs and your bowling and just the things that you did to keep yourself fulfilled that I wasn't even aware of as a child really. I do remember I think my first journal entry ever is a picture of me and Natalie, and I wrote, I help take care of Natalie when mom goes bowling. And I remember thinking of my mom, she's a bowler.

Bonnie: And I had a pink bowling ball.

Jody: Yes, I do remember the pink bowling ball with your initials on it. But anyway I just love that message that it's not like you have to find your purpose. I think because people make it so heavy sometimes or that it's going to be a waste of time or a waste of money if I do that thing and then I don't go build a business. Or if I take that job and then I quit two weeks later, that was a waste of time. All of that is nonsense.

That's just the way of life is it's trying things out, it's meeting people. You don't ever have to think of any of it as a waste. It's always just one step closer to whatever is the next thing. And sometimes it means taking the wrong step and then redoing your step. But I just think you've always been a good example of that. I know because I talk about you on the podcast sometimes, so I know people want to just hear how you're doing, how your health is, how you're feeling and everything.

Bonnie: My health is, the doctor will ask me, "How is your overall health?" And I'll go, "I don't know, you tell me." So I would say...

Jody: I want to be like, well, I pooped today so I guess it's good.

Bonnie: Yeah. I would say I'm doing well. I still have pain 24/7 but again, there is so much in your mind that you can do to even manage pain. That I thought, I'm just not going to do, not do anything the rest of my life because I'm in this pain. And so I just thought, okay, I do what I can do every day

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until my back says, "Okay, stop." I don't even plan ahead, okay, you can only do this many hours. I just go for how many hours I can do every day.

So my pain is good, the type of cancer I had – have, I guess you could say, they say it's in remission, multiple myeloma, they'll never say you're cancer free. And so they say it always comes back. They're getting to closer to a cure but that's just the way it is. I don't know if it's my age. I don't know if I choose to but I do not worry every day or even the week I go in for a blood test, that something is negative is going to come up. I'll just deal with that when it does. So I would say it's good.

Jody: Would you say, because it seems from my observation but tell me if I'm wrong that as you're able to do what you need to do to keep your emotional health, which is not always possible. And I'm not saying that anyone who can't do that should feel bad about it. But you do what you can to keep yourself emotionally healthy which makes the pain more tolerable?

Bonnie: Definitely. You've got to be excited about something. And if you're excited, maybe it's a buffer. But when I'm coaching a client I never think, and four o'clock is usually a hard time. And I have some clients that I don't start till 4:30. I never once have thought, I can't wait till this call is over so I can go lay down and get some relief for my back. That emotion of loving what I'm doing just kind of kicks in, yeah.

Jody: Well, and a buffer, the way I teach buffering is that it's only a buffer if it has another negative consequence it's creating.

Bonnie: That's true.

Jody: Yes, coaching is maybe helping you avoid some of the emotional pain but there's no downside. On the other side you're not like, "Darn it, I wish I wouldn't have done that." So it's not a buffer, it's just a healthy coping mechanism as Dr. Phil would say.

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Bonnie: Right. It's very interesting though for anybody that is in physical pain. There's a book out called, I think it's The Way Out by Alan Gordon. And it's the same, almost the same tools that you teach and I teach about not resisting the pain. And a lot of times pain will come because our brain is trying to protect us from harm coming. But if you know, I know that just because I have pain doesn't mean I'm doing damage to my back. So just acknowledging that I have been able to lessen my physical pain also. Just not resisting it and just telling my brain, it's okay, I've got this, it's just some residue.

Jody: Pretty amazing what the brain can do. Okay, so we're running out of time. And they're trying to vacuum outside my door and I never stop anyone from vacuuming my house. So let's just tell people where to find you, if people are interested in learning more from you and/or maybe even getting some coaching from you, where should they go?

Bonnie: If you go to my website, bonnielyman.com.

Jody: That's Bonnie, B-O-N-N-I-E Lyman, L-Y-M-A-N.com.

Bonnie: Right. There's a little tab there to book a call. If you go to my Instagram account which is Bonnie Lyman Coaching. Go to my profile, there's quite a few links to either book a call, get signed up for my email, I have a podcast called Loving on Purpose.

Jody: Okay. And if they book a call with you then they're going to get some free coaching?

Bonnie: Yes. It's a free 60 minute, I call it a consult. We just talk about whatever you've got on your mind that's not going well in your life.

Jody: Nice, a free coaching session. And then you'll help them figure out if your program's a right fit for them or not.

Bonnie: Right.

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Jody: Yeah. Okay, cool, bonnielyman.com or podcast, what was the podcast called again?

Bonnie: Loving on Purpose.

Jody: This is a new podcast, yeah?

Bonnie: Yes. I've only had three out, comes out on Wednesdays.

Jody: Okay, Loving on Purpose. Alright, well, thanks, mom, for coming on my show finally.

Bonnie: Thanks, Jo.

Jody: Alright, we'll see you soon, dinner at your house Sunday.

Bonnie: Okay. Alright, dessert maybe.

Jody: Dessert at your house.

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.