

347: Managing Depression with EmyLee McIntyre



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Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 347: Managing Depression with EmyLee McIntyre.

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.

Hey, everybody, welcome to the podcast today. I have a guest today that I think so many of you are going to benefit from. I get asked questions all the time from people who are battling depression or have a family member, or loved one, or child, whose battling depression and they want to know does coaching work. Is coaching the right answer or how do I know if it is or if I need something different? Does it work with therapy? What other things can we recommend to help people with depression?

And EmyLee is a coach, you'll hear a little bit as we discuss. I was able to meet her actually years ago when she first went through coach training. But she herself has battled with depression throughout her life and has used lots of different things to help her manage it, coaching being one of the ones that helped her really find a lot of relief. She now specializes in coaching people with depression. So, I'm excited for you to hear what EmyLee has to say. We'll be giving you information about how to learn more from her if you love what she has to say or want some more help.

She is also, I should mention, a student in my Business Minded coaching program where we are working on growing her coaching practice even more so. And I'm having so much fun working with her in there. I think we talk a little bit about that. Every time I mention Business Minded I get flooded with questions about, "How can I join Business Minded?"

So, if you think you might want to grow your business and it doesn't have to be a coaching practice, we have all kinds of entrepreneurs in there. You would want to head to jodymoore.com/business to get on the wait list. We won't be opening it up until later this summer but you can get on the wait

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list and make sure you don't miss it. Alright, here is my conversation with Emylee, please enjoy.

Emylee: It's good to see you.

Jody: What's happening? Long time no see.

Emylee: I know. I know, it's been so long.

Jody: Yes. Okay. You were in my class at coach training. How many years ago was that?

Emylee: 2019, I think, fall.

Jody: It feels like a whole lifetime ago.

Emylee: I know, because the last three years have been so long and also so short. I'm like 2021, what?

Jody: It's so bizarre, okay, so it was pre pandemic, that's why it feels so long ago, but it was, well, almost four years ago now actually.

Emylee: I know, it's crazy.

Jody: That's so crazy. So, tell everybody about you. Where do you live? Tell us all of your personal information if you wouldn't mind to begin with.

Emylee: Yeah, my address.

Jody: Yes, social security, bank, debit card number, all of that.

Emylee: My husband's always telling me when not to give that information out. He's like, "Now, you know, this is a robo call." I'm like, "I know honey."

Jody: Man, people are tricky nowadays.

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Emylee: I know, and I tell my kids all those tricks all the time. Like, “I found a new one today you guys, so you’ve got to be on top of your game for sure.”

Jody: I feel like I always have to call my parents and be like, “Don’t fall for it if somebody calls and says somebody hacked into your bank account and they need your number.”

Emylee: The vulnerable people in your life you’re like, “Just say no.” I know.

Jody: Anyways, okay, back to Emylee.

Emylee: So, I live in San Antonio, Texas. Like you said, I certified with The Life Coach School in 2019.

Jody: And first of all, what prompted you to want to do that?

Emylee: I was struggling with family relationships but also always is this is my depression? Is it their fault? Is it my fault? I always tried to figure out who or what was at fault and also the whole depression thing came into play. It was like, am I seeing it skewed? And I was talking to my brother-in-law who’s a pediatrician. He actually recommended – my sister had recommended you for years actually. And he recommended, he was like, “No, you really have to listen to Jody Moore because it’s free counseling.”

Jody: Thanks, brother-in-law and sister.

Emylee: Yes, I know. So, I listened and it was, I think the second episode I listened to was how I became a life coach. And I was like, “That’s what she is. That’s a thing. You can just be a life coach.” And my dad’s sort of a motivational speaker. And I don’t know, it just fit. It just was like the cards parted and were like, this is what you’re supposed to do.

Jody: That’s awesome. Yeah, I recorded that episode a long time ago because people would reach out to me all the time wanting to know how I became a life coach. And I thought, well, just do a podcast. So, we’ll link

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that up in the show notes for anyone that wants to know. That's awesome, okay. And so now who do you coach today?

Emylee: I coach women who have been diagnosed with depression or even just struggle with their mood. But for a lot of them they have tried medication, or therapy, or counseling, and they're looking for more tools in order to be able to combat some of depression, especially the parts that they can control. For me it felt like medication helped a lot, and exercise helped, and changing my diet helped. But I wanted some tools that felt like they were in my control because sometimes I couldn't get a hold of my doctor or my body would adjust to my medication.

Or hormones, or post baby, or just a hard day and I just felt kind of I was out of control. And so that's what I wanted to give to the women I coach. It's just more control, more power, more leverage over their mood.

Jody: Oh my gosh, so good. So, tell us a little bit about your history then with depression if you don't mind. Were you diagnosed by a doctor? How long ago was that?

Emylee: Yeah. I feel like something inside of me shifted as a senior in high school. I don't know if it was because life was hard or because life was hard because of my depression. But when I got to college and had a roommate who was going through very similar things. I told her, I'm like, "I see other people in the hallway and they don't spiral out of control when they miss a morning class. And me and you, it's like our whole day has gone." And I'm like, "I don't think life has to be this hard."

So, it was really handy that she was there and we could both go get help, try medication, especially it's really nice to try medication away from your family sometimes because just like trying to be a life coach with people who don't already know you. It's easier to take on that identity. It was so much easier not to be around family, to have family be like, "Oh, you seem better today." Or, "Where's my old Emylee, where is she now?" You're just trying to figure out who you are now with this new emotions and these new struggles.

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So, it was really easier to do it my freshman year in college and figure that out.

Jody: That's interesting, yeah. I mean, yeah, because you are sort of taking on a bit of an identity change which people are going to have opinions about whether they in some ways like it and prefer it. And in other ways either dislike it or they're just used to you being a certain way. It's really strange in relationship dynamics when somebody really starts changing. That can happen through medication, that happens through coaching sometimes too. Like wait, I don't fight with my husband anymore and he doesn't like it.

It feels weird, we're just used to the dynamics, so that's interesting, I hadn't thought about that before.

Emylee: And I think it helped that I met my husband right around that time because I was always like, "I'm such a mess. And why is life so hard?" And he'd be like, "What are you talking about? You're fine. Of course, life is hard." And I don't know, he just had this special ability not to try to fix me. Our entire marriage he's been like that and I know that's challenging for most of us. But for him, I've always had this gift where I'm really comfortable talking about my mood and depression. It just doesn't seem it's something to be shameful about.

But I also married this person who also just think it's just another trial. I'm here for you and there's nothing wrong with you. And so, I feel I really get to translate that over to my clients of being like, "There's nothing wrong with you. And I know this because all my clients have depression. So, it must be pretty common."

Jody: You're like, "Trust me, everybody I work with has depression." Well, and the thing is, it is really common nowadays. And it's really, I feel really common amongst our young people too. And it can be a really crippling challenge and hard for people to know what to do with and hard to know how to help our kids. So, what tools do you have to offer people? What do we tell people who are struggling with depression?

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Emylee: I was listening to your podcast today on why feelings matter. And that whole time I was like, “Boom, Jody, you nailed it.” Because I think I spend the most amount of time helping people feel their feelings because they’re so afraid because they just feel they’re going to get swallowed up by it. And they just feel it’s going to consume them. And so, what they don’t realize they’re doing most of the time is they’re resisting all of these emotions like I shouldn’t feel angry with my kids. I shouldn’t be sad today. I shouldn’t be tired. I shouldn’t need an extra nap. I shouldn’t need so much me time in the evening.

And they just resist all this thinking that they should be better. And I think that when I’ve gotten good at feeling my feelings. And trust me, I’ve had so much opportunities during the pandemic, and then I also was diagnosed with some chronic illnesses. And then I just got COVID in January. It was so much time to be like, okay, I feel depressed but let’s really go into my body and feel what depression, what I describe as depression really feels like. And the separation between me simply getting in my body and feeling depression and when I don’t do that.

And I layer all this dirty pain because of the way I’m thinking about my depression. That’s such a heavier thing to experience. Depression itself when I really stay out of my head and just keep going back to my body, keep going back to my body, it’s a simple kind of empty lull in my stomach that I can handle. And so, I’ve found that a large part of my depression was actually manageable by my mind.

Jody: It’s so amazing. Okay, so you brought up that term, dirty pain. And one of the things that I have been getting a lot of questions from my clients on, so I thought we could do a podcast on it is what is the difference between clean pain and dirty pain? So, would you kind of talk about those concepts and how they relate specifically to depression?

Emylee: Yeah. I feel clean pain and I actually recently heard your definition of it and I loved it. It’s the pain that makes us human. The pain that we want to have. Opposition in all things, the pain that makes joy so good. And it’s the way we want to feel. It feels appropriate for a circumstance. It feels like

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a grown up mature way to react, sad when your kids are sad. I think that's good sometimes. And feeling sad when there's injustices in the world, things like that, I think that's so appropriate.

But dirty pain I think it feels like that storm of emotions. A lot of people describe it as anxiety or depression I think, is oftentimes it's one of those appropriate emotions. And then we have all these thoughts about how either it's wrong or this isn't the right time. Or I don't have time for this feeling. And then we create that storm, then it becomes this dirty pain, this pain that we actually created with our thoughts about why the way we're feeling is not the right time, or I don't have time for it, or it's not appropriate.

Jody: It's not fair.

Emylee: It's not fair.

Jody: Yeah. And this is a concept I didn't create, I heard it first from Martha Beck actually in one of her books. And then I found it online that behavioral psychologists use this term. For me the easiest example to explain it is I used to work at the University of Phoenix for 14 years or so. About eight years ago they made a bunch of changes and they laid a whole bunch of us off. And when I got laid off from that job, I kind of knew it was coming so that helped a little bit. But there was a lot of pain there.

There was clean pain which was this was such a huge part of my life and I love these people, and I love this organization. And I'm going to miss all of that. And I'm sad that that part is over. And that's, like you're saying, that appropriate, I want to feel sad when an important powerful part of my life ends. That's clean pain. Also, as people were getting laid off there was all sorts of gossip and drama. I think there was even a website somebody threw up about rumors and who said what and why did this person get let go and not that person.

And all of that which is tempting to indulge in because it feels sort of validating is dirty pain. This isn't fair. This isn't right. I can't believe this person did this thing. Like you said, you used the word 'mature'. It feels like me reverting back to high school Jody, instead of me being my highest self

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when I'm in dirty pain. And sometimes it's just like you said, this isn't fair, or it can be like you said, I don't have time. I've got to take care of my family. I know I've coached women with depression who are like, "Well, what am I supposed to do?"

When I say, "Just be depressed, just feel the depression." "Well, what am I supposed to do? We've got to eat dinner." I'm like, "Okay, cereal." You're not going to be in your A game I would imagine at times.

Emylee: Right. And they'll spend half the session explaining to me why, "But you should have seen me three years ago. This is not my A game." I've heard the women say that. And it's like we shift and change. And who's to say what our A game is supposed to look like at any point in time? Why isn't it good that my daughter sees me struggling with my emotions? I think there's so many different ways to be on our 'A game' as a parent, as a person.

Jody: Well, and I think that's an interesting point too that this isn't me. This isn't who I used to be. And that can be true with depression, that can be true with a physical challenge, a chronic health problem, or an injury, or something. This isn't me. We identify as a certain way and then something changes physically or emotionally for us. And we don't want to let go of that old part of us. I would classify that as sort of a clean pain of yeah, you might need to grieve and just like I did, grieve that my job was ending.

Might need to grieve that that part of your life in the way that you knew it is complete. But there's the dirty pain on top of that of the judgment of yourself, the fear that it will never be as happy, you'll never be as good. You'll never be as fulfilled. All of that's a lie. What's coming could be even better but you have to be willing to sometimes let go of a past version of you and that can be really painful for people.

Emylee: Which is what I feel I spend the most time is people being like, "I want to be who I used to be." And I actually just did a podcast on that, getting your life back. And the idea that who you are going to be and who you are now is so much better because it's built on her. Now you're

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experienced, and wise, and resilient. You've come through these things. It's so much better than the past version of you that puts so much emphasis on circumstance because you had all these milestones ahead of you.

It's going to be so fun when I graduate from college, when I get married and have a baby. And now this version of you looks back and just thinks the past was so beautiful and perfect. But the truth is this version of you knows that you create happiness because you've been through hard things and you're still okay. So, she's so much better.

Jody: Yes. And we don't have to dislike who we were in the past to become a different version of us. And I think that's so hard for our brains to understand. But I just like her, that was fun, I like being her, I still want to be her. Okay, you can like her and become an even better version of yourself.

Emylee: Yeah. She's you.

Jody: You still are her.

Emylee: She's so cool. I can do that too. Yes, exactly.

Jody: I mean I'm going through a little bit of this right now where I'm just feeling sort of stagnant, okay, I've figured out a lot of the parts of my business anyway. And I am a really good coach. I love all those parts of my life but I can feel that the challenge of it is gone. And I can feel myself wanting a new challenge and either because we have a trial we're dealing with like depression. Or just because that's the ebb and flow of it.

Emylee: Yeah. And I could give you a few of mine if you want some.

Jody: But I want to choose it. I know, I should be careful because God's going to be like, "Alright, here you go."

Emylee: You're bored.

Jody: Did you say you were bored?

Emylee: Oh my gosh.

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Jody: So, you mentioned something in what you sent to me sort of about the science of mental health and the way the science of mental health is changing. Tell me what you know about that.

Emylee: Through coaching, I had noticed more and more that we are figuring out that a lot of our neurotransmitters are created in our gut. So, a ton of our emotional health is being affected by inflammation of our gut which is caused by all kinds of things, like stress, the way you eat, the way your DNA is predisposed to absorb vitamin B12 and different things. So, I think we put a lot of emphasis on this chemical imbalance idea.

And I had Jacob Hess on the podcast, he works with, I'm going to say Thomas McConkie. You had him on your show I think.

Jody: Yeah, Thomas McConkie, yeah.

Emylee: Yes, they work together.

Jody: Now, what's your podcast called?

Emylee: Limitless Female. Yeah, so they work together. And he came on, he was saying that you can't find a neuroscientist that will say that depression is caused by chemical imbalance anymore. They'll say it's caused by inflammation, inflammation in the brain, like your brain is on fire. Inflammation of your gut, it's becoming this outdated idea because what happens is your brain is constantly shifting in its chemicals. You eat a candy bar and your chemicals shift. You eat broccoli and your chemicals shift.

And so, there's really no study like my chemicals are just imbalanced. It's more of a...

Jody: Interesting.

Emylee: Yeah, it's more of an inflammation problem. So, it seems we have more control than we thought as far as our daily habits in controlling the inflammation in our brain. But I just love it because we also, the work me and you do is helping people manage their thoughts about their brain kind

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of. And I love the idea of managing our thoughts about our depression which is a huge piece of what I do. And I love the idea of treating our emotions like a detective rather than a firefighter, rather than it constantly putting them out, being like, I wonder why I feel that way and what do I need?

Jacob actually gave the example of touching a stove. And when we touch a stove and it's hot, we get this signal that runs up our fingers, and into our brain, and then our brain tells us it's hot and it sends a signal back down and we pull our hand away. And when that happens we're not angry at our body for pulling our hand away and for it burning our hand. We're maybe mad at the stove for burning our hand, but we're not angry at our body. But then when we get depression we're so angry, we feel our body has betrayed us, it's just not working the way it's supposed to.

And I should feel better and I should have a steady mood, and this isn't fair, and this is too hard to parent with this. But what if instead of being angry with our body we could manage our thoughts by thinking about our body in that way, signaling us. You need to eat different or you need more time to yourself, or you need to manage this relationship in your life that's really hard.

Instead of just shutting down this fact that – and taking it all like, it's just a chemical imbalance. I don't work, nothing's working. Maybe we could take it as some clues and some different areas of our life where we could manage our depression a little bit.

Jody: That there's something that needs to change. I love thinking about it as inflammation too because for some reason, and I always use that term, chemical imbalance or a hormone problem. But that feels so out of our control. My chemicals are imbalanced, I don't know what causes that or how to solve for that. Inflammation still feels to me challenging, okay, how do we minimize inflammation, reduce inflammation in the brain and the gut? But it feels more doable than in terms of our ability to do something about it. And so, I love that, that's interesting.

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Emylee: And by the way, an anti-inflammatory diet, everyone in the world I feel should be on it but it's not really a crazy diet.

Jody: What is it? Tell us.

Emylee: It includes things like blueberries, spinach, it's a lot of wholefoods. And you avoid things like processed meat and gluten, sugar. I mean it's not really a new idea.

Jody: I mean that sounds terrible, I'll be honest. So, in other words eating more fruits and vegetables and less processed things and sugar? Yeah, okay. Not rocket science.

Emylee: No. But I was talking to this girl, did all my DNA. And she was looking at what I'm predisposed to and some of the things are happening in my body that are creating inflammation. Because it turns out I don't actually have a genetic disposition to have a problem with my neurotransmitters. For me, all of my depression is from my gut and my inflammation in my brain. So, I was like, "Well, I think my son has ADHD. Should I bring him to you?" And she's like, "Why don't you just feed him what you eat because he has 50% of your genes."

She's like, "Actually, how about you just tell everybody to eat an anti-inflammatory diet." I'm like, "That's a really good idea."

Jody: Yeah. I mean I know people who say that changing their diet has done wonders for their children with ADHD, even with autism, that it's lifechanging. And our world today and our fast culture is not set up for an anti-inflammatory diet. But if you pay attention a little bit, it's doable, yeah?

Emylee: Yeah. I mean it can be challenging but I don't think about the parts I cut out. I mostly think about what I'm putting in. My smoothie in the morning, I am cramming in everything. I'm like a handful of spinach, what will cover up that flavor? And then I'm like, let's shake this super powder in. I'm just adding in as much nutrients as I can.

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Jody: I love it. Okay, so let's give people one more tool. We've talked about clean pain and dirty pain. And just noticing the difference I have found can be really powerful. It's not that you shouldn't feel dirty pain or that you won't. It's just noticing this isn't useful, I could step away from this, whereas clean pain is useful. It actually moves us through an experience, it's resisting it like you said earlier, can actually increase depression and anxiety.

We talked about an anti-inflammatory diet can be really useful which you could probably Google and find in two seconds. Just give people one more, something to kind of try out if they're struggling with depression.

Emylee: Okay. Well, one of the things, I mean a lot of our mood probably can be contributed to the way we think and feel about some particular circumstance in our life. And it shifts all the time. So maybe for me it was having COVID right when I thought my goals were on track. And I was starting my exercise program and then COVID. So, I like to think about that situation. And every night I like to write down three – take a thought that I want to start thinking like my life is exactly as it should be. That might feel really challenging at that time.

And then I'm going to look for three ways all day that that is true. And so, every night I'm going to write down three ways that day that I saw that my life is exactly as it should be, or that my life is, you know, there's a reason that I am sick and not able to do this. I do this a lot with my clients with their spouse. When they're like, "My spouse just isn't supportive of me." And I'm like, "What do you want to think about your spouse?" They're like, "I want to think that he cares."

So, they have a notebook next to their bed, they put, he cares and then every night they're going to write down three ways that they saw that he cared that day. And what it's doing is we're literally – we talk about neuroplasticity, we're literally changing the brain, first chemically, because they're having to look and cement this new thought. But your brain actually does eventually physically change where that thought is a new neural pathway that their brain could just take and find so easily.

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Jody: That is a great practical exercise that you can do because a lot of times as coaches we will offer people new thoughts. And they'll say, "Well, I don't really believe that." Or we want it to just be instant but it can require work like that. I saw, I think it was a health coach online posted something recently that said, "Don't be frustrated about the lack of results you have from the lack of work that you've put in." It really hit home with me, I was like, "Yeah, I can't be mad that I've sort of gotten out of shape a little bit because I haven't been exercising."

And with thought work and changing your brain it's the same way. It might require that you do something intentional like that, grab one thought, look for three pieces of evidence for it and write it down every day. You do that for 30, 60 days, I promise you, you will change the way you start seeing that particular circumstance.

Emylee: Yeah, I feel like one week, they're like, they have enough evidence. They're like, "He must care about me."

Jody: It's things we just block out otherwise. Really our brains are designed to filter out anything that's not relevant. So, when you tell it, this is what's relevant, it will start noticing things that you'll think your husband changed. But really you just changed what you were looking for.

Emylee: Yes. My clients are always like, "Everything shifted and yet I think nothing changed." I'm like, "Exactly."

Jody: Exactly, that's how it works, my friend, it's magical, it's so good. Okay, well, where do we want to send people, Emylee, if they want to learn more from you, get more help?

Emylee: Yeah. I have a podcast called Limitless Female like I said, where we kind of dive into topics that are really specific to women with depression. And of course they range because I think our mood is at the center of most of our challenges. But they can also find me on Instagram at Limitless Female, or limitlessfemalecoaching.com.

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Jody: Okay, awesome. And I can't remember, did you have an opt-in or something?

Emylee: I do. I took a note from you. I loved your freebie in Business Minded. And so, I did 50 thoughts happy moms think. And so that's available to you guys too.

Jody: That's so good. A free download. I'm always on the lookout for more thoughts because even if 49 of the thoughts on that list you don't like, if there's one that you're like, "Oh, I never thought of that before." That can be lifechanging, it's a different way to view the world. So, I think of thoughts the same way I think of clothes. I'm always looking for new clothes. I love shopping and my closet's always overflowing. And I'm always like, more thoughts, more thoughts. So, everyone grab that download for sure.

Alright, Emylee, thank you so much for your time, for coming on the podcast.

Emylee: Oh my gosh, it was so fun. Thanks, Jody.

Jody: You bet.

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.