

436: How to Save Your Marriage



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

436: How to Save Your Marriage

I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 436, How to Save your Marriage.

This is *Better Than Happy*, the podcast where we study what the healthiest, most successful people in today's world think, feel and do. And we leverage this knowledge to create our best lives. Are you ready, little bird? Let's fly.

Hey there everybody, how's it going today? Thanks so much for joining me for the podcast. I hope that you had a beautiful Thanksgiving. I hope that you're having a lovely fall. I've got to tell you a funny story, my son who is 10 years old in fourth grade, he said, "Mom, I saw this meme online that said moms in October, no listening to Halloween music until October 30th. Moms on November 1st, time to listen to Christmas music."

So I hope that you're listening to whatever kind of music you like. I prefer Christmas over Halloween. Although Halloween is my birthday, you all, I just turned 49. What? Get ready, turning 50 next year, I think I'm going to make it a big year.

Okay, speaking of Christmas, we have the best holiday gift this year. I'm so excited to put this out because people asked us for this type of a gift for years, and we've done other gift options but we've never done this before and I'm very excited. We have created *Better Than Happy*, The Masterclass. So for all of your fans of the podcast, I'm telling you, whether they are men, women, young adults, college students, older retired age, whatever, if they like the things that I teach here, they're going to love coming to a masterclass with me.

I can't even describe to you how mind blowing it is to hear this work applied in real life, and that's what we're going to do together on the masterclass. They'll have the opportunity to ask me questions and interact with me if they want. If they don't want to do that, they'll just have work I'm going to have them do and I will guide them through it. And they can stay behind the scenes. I think you should get one for all of the *Better Than Happy* fans on

436: How to Save Your Marriage

your list and you can head to jodymoore.com/gift to check that out. It's only 59 bucks so get it for all the people that you love.

None of us need more stuff. We need more experiences, especially the kind that will refine us. Those of you in The Lab, get ready because we have a pretty exciting holiday gift coming for you so stay tuned, all of my friends in The Lab.

We're going to talk today about how to save your marriage. And I use those words because those are the words people say to me sometimes. They say, "Jody Moore, thank you for your work, I so appreciate it, you totally saved my marriage." And that's so generous and gracious, by the way. I talk about people's compliments on here sometimes and then people go, "I know you hear this all the time." And I'm like, "No. Guess what? I'm not tired of hearing it. Keep telling me how much you love me and my work. I need this validation. I like it."

But what I do know is true is that I didn't ever save anyone's marriage. I am just not that powerful, if I were, I would be doing a lot more good than I'm able to do right now. I might even do some harm, who knows? But anyway, my point is I did not save your marriage. You saved your marriage, you and God and maybe your spouse was involved. Sometimes they are, sometimes they're not.

But I'm so delighted to hear that the tools I teach you here helped you create what you wanted in your life and I know that's what people mean when they tell me that. And so I want to dive into some of the kind of common questions I get from people who are still on that journey. And I want to give you some things to think about if your marriage is struggling. And I want to begin by encouraging you to ask yourself the question, is this a marriage I want to save?

So whenever somebody comes to me on a coaching call and they are having struggles in their marriage, and they'll tell me about their spouse or about what's going on between them, the dynamic, etc. The first question almost always that I ask is, "Do you want to stay in this marriage? Do you

436: How to Save Your Marriage

want to be in this marriage?” Now, oftentimes they immediately say yes, and that’s great. I’m all for you staying in your marriage if you want to, and I can help you get to peace around it. But it’s important that we give this question a little airtime.

Many people are afraid to give this question airtime in their heads. They’re afraid to even consider the idea that it’s possible to not stay in this marriage. I don’t know about you, but I remember when I was younger, hearing the advice, divorce is not an option. If you just go into your marriage with the idea that divorce is not an option then you will work through any challenge or problem that comes up. It makes sense.

Except that I’ve found that for many people who are struggling in their marriage, this whole divorce is not an option concept, isn’t useful. First of all it’s a lie, because divorce is always an option. I can’t think of an instance when it wouldn’t be. There might be, depending on the country and the culture you’re in, or the family structure that you’re around or the social structure. There might be more severe consequences in some places than others but literally divorce is pretty much always an option. So we want to begin by telling ourselves the truth about that.

And the other thing that people are afraid of is they are afraid if they explore that idea in their minds and they at least acknowledge the reality of it then they might discover that they kind of do want a divorce. They kind of do want to get out of this marriage. And then they’ll have to go do that and that will be scary and hard and overwhelming. And what I like to remind everybody is that you can acknowledge to yourself the truth that first of all, it is an option. And even if it’s true for you, maybe you actually don’t want to be in this marriage and you still don’t have to leave. Did you know that?

We do things all the time that we don’t want to do and there can be a lot of valid reasons to not really want to be in that marriage and choose to stay anyway. There really can be. And when I say valid reasons, guess who gets to determine whether or not the reason is valid? You do my friend. Now, a good coach will be able to help you make the decision from love

436: How to Save Your Marriage

and trust and abundance, not from fear and scarcity but still you get to decide.

So I have had clients who choose to stay in their marriages because they think it will be easier on their kids to have their parents stay together. And many times that is a perfectly valid reason. It's a reason that many of my clients like in the end. And all I do is give them permission to like the reason and to choose to stay. But instead of telling yourself, I should be in this happy marriage, my marriage should be better, my marriage should be easier or I should be enjoying it more.

Sometimes just acknowledging, I don't really want to be in this marriage, it's challenging, but I'm going to stay in this marriage, at least to a certain point, until my kids are out of the house or whatever point or even if it's just for now. Maybe you're going to end up staying forever. But for now, I choose to stay in this marriage, even though I don't really want to be in the marriage. That is going to give you more opportunity to improve yourself and your situation, even your marriage, than denying the truth.

When we reject the truth, because if it's true you don't want to be in that marriage but you're just rejecting it by choosing not to acknowledge it, not to even just to yourself acknowledge it. You can't make progress from a lie. You can only make progress from the truth. The truth may be, I don't really want to be in this marriage. But even more so, I don't want to leave the marriage. And again, that might have to do with kids. It might have to do with money. It might have to do with somebody's health.

It might have to do with, I've even seen clients in a situation where they felt that their spouse was dangerous in some way. And they didn't want to get a divorce because they didn't want their kids to be left alone with that spouse then on the other side of that divorce. And they didn't want to go through all of the shenanigans and risk not being able to be with the kids more often and protect them. Literally any reason you want you can choose to stay in your marriage.

436: How to Save Your Marriage

And acknowledging for yourself what's true right now at least, again doesn't have to stay true forever, but maybe it will. What's true right now is this. I don't really want to be in this marriage. Now, that may not be the truth. And the truth may be I do want to be in this marriage. I just desperately wish that my spouse was different. And that's probably the most common thing I see when people come to me in coaching, although what I just described is not uncommon either. So that's the first thing though, is this a marriage worth saving?

I do also see people who decide, no, I don't want to be in this marriage and they choose to leave it. And just like you can stay for any reason, you can also leave for any reason. Now, listen, stay with me. Some of you are getting upset right now. You're like, "Why is Jody Moore telling people to leave their marriages just because they want to or that any reason is a good reason. That's not true." Okay, that doesn't have to be true for you. Every one of us gets to decide what's true for us.

What I'm saying is, you get to decide for yourself what is a reason you like for leaving your marriage. And it may be that you cannot be your highest best self in this marriage. It is too challenging for you to do that. I mean that would be obviously true if you are in a situation, most likely I would say, it would be obviously true if you're in a situation where you're being abused or mistreated in some way, either physically, emotionally, mentally mistreated or abused.

It's going to be very challenging for you to remain your highest, best, most abundant, most loving, the version of you that every one of us is trying to become. It's going to be an uphill battle sometimes to be that version of you. And that might be the reason you choose to leave a marriage. And people will say, "Well, was there infidelity or was there abuse or mistreatment?" And certainly sometimes those are valid reasons, but there doesn't have to be anything like that. It doesn't have to be anything that obvious necessarily, it's a very personal decision.

Again, I recommend that you make it from trust and love, not from fear and scarcity. And come and get some help with that in The Lab if you're not

436: How to Save Your Marriage

sure, we can help you with that. But that's the first question. Do I want to save this marriage?

So let's move on. Let's assume that you've decided, yes, I do want to save this marriage, at least for now, and maybe even, ideally, in the long run I'm going to create more of the marriage I want. I'm going to speak to you now if you're in that camp. Every single challenge and problem that we have in our marriages comes from an unmet expectation, an expectation that is not being fulfilled of either myself, my spouse, or the marriage experience in general, which sort of includes both myself and my spouse.

When we have a picture and a story of what marriage should be, how we should be, how our spouses should be, then often reality doesn't meet it. And that is what creates problems in the marriage. The end, we could wrap it up, but I will elaborate more just in case. But I just want you to think about it like that because it's not complicated. We tend to want to make things complicated. We say things like, "Well, my spouse, he's really not available for connection. He doesn't share with me what he's thinking and feeling.

I can tell that he's sort of annoyed with me when I ask, but at the same time he's a good dad. He provides well for our family. He's a good person. So I don't know. I know I just need to get over it." So we make it all so complicated like wait a second, is he doing it right or am I doing it right or should I be annoyed at this because it seems reasonable? On the other hand, he's doing so many things well. All of a sudden we have this complicated thing, we're not quite sure how to solve.

But if we just simplify it down to, I have an expectation of how a husband should be. I have an expectation of how I should be or how I should feel or behave. And I have an expectation of what it's like to be in a 'good marriage'. And one to three of these things are not lining up according to my expectation and that is the only problem here. That is why I am struggling. That is why I'm unhappy.

Maybe it's my spouse does not want to have sex as frequently or as intimately, etc., in the way that I would like to. And this doesn't seem fair.

436: How to Save Your Marriage

This doesn't seem right. That's part of a healthy marriage. Having a sexual relationship, being intimate in that way. It's one way that we connect in marriage. And he or she is not interested in that in the same way that I am or not interested in it at all. And I don't know what to do here. So again, we have an expectation of ourselves and/or an expectation of our spouse and an expectation of marriage in general.

And I'm not saying any of our expectations aren't valid, you guys, please hear me say this. Your idea, your story, your picture of what a marriage should be is valid, it is. It's probably very reasonable. It's probably something that you could find many, many marriage experts and marriage therapists or just friends and reasonable people in the world would say, "I agree, that is how a marriage should be. That is how a husband should be. It is better if the spouse behaves this way or that way or if you feel this way or if your marriage looks like that. That's ideal."

In fact, we see it over and over again on Instagram, people telling us, "This is what we do in our marriage and it works so great. Find somebody who does this or that or the other thing." Okay, great, but if reality doesn't match that, you're going to upset yourself in your marriage if you hold onto that story. So what do we do about it then, Jody, if our stories are valid and reasonable and true, and yet reality isn't matching it, then what do we do if we want to stay in this marriage? Well, great question.

The way I see it, we have a few options we can play with. You can try to explain your expectation to your spouse, if it, let's say it's your spouse that isn't meeting your expectation. You can certainly try communicating it. I think this is a valid option by the way. What I see happen more often though, is not someone communicating it from a really open minded, let's discuss this kind of place. I see people communicating it from a defensive place. And it's tough, even if we go into it trying to be really open and kind, it often turns into confrontation. It often turns into a conflict.

So I think it's important that before you have a conversation like this, you have to get clear on your objectives. Your objective should not be to change the other person. I know that sounds strange. Why are we having

436: How to Save Your Marriage

this conversation if it's not to change them? We're having the conversation because we want to be as honest and open and vulnerable and available for connection with our spouse as possible.

And part of that is communicating our desires, communicating our preferences, communicating our stories and our ideas about what marriage should be and what a spouse should be. Not from a place of, let me explain to you why I need you to be this way. From a place of, I want to tell you what the story is in my head that I have about a marriage and I realize it's just a story. I picked it up from a lot of valid places. A lot of people share my story, but in the end it's just a story, it's just an idea.

And I would love to hear from you spouse, about your idea of what a marriage should be or who you want to be or what do you have to say about this? That's the ideal way to approach this conversation, is just to share your desires and preferences and interests. Because you'll be surprised how many times in a marriage, they're really small things that we prefer, really just small adjustments that we're asking of one another. And sometimes just having that understanding that your spouse is interpreting your behavior in a certain way that you don't intend can be really useful.

I'll tell you, I've had some discussions like this with my husband where either he's had requests of me or I've had requests of him. And it's always hard for the other one to hear it. It's tricky not for it to turn into a defensive well, yeah, but you do this and you do that type of situation. But if you can cut it off before it escalates and don't think, this is something I learned from my sister Natalie Clay, by the way, who's a marriage coach. Is to not go into those conversations thinking that you have to get to an agreement or resolution by the end. You don't.

You can just share it and say, "I don't know what the answer is and it's okay that we don't agree. And I don't think we have to come to a resolution. I just wanted to put it out there." And let it be, let it be kind of messy and unsettled, it's still the communication of when we're coming from our best place as much as possible, the communication is really valuable. It's really

436: How to Save Your Marriage

good for us to know what the other person's thinking and feeling. So that's one option, you can communicate it.

Another option is you can adjust your expectation, you really can, did you know this? And people sometimes say, "Well, that's not fair. I shouldn't have to let go of this." And I'm like, "Alright, well, welcome to life." We have to let go of thinking we can control other people and thinking that that's useful. And if there was a way to control them, I'd teach you that but this is life.

And it might feel unfair in the beginning but what I try to help people see through coaching is that it's not something we're doing for them. It's a gift you give yourself. It's like when we hold onto it, we're like hugging a cactus. And I'm like, "Hey, why are you hugging that cactus, it's prickly?" And they're like, "Yeah, I know, I'm in a lot of pain." I'm like, "Well, why don't you let go of the cactus?" They're like, "No, I want this cactus. It's not fair, I should get to hug this cactus if I want to."

And I'm like, "Yes, and you can if you want to but also, it's really prickly and it's hurting you. What if we just let go just a little bit? What if we loosen our grip on it a little bit?" And when you do, when you let go of it, even just a little bit and you don't have to go to extremes, but just a little bit of letting go of it can provide you so much relief that you'll be like, "That is so much better." This has happened over and over again, you guys, with people that I coach.

When I can get them to loosen up a little bit on their expectation, their ideas, their stories about what should be, they find so much relief that they want to go even further. I've got to tell you something here and this might help you, I hope, to let go of that cactus that you're hugging. Because I get it, again it feels relevant and valid but here's the thing. Your spouse is not there to fulfill you or complete you, they're just not. That was never the intention, I don't think, of marriage.

And I think that unfortunately, like all the movies that I love, by the way, the love stories, the Jerry Maguires, the whatever other Hollywood movie that

436: How to Save Your Marriage

shows us what it looks like to fall in love and have someone complete us. Unfortunately, create this illusion that isn't real. I wish we had stories that were good, happy stories about somebody's marriage that's 15 years in, but a more realistic picture of what it looks like to struggle and work through it. And to respect each other and love each other deeply, but not always be completed by the other person.

In fact, mostly, not be completed by the other person. Mostly have to learn how to complete yourself, how to find interests or hobbies or goals or other friends as well that can help you feel completed. There's a lot of things that we do that help us feel like our needs are being met overall. And it's not going to come from one person, it's just not.

If we go back to sex and intimacy because that's the main question I get. People say, "I get it. I've got to meet my own needs and that's the way of it." But what about sexually, especially if you're a member of conservative religion like I am and you don't want to have open relationships or engage in other activities to fulfill your sexual needs. Then I say, "I don't know. That's a good question. What are you going to do? I don't know the answer.

But what I do know is that not having your sexual needs met in the way that you hoped they would and being resentful and mad about it, is two times to ten times harder than just not having your sexual needs met in the way that you wish they were." Do you see what I'm saying? We could just drop the resentment and anger part.

For example, if heaven forbid something happened to your spouse and they passed away and you chose not to engage in sexual behavior outside of marriage. And you didn't have another partner and you were going to live the values the way you've described them to me, then what would you do? You could go the whole rest of your life without a sexual partner in that way or at least a very long time. What would you do?

Well, it would be uncomfortable. It would be inconvenient. It would be annoying. I would have these unmet sexual needs but you wouldn't have

436: How to Save Your Marriage

the anger and resentment and blame of someone else for it, so it would be much more tolerable and in fact people do it all the time. So the answer is, I don't know how you should get those needs met. That's a personal decision. But I do know that you being resentful about it isn't very sexy. That's just the reality.

I see this over and over again in marriages. There's a higher desire and a lower desire partner. And please, higher desire partners, I am not beating up on you right now. I know it sounds like I am and I don't mean to, I really don't. I don't want to beat up on either of you. I don't think either of you is wrong. I think it's a beautiful thing that you have strong sexual desire just like for those of you that are lower desire, I think it's totally fine that you are lower desire and that you don't have as much sexual desire. I don't think there's anything wrong with either of you most likely.

I think it's just different. You're having different experiences. And I think it's something both of you could work on. I think it's worth working on. I think it's worth communicating about. I think it's worth being really patient and understanding of one another. I think it's worth not making it mean something about you if they're frustrated. I think it's worth trying not to get frustrated with the other spouse. And I do know that it's solvable. It's solvable because I've seen it happen over and over again as I've done this work with people.

So when you put the blame on your partner for your struggles, for your needs not being met, you are making it worse for yourself. You're making it harder on yourself. You are most likely not changing your partner. So remember, I said you can communicate about it without blaming them. We're not handing it over to them like here is my need, I need you to meet it now. I'm not a believer in that approach at all. I have not seen that work for many people.

I'm a believer in communicating openly and saying, "I want to understand what you prefer and I'd love to share with you what I prefer. And I'd love for us to just get to know each other better in this way." But that is very

436: How to Save Your Marriage

different than handing over your needs and expecting them to meet them and then resenting them if they don't.

Alright, the last thing I want to say on this episode is I want to talk about the topic of trust because I get this question a lot. In fact, I had it come in recently through a DM on Instagram, somebody said, "How do I trust my husband? I want to trust him and he tells me I can and that I should trust him. But the truth is, I kind of don't." Now, this person didn't give me any details about why she doesn't.

But again, I've had this come up many times, sometimes it's, you have a spouse who has been dishonest in a certain area of their life before, maybe with money, maybe with other relationships, etc. And then they say, "You can trust me. That's not going to happen again." Maybe they haven't violated your trust in the past in that way, but you see that they seem to be playing in dangerous territory, you see behaviors that you don't prefer.

I see this a lot too, where women will say, "Well, as far as I know, he's always been faithful to me, but he is really close to this woman at work. They text all the time. They talk all the time. They get along well. It seems flirty. It seems more friendly than I'm comfortable with. And so I want to trust him but I kind of don't." So whatever the reason is, here's what I want to tell you. So when people say to me, "So how do I trust my husband?" I say, "That's the wrong question."

I mean, it might be the right question, but we're not ready for that question yet. First question we have to ask is, do we want to trust in this scenario? Does it make sense that we would trust? And what is trust anyway? So let's start there. I like to think of trust as me directing my mind away from keeping an eye on something, a certain topic, and in this case it would have to do with our spouse. For me, checking up on it, managing it, being accountable or holding someone else accountable to it.

And just choosing to let them manage themselves and be accountable on their own and choosing not to let it take up space in my head. You know what I'm saying? If I say to one of my kids, "Here's some money. I trust you

436: How to Save Your Marriage

with this money”, to my daughter, “Hey, go to the grocery store and get milk. Here’s some money. If there’s any money left over, bring me the change.” If I trust her, then I’m not like, “Hey, where’s the receipt? How much was the milk? Let me see the receipt. And where’s the change?”

If I trust her I just don’t let that even take up space in my head. I don’t even think about it anymore. I just decide to believe that if there’s change when she comes home, she’s going to give it to me. And I’m not going to go, “Are you sure you gave me all of it? Where’s the receipt?” See what I’m saying? So that’s what trust is in my mind is, no, that topic is not relevant. We’re not putting time, attention, and effort onto it. If I don’t trust, then I am putting time and attention and effort into checking up on it.

So that’s why I say, do we want to trust in this situation? Because let’s say my spouse has a gambling problem and now they’re saying, “I’m not going to gamble anymore, you can trust me.” I might say, “Okay, well, the truth is I want to have some oversight. So here’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to keep an eye on the account or you’re going to get this much money, but you’re not going to get access to this money. Or we need to have a discussion every day or we need to have this kind of a spreadsheet that we check in and we need to have oversight into the bank account, both of us.”

I might decide I want to put time and attention and effort onto managing this because this person has this addiction or this tendency or this habit. And I don’t trust them right now. I don’t trust them. Sometimes we don’t. And there are other situations, though, and these are personal choices, by the way, whether or not you’re going to trust. You get to decide, do I want to put my time and effort and attention into it or not? It’s totally up to you. There are things that I would be like, “Yes, this is worth me putting my time and attention into.”

But there are other things that I would choose not to. You may decide, hey, my spouse seems to be really friendly with this other person. There’s a chance there may be some violations of our marriage vows in certain ways. And also I’m choosing to trust them. You can just choose to trust someone even though you think there’s potential that they might violate your

436: How to Save Your Marriage

marriage vows, let's just say, for the sake of simplification. You can decide you know what? I can't control them. If he or she is going to make that choice, they can do it, they'll be able to find a way.

And personally, it's not worth my time because of all the emotion, all the thoughts that I would have and the way I would have to live my life by constantly supervising my spouse in this area. And I don't want to be my husband's mom. I don't want to check up on him in that way. If he chooses that, then I will have emotions to process and I will have decisions to make and there will be conversations to be had.

But I don't choose to put my effort on trying to prevent it because it's not even so much that your spouse would violate your marriage vows is that your spouse really wants to do that. That's the bigger problem and we can't control that anyway. Do you see what I'm saying? So there are times when I would decide I choose not to trust in this instance. And there are other times when I decide I choose to trust either because I have no reason not to or I have some valid reasons not to and I choose to anyway.

And so how do you do it? You simply direct your mind towards what you do want to spend your time and effort and brainpower thinking about. That's it. And when it tries to go to that place of, I wonder what he's doing right now or I wonder where she is. I wonder who she's talking to, I wonder. I wonder. You just go, no, none of our business. We're not doing that today. We're not spending our time on that today.

And you engage your brain in other activities instead. What do you have control over? Where can you do good in the world? So trust is an interesting one. I always find it fascinating that the better people are at lying, the more we trust them until they get caught, but sometimes that never happens. So don't think that trust is something that the other person creates for you. Trust is a decision that you make or you decide not to trust. Sometimes we have really valid highest self reasons for choosing not to trust.

436: How to Save Your Marriage

So there's a lot here and if you have questions about any of it, I would love to hear from you. So come on over to Instagram, shoot me a DM, I try to reply to as many of those as I can or post in the comments. Let's keep this discussion going, but thank you for joining me today on the podcast. I'll see you next time. Have a good one.

Coaching changed my life and I've watched it change the lives of thousands of men and women since, but is it right for you? You'll only know by giving it a try. Try it out today at jodymoore.com/trial.