

463: 10 Years Coaching – Lessons Learned Part 5: Identity



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jody Moore

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Who are you anyway? Are you okay? Are you normal? Are you a mess? Should you be better or different? If you were, would everyone like you better and would that be a good thing? Would life get easier? Today I'm talking about the issue of identity and how it permeates every single experience we have every single day. We all have areas where shifting our beliefs would create big changes, but the biggest and most universal one is with regards to our identity.

Welcome to episode 463. This is the final episode in our month-long series, 10 Years Coaching – Lessons Learned: Identity.

This is *Better Than Happy*. I'm your coach, Jody Moore. And on this podcast, my objective, just so we're clear, is to change what you've been taught and have likely believed about yourself up until now. Here's what I believe about you. I believe that what you think is real is mostly imagined. And what you imagine is actually creating what's real. I believe that in the ways you desire to achieve, you 100% have the capacity to succeed.

And finally, I believe that joy, love, and miracles are your God-given natural state of being. And any time you feel far from them, the way back is much simpler than you think, but that's about to change. Are you ready? Let's do this.

How we doing, everybody? Welcome to the final episode in this month-long series I've been doing. It's our 10 year anniversary here at Jody Moore Coaching. In May of 2014, I went to coach training and became certified and then started talking about this work, much to the probably dismay of people around me, I couldn't stop talking about it. So, I just want to thank all of you for being here, because I want to talk about it to people who want to learn about it, not just people who happen to be there in earshot and have to listen to me.

But I do love talking about this stuff, 10 years later I'm still not tired of it and I'm still having new insights and I'm so grateful to all of you. As I reflect back on the last 10 years, I want to make sure and express that gratitude, not only because you being here allows me to do what I do, but I so value

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your willingness to work on yourself. I think that the best way, or at least the best way I know of to really make positive changes in our societies, in our cultures, in our families, in our churches, in all the places is to have each of us be willing to go internal and work on ourselves.

Anyway, I've loved meeting you for those of you that I've been able to work really closely with. If I haven't met you, I know you're here listening and I appreciate you as well. So, in all honesty, I just recorded this podcast episode on identity. And for some reason, when I got done I was like, "I don't know that that went in the direction I intended."

And I have this whole outline that I wrote that I was kind of following along with as I recorded it. So, you'd think that following the outline would mean it went the direction I intended. But there was just something about it at the end that I thought, I don't know if that's exactly what I want to say about this topic. So, I have my outline here that I might reference on occasion, but I'm going to try this again and just speak from my heart so, I hope that it makes sense.

I think the reason I feel this way is because this is kind of an existential philosophical topic. And I don't know that I'm great at talking about things like that. I feel like I talk in circles sometimes and there are just people out there, Adam Miller comes to mind and Thomas McConkey, who are really good at these existential philosophical kinds of discussions. And I think I'm good at plenty of other things. But this whole topic I feel so strongly about that I want to do it justice and yet maybe nobody can actually.

Maybe it's so important that none of us actually has the magic words to be able to help you or me truly understand our worth. So, in coaching and those of you who are coaches like myself, know that at the root of pretty much every problem or challenge, even when we take on goals and give ourselves problems or challenges. At the root of any struggle we have, is our relationship with ourself or our understanding of our identity and our worth, it really is.

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My friend, Kara Loewentheil, who, by the way, has an amazing new book out that you should check out. It's called *Take Back Your Brain*. I think I'm going to have Kara on the podcast to talk about some of the things in that book, because it just came out two days ago and I haven't been able to put it down. It's so good. Seriously, check it out. But at any rate, my friend, Kara, I remember years ago being at some kind of conference or something with a bunch of coaches.

And we were talking about this topic of if everybody just liked themselves better, felt good about themselves, then we wouldn't have most of the problems that we have. And she's like, "I know, but the problem is as a coach that means that all we can say is, "So just like yourself better, just stop thinking you're not good enough because you are."" And then that's the end of it. Improving yourself in whatever way you choose to improve yourself doesn't make you more valuable.

And making mistakes, and again, whatever you define as mistakes or falling short doesn't make you less valuable. If me telling you that is enough and you're like, "Great, now that I get that, everything is easier, then good, I'm in." I do try to tell people that all the time, hoping that it will just flip a switch. But unfortunately, I don't think that this challenge of identity is a switch that can be flipped in our human condition. I don't know why.

I suspect though, based on my faith, for those of you who are religious, my guess is that this lack of understanding of our identity is part of God's miraculous plan. That in order to become like our heavenly parents, we have to wrestle with this question of am I okay? Am I good enough? And even not be able to fully let go of the idea that some people are better than others.

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So, if you want to keep learning to be better at, get help with and stay motivated in your job as a coach and all the other jobs you do as a coach, come join me in The Lab Coach Access at jodymoore.com/coachaccess. That's jodymoore.com/coachaccess. Now, the experts say you're supposed to give the URL three times, so once again, jodymoore.com/coachaccess. I'll see you there.

So, I think that that kind of pushback and resistance of the human experience is what gives us the opportunity to evolve and develop and become more of the spiritual, divine beings that we are intrinsically. I don't know. That's my guess. I don't know that that's true, but it makes sense to me in my mind. So, we're never going to turn that switch off. And in fact, even as we talk about this today and as we talk about how it comes up in coaching, what it looks like and how I try to help people understand this, it's still not a checkbox. I mean, that's true with coaching in general.

It's not like I worked on my thoughts about this topic and now I'm done. There are some topics like that. There are some that you'll check off and you'll never struggle with again. But there are many that will keep resurfacing and come back and identity is one of them. So, if you tell yourself, I thought I already did it. I thought I was confident, I thought I understood my value and worth and healed my relationship with myself. Why do I have this self-loathing now? Why do I have this doubt? Why do I have this insecurity?

You're missing the point. You have it because you're a human being, a healthy human being at that. So, I always use this example, but it's the best one I can think of, that it's like brushing your teeth. It's like bad breath. If I have bad breath, I can tackle that in many ways, but my favorite way is just to go brush my teeth, seems to help. But if I wake up the next morning with bad breath again and go, "I thought I brushed my teeth. Why do I have bad breath? Yesterday I brushed my teeth." It's because I live in a human body that has bacteria and things that show up as bad breath in my mouth.

And I'm never going to be done brushing my teeth. I'm going to have to keep brushing them. The good news is, I know that I can brush my teeth or

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chew gum or use mouthwash or whatever and not have that bad breath be a dominant part of who I am. The people around me probably really appreciate when I do that, but it's never going to be gone. I'm always going to have to do something to address it as long as I'm alive in a human body and that is how identity work is as well.

But because I have habits of brushing my teeth and I know what kind of gum I like to chew and I know how to address it, it doesn't play a dominant role, it doesn't really slow me down. And that's how I want to help you get when it comes to your identity. So, who are you? What makes you unique? Because even if we understand our worth and value, and I guess we should start there. Like I said, I'm not following my outline anymore, so stay with me.

Let's go back to human worth and human value in the first place. I like to picture that there's in our minds this part of us that struggles with worthiness, there's a vertical scale. Vertical means going up and down. Remember people, the V goes up and down, that's how you remember. There's a vertical scale that goes from high down to low. And in our minds we place people on this scale and try to determine who's better, who's worse and where do I fall in this scale, most importantly, where do I rank in this scale?

That whole scale in and of itself, first of all, what moves somebody up and down the scale is a whole fascinating, complicated discussion to have around socialization. We have all had growing up and continue to get around maybe just preferences and thoughts, around one random statement that somebody said when we were 16 years old and it really stuck with us. There are so many things that we use and not the same for all of us but many overlaps that we use to move ourselves up and down the vertical scale.

And what I want to say is that those things are arbitrary and that vertical scale in and of itself is a lie. There is no vertical scale. There's only a horizontal scale, which means it goes from left to right in terms of how we are unique and interesting and different but nobody's higher up. It might be

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that horizontal scale might include people who are having an easier or more expansive or more enjoyable life experience. And people who are having a more challenging, more difficult or more constricted life experience.

It can be all kinds of things that move us around on that horizontal scale, some of which are things in our control and some of which are not, that are circumstances that we didn't choose. But we move around on this horizontal scale but we never move up and down on a vertical scale. Now, I just want to point out because as you know, I'm a very active member of the LDS Church. I love being a member of that church. And I also want to do anything I can to bring awareness to how we can make our church community and our practices even better.

And one way, I feel, you may not agree with this, that's fine, but one way I feel we can do a better job is we sometimes talk about, 'the world'. And what we're talking about is this exact topic of socialization. We say things like, "Well, in the world people value things that actually don't matter in the end at all." For example, maybe we would say, "People in the world value money or success or appearance or fame or things like this that aren't valuable at all." And I would agree, it can be useful to understand that those things aren't valuable.

I don't like when we separate ourselves and do this kind of othering thing of labeling there's us, and then there's the world. Because I am a part of the world and I am just as guilty of valuing things that don't matter at all, as the next person, even if our things are different. So, I like to keep us as part of the world. I think that is actually the way Christ would think about it. But at any rate, that's just one of my pet peeves, we'll get into more later.

My point in explaining this though is that often, the way we then round out that conversation, the way we end that topic is we say, we believe that what's important is your relationship with God and how are you drawing near to him and are you emulating Christ? Are you trying to be as Christ-like as possible, and are you seeking for eternal things that matter more in

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terms of are you serving? Are you making good choices? Are you honest? Are you treating others kindly? Those are the things that really matter.

Now, I don't disagree with that, but I think there's a third piece of that conversation that's missing, which is, even if you're really good at those things, it still doesn't make you a better person than if you're not. So, let's just pause for a minute and try to wrap our minds around this. The more someone is like Jesus, the better they are, is the message people hear when they go to church. I don't actually think that's true.

I think the more that you are like Jesus, the more amazing your life is going to be. I think it's going to serve you really well to be like Christ. I think you're going to like the fruits of that for your own experience and I think the people around you will probably prefer it as well. But I don't think it makes you more valuable than somebody who's not like Jesus in whatever way we would even define that. I think it means you're going to have a different experience and you're going to have different struggles or challenges or trials etc.

Maybe even it means something about the next life, although I question how much we really understand that at all. But my point is it still doesn't then create a vertical scale. and unless we say that out loud, then we oftentimes not intentionally, but we are contributing to people's misunderstanding of their identity. I do worry about this when it comes to our kids and our youth and the way we talk to them at our church.

I personally am constantly saying, anytime I get to get in front of the kids or the youth, I say, "Listen, you're going to make mistakes. You're going to break commandments. You're even going to make big mistakes. Some of the stuff in your mind that you think I would never do that, you might do and it doesn't make you less valuable. It doesn't touch your worth. And it doesn't mean God's disappointed in you or doesn't love you as much." Because the brain wants to believe otherwise, the brain is looking for a way to measure success. The brain is trying to put you and me, my brain does it too, on a vertical continuum.

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And the problem is that that lie that we believe, Myron Golden calls this your liedentity, doesn't help us be better. It does the opposite, it makes it harder for us to be who we want to be. So, when I say better, that's a subjective term. It's not based on your worthiness. It's based on what, for you, is the kind of person that you want to be. Who do you want to be? How do you want to live? What decisions do you want to make? How do you want to show up? How do you want to feel? What do you want to create? What do you want to go after?

The things that you desire, the person you desire to be, whoever you genuinely are at your best, which is tough to know who that is because we all have so much socialization around who we should be or what is good. But my point is, whatever is truly you at your purest, most loving, least fear based, most confident is tough to be when your identity is in question. That's just the reality.

So, listen, this is coaching that I do in all kinds of ways. Sometimes we literally have this discussion. I can think of instances when I've talked to clients over the past 10 years about, what does make a person valuable? And I so appreciate people telling me what they truly believe, what their brains are telling them because we have the prefrontal cortex, the wise, I know this kind of answer. And then we have the subconscious, this is what I kind of still believe for some reason even though I logically don't believe it.

And when we access that subconscious belief that is actually the stronger driver in all of us, it can be really powerful. So sometimes people have told me that there is a part of them that does think that the more you get done, the better you are. The harder you work, the better you are.

The more people who like you and approve of you for whatever reason, a lot of times people are like, "No, I don't want people to approve of me just because of my appearance or my whatever." But if people think that I serve a lot, that I'm really righteous, that I'm really humble, or that I'm really smart and I have interesting things to say or that I'm really fun", or whatever the reason. Then that must mean I'm a better person if people like me.

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Or if people don't like me, I must not be doing as good of a job at this whole being a human thing. I must not be as worthy, as valuable, as complete, whole, good etc. What is it for you? What do you think makes some people better than others? We can go into a whole bunch of stuff about all of our fears and assumptions and biases that we have around people for all kinds of reasons. But even if you clean up a lot of that, whatever's left is still a belief that there are certain ways to earn more worth and that's a dangerous belief system.

So how do we 'brush our teeth of this?' How do we chew a piece of gum? How do we not let this thing that I don't think we'll ever get rid of in this lifetime, how do we not let it be something that so negatively impacts whatever else we're doing, our relationships, our contribution, our ability to set and achieve goals, and even our day-to-day life experience? Here's what I think.

I think that taking a look at pressure points in your life and just addressing those, you don't even have to go all the way to these deep existential identity type of questions. If you take a look at what upsets you, what bothers you, what frustrates you, what's hard for you, like I said, at the core of that is identity. So, as we work on these smaller, easier to access things, which is what we do in coaching, it naturally shifts the identity piece.

Let me give an example. So today I was coaching a woman who said that she has a daughter who gets upset. She wants this daughter to do some homework for example, and the daughter gets upset and yells at her and says, "You're trying to manipulate me", amongst other things. So, my client says that she feels sad and defensive. As she gets emotional, she has to withdraw. She's upset by this. Nothing wrong with this. My client, I was like, "Doesn't sound to me like you're doing anything wrong here, but it's interesting. Let's notice it."

So, the truth is, at the core of this is identity work, relationship with self, confidence, self-esteem. If my client understood that she is amazing and whole and valuable and complete and even if her daughter doesn't see that and her daughter thinks she's being manipulative. It doesn't change her

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value. Or even if she is kind of being manipulative or maybe she's really directly being manipulative. If that were the case, it still doesn't make you a less valuable person. If she knew that there would be no danger here.

Her brain wouldn't think this is sad or dangerous and I've got to get away and she wouldn't be crying and feeling bad about this if she truly understood that. But she's a human being having a human experience. And so, for whatever reason, do you see what I mean about these pressure points? Some of you might say, "My child says that to me all the time, and I don't care at all. I just know that she's emotional and she's dramatic and she's struggling and I just tell her, "Oh, well, whatever", and I move on."

For some of you, that wouldn't be a pressure point. For this client it is. But we all have these pressure points. So, when you take a look at the pressure point and you start examining it and you start questioning, why does this bother me? What do I make it mean when my child is upset with me or about me or about the child? Do I make it mean something about myself as a mother and that I'm not a good mother? And if so, am I saying that I should be a good mother? If I was a good mother, then what, I would be more lovable, more complete, more worthy?

Do you see how we have just tapped into a little piece of this identity work that we could do? Because the truth is, you could be whatever is the best mother on the planet if we could even define that and it wouldn't make you more valuable than if you were the worst mother on the planet. That's fascinating.

Now, when we unwind this stuff, and we don't always have to get to this level of identity in order for this to make an impact, but it will impact your identity because it's there whether we say it out loud or not. But when we do unwind it, then the next logical question I hear a lot is, well, then, why bother? If being a better mother or if achieving this goal or being more like Christ or whatever it is that you choose to make the thing. If that doesn't make me more valuable, more worthy, if it doesn't move me up on this vertical continuum, then why bother?

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And I think that's such a fascinating question. The fact that that question comes to mind for so many people when I do this work, tells me that there's a huge part of our brains dedicated to climbing a ladder that doesn't even exist. Isn't that crazy to think about? I don't know why, but for some reason as a young girl, as a teenager, I remember thinking about this. Do you have these kind of weird, existential questions that you get as a kid?

Why do we all want to have fancier cars and bigger houses and skinnier bodies? And this is again when I was a teenager. And I remember going, "Because then we think that people will like us more or will be impressed by us or will be impressed by us, then we'll feel better about ourselves." I remember realizing at a really young age, we're all just trying to feel better about ourselves. Everything we do is an attempt, most of what we do anyway is an attempt to feel better about ourselves. That's so fascinating.

It wasn't until I found coaching much later in my life that I learned how to actually feel better about myself, which is exactly what I'm describing here. Take a look at your pressure points or pain points. Now, my favorite ones to look at, that I like to use to work on identity are the pressure points that I create or that you create for yourself? I like to give myself a challenge or a goal.

I like to say, "I wonder if I could achieve this thing. I wonder if I could do that", because it forces the identity work. I have to examine my own limiting beliefs, my own thoughts about whether or not I'm worthy of this achievement or whether or not it's possible for me. Or whether or not I'm willing to be terrible at things and fail at things and still not make it mean something about my identity. There's so much identity work that's available from a challenge or goal that I pick. And the good news about this is that I'm working towards something that I desire.

So, you can do it either way. You can do it with challenges and problems, you can do it with goals and probably you'll have some of both in your life if you're like most of us. But the more you understand that that vertical ladder of who's higher and who's lower doesn't even exist, no matter what you have been believing all this time, the freer you become. So, the answer to

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the question that I brought up earlier, if it doesn't make me better, then why bother? Is just because we're alive here on planet Earth having an experience.

And we actually don't like boredom or stagnation either. We're either growing or dying. And growth feels a lot better to us because it's what we're here for. And there's all kinds of ways we can grow, but if we stop growing we don't feel good, we feel depressed, we feel sad. We are not designed for stagnation. It's just not even an option.

So again, I look at a sporting event, you go to a game. Let's say you go to a basketball game and there's a bunch of basketball players on the floor trying to shoot hoops and maybe they have all kinds of motivation and I'm sure identity's at play and all of that. But let's say we cleaned all of that up, let's say it's not a professional game. Let's say it's a group of boys out in the neighborhood.

And again, there's still going to be identity stuff to clean up, but at its essence, at its purest, why are they playing basketball? Just because they can, because they're alive and they have legs to run on, and they have a ball and a hoop and it's fun to interact and it's fun to see what's possible. And it's fun to have a challenge and to get better and to gain the skill of dribbling and shooting a basketball. And it feels good to be in a body and get your heart rate up.

And it's fun to interact with other people and to have teammates and to have competitors and all of it just feels good, in all kinds of ways. And that's it. That's what this life is. It's just like a giant experiment, a giant playground, if you will, whereby we get to evolve and grow. It's a giant classroom maybe you would say, but in the most fun way. That's it. Not because you have anything to prove or anything to earn. Interesting to think about, don't you think?

So, I do think this is worth thinking about. I think that paying attention to your pressure points for me has been the most effective way, I honestly do. Maybe this is just aging, maybe it's something that just happens as we age.

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But as I look back at myself over the last 10 years, I do have a lot more inner peace. The voice in my head is a lot kinder. I still have disagreements with myself, in other words, part of me will go, “Hey, we should try this thing.” Another part of me will say, “No, you can’t do that. Who do you think you are?”

But the conversations are much more interesting and a lot less just shaming and shutting down and feeling bad. I’m a lot more open for discussion with myself about what’s possible. And partly that’s because as you work on identity then you start showing up better for yourself. You start showing up for what you truly care about and desire, and you’re willing to sacrifice some short term pleasure or things. You’re willing to do some short term challenging things. And you honor your commitments to yourself.

And just everything gets better because you build trust with yourself and you build a healthy relationship with yourself. And then as long as you can manage yourself and not make that mean that now you’re better than the version of you that didn’t do that. Just notice it makes your life easier and it feels better in the present experience. Then it really is impactful in every area of your life. When you can be patient and kind and generous in understanding your own worth for you, you can do that for other people as well. You become less judgmental, less critical.

So, practice understanding this. I like to do it in small moments, I’ll be driving downtown and see a bunch of homeless people on the side of the road. And I just quickly remind myself, I’m not better than them because I’m driving my car down the street and they’re homeless on the side of the road. I’m not better than them. I’m having a different life experience. And for all I know, if I came from their circumstances, I would be struggling a lot more than they are. Who knows?

We have different circumstances. We’re having different experiences. And maybe some of that’s within some of our control and maybe a lot of it’s not. We’re both equal in value. That’s interesting. And when I see somebody succeeding in all the ways that I wish I could succeed, that it’s achieving

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things or that seems to have a better handle on their habits or whatever it is. I remind myself, they're not better than me. We're the same. We're both amazingly valuable, complete, 100% lovable people.

We're just having different experiences, some of which may be because of choices we made and some of which may be outside of our control. I don't know. All I know is we're equal, just different. Interesting. Do you see how I'm constantly reminding myself? Because then, inevitably I wake up with bad breath again at some point. And I think that I'm a little better than someone, or I think that I'm much worse than most people and I just brush my teeth again.

It usually comes up, when I say wake up with bad breath it usually is because of a challenge that has come up in my life, a problem of some sort or a goal that I'm striving to achieve and I'm not making the progress that I wish I was. Those are the two times when I pay attention to my identity work, and I hope that you'll do the same.

Thanks for joining me for this episode today. You are amazing. I love you so much. Thanks for being here and I'll talk to you next time, bye bye.

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