

475: When to NOT Think About the Future



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

When I was certified as a coach over 10 years ago, I learned a tool called Future Focus, and it's been a game changer for me to help me achieve my goals. And I've used it to help thousands of clients also to get a healthy, useful perspective, to think bigger, to achieve more. But there is a time when thinking about the future might be creating problems for you. Today, we're going to dive into future thinking, past thinking, and better understand when to utilize both to create your best life, solve challenges, and achieve your goals. This is episode 475, When to NOT Think About the Future.

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.

Hello everybody, welcome to the podcast. Thanks so much for joining me today. Thanks for being willing to work on your mindset and your own emotional regulation and better understand how to create the best version of you so that you can create the best life and teach those around you, be example to those around you. I'm so grateful that you're here. It helps me achieve the goals that I have in my work as a coach.

So before we dive into today's topic, I want to invite you to a four-week challenge called Make Peace With Food. This is a challenge that I did earlier in the year that everybody loved and had such phenomenal results for. They've been begging me to bring it back. And a lot of you also missed it and have been messaging me. I've got so many messages, probably about this more than anything else I teach, of when are you going to do Make Peace with Food again? This is such a challenging topic and such a

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

great opportunity for sharpening your skills in terms of your own self-discipline, your relationship with yourself, your body image, all the things that we're trying to do here in The Lab.

So head to jodymoore.com/food. This is a \$29 four-week challenge that I promise you will get 10 times more than your money worth if you come to this challenge. We should be charging \$2,900 for this, but we're going to keep charging \$29 because we want to help as many people as we can. So jodymoore.com/food to register for Make Peace with Food. And we get started on September 16th. So go do it today before you forget if you're like me.

All right. So I kind of mentioned this in the intro, but a lot of times in coaching, what I'm doing and what other coaches who coach in a similar format to me, what we're doing is trying to help people focus more on the future. It's one of the things I love about coaching. There is, of course, a useful time and place for thinking about the past. Traditional therapy works in the space of the past, right?

Understanding your past, sort of maybe processing trauma or pain and healing from things from the past, reframing the way we think about it so that it can serve us today, that's all good, useful, valuable work to be doing at times. That's not actually my expertise. My expertise as a coach is in helping people think about the future and create what they want from the future. That's one of the things, again, that draws a lot of people to coaching is at a certain point, they realize that they need that.

So our brains find it much easier to think about the past than it is to think about the future, which is why in coaching I have to constantly redirect people into the future. So for example, if I ask you a question like, who are you? Where does your brain go? Does it go to the past or does it go to the future? Because there really is no such thing as the present, right? The present is happening right now, but now that second is in the past. So is it the past or is it the future that your brain goes to if I ask who are you?

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

And most of us, our brain, including me, my brain automatically goes to the past. Because if you ask me, who are you, and I go to the future, that feels odd because maybe who I want to be in the future is in some ways the same as who I am now, but in other ways different. And so I don't think about that because I feel like I'm not her yet.

But by that rationale, it doesn't make sense to go to the past either, because I'm not the same today as I was necessarily in the past. And so I'm not her either. I'm different in certain ways. I'm maybe a little bit more experienced, maybe a little bit more refined, maybe a little bit more damaged in some ways.

So it's interesting to think about, right? Where do we go to answer a question like, who am I? Where do you go to answer the question, what are you good at? What do you like? Because these are all up for grabs, right?

I find this to be really useful a lot of times for people who are building businesses, right? I'll say things like, "Okay, tell me about what you're working on. What are your goals? What are you trying to create?" And they'll often go to the past. They'll say, "Well, my clients tend to be like this, or my program is like this."

Now, again, maybe we don't want to change any of that. In which case, beautiful, nothing wrong with going to the past. If we want to keep serving those same clients and we want to keep that same program, and we want to keep our business the way it is, then we should be just going to the past to get the answers.

But if you're not trying to just recreate the past, then you have to go to the future to get the answers. And the future is a blank slate, which is why it's really hard for the brain to do. The brain doesn't like to have to imagine or make decisions or be creative. That's a lot of work for the brain, not to mention it brings up all of our own limiting beliefs and self-doubt and everything else. And so it would prefer to just go to the past. It's a lot easier for our brains.

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

We tend to call these limiting beliefs, right? These beliefs about who we are that come from the past that we think are just the reality, and then we keep recreating them today and for our future. So that's just a little bit about future focus and why it's such a valuable and powerful part of coaching.

Oftentimes I will help a client go to the future by going, "But you could do anything you want. The sky's the limit. You don't have to keep any part of your past that you don't want to. And yet, you can bring the parts with you that you want to." But it kind of gets us out-of-the-box, right? The box of limiting beliefs to think, "Wait a second, I can be anyone I want. I can create anything I want. I can serve any client that I want."

This summer in The Lab, we've been doing Summer of Style. I just got done with a call today where we gave away tons of gift cards and jewelry and just like amazing, fun things. So that was fun. If you missed that in Summer of Style, those of you in The Lab, don't miss it next time because boy, that was a blast.

But at any rate, even with our own personal style, when I ask somebody, "What is your style?" They go to the past usually. They tell me about their past self. And I say, "What if we go to the future to decide your style? Who do you want to be? How do you want to dress? You can dress the same way you have been, maybe that's working great for you. But if you're trying to become somebody different or you're trying to create a different result in some area of your life, which will require you becoming someone different, then it can be easier sometimes to start with an obvious external thing that is less emotionally charged, like just how you dress, and change that, and then bring the rest of yourself along with you."

Another thing I really like to help my clients do is to think further ahead in the future than they have been. Our brains, again, find it more and more challenging the further out we try to go, because again, there's just more unknowns, more variables, and more of a blank slate. And also to help them think much bigger about the future than they're currently thinking.

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

And I'll tell you, this is a challenge for me. It's something I'm constantly working on, doing a better job of thinking about the future, thinking further out and thinking bigger. It brings up so much noise in my head of like, who do you think you are? You can't do that. You're too old. You don't have enough money. You're not smart enough. You're too tired. It's too hard. All of those thoughts are interesting to take a look at and thinking bigger, thinking longer term can be really useful when it comes to things that you're trying to create in your life, to your goals, to the results that you want to create or change for yourself, okay?

So that's just a little bit about future focus and why I love it so much as a coach, but there is a time when thinking about the future or thinking too far out is not going to be useful. And that is with regards to our challenges or problems or potential challenges or problems.

So here's how you'll know the difference. If it's a useful way to be thinking about the future, you'll feel either excited and motivated, or maybe you'll feel confused and uncertain like this I-don't-know type of thought and feeling. But if it's not serving me, it's useful to stay in the I don't know and then just be open to it, right? And kind of try to figure things out. But if it's not useful, it's going to feel like worry and fear. It might even feel like panic for a lot of people. It feels like panic, okay?

So for example, maybe I've got a child who doesn't seem to be on track in life in the way that our society and maybe even my brain thought that a child should be on track. Maybe that child is not physically healthy in the way that I thought they would be at this point in their lives. Maybe they're not mentally or emotionally as healthy. Maybe they're making decisions that I know can have long-term consequences. Maybe they are not achieving in all the ways that we think kids should achieve, whether it be school or social situations, et cetera.

And my brain is now going to the future and creating worry or fear or panic, right? What if he or she doesn't turn it around? What if they don't graduate from high school? What if they don't become healthy adults? What if they

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

don't get a job? What if they don't get into college? What if they don't make friends? What if they don't get healthy in whatever way? What if, what if, what if, right?

These kinds of thoughts, this kind of thinking about the future creates fear, worry, or panic. Now, your brain thinks that this is useful. Your brain thinks that this is preventative. So I'm not saying you wouldn't want to be aware of the future or aware of possible consequences, or even share those with your child if you think that they're not aware. Awareness can be useful, but as soon as it crosses over into worry and fear, it's no longer useful. It's really not.

Planning for the future, trying to make choices that will steer towards what we want and away from what we don't want, that's useful, but that doesn't require worry or fear. Did you know this? And in fact, we're way more effective at doing that when we do it from something less emotionally charged. It doesn't have to come from positive energy, but it should come from a more neutral, like, "Huh, let's try to go this way. Let's see if we can't go this way," rather than from worry, fear, or panic.

Because we've become manipulative, or we have to start to pretend, or we start to damage current relationships, or we just get really confused and overwhelmed, and we just don't know what to do. We start worrying about other people's judgment. We start making it mean something about ourselves. We do all of the things that don't serve us from this kind of worry, fear, panic. Confusion I would say is the biggest one. Overwhelm is the biggest one I see for people. Like I just don't know what to do.

So what I recommend if you are in a challenging situation, and I gave the example of a child because I see it with that a lot as I coach a lot of parents and grandparents, but this also can come up for yourself in your own relationships. I've coached people who suddenly found out that there has been infidelity in the marriage or that their spouse was lying in some other way. And again, the brain wants to go to panic about the future.

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

What am I going to do? Are we going to stay together? Are we going to break up? If we split up, is that going to be hard on my kids? If we stay together, is that going to be hard on my kids? If we stay together, are we ever going to have trust again? Are we ever going to have an intimate relationship again? On the other hand, if we break up, am I going to ever meet anyone else or am I going to be alone forever? And is that going to be harder? We want to run away to the future with all the worry, fear and panic, you see it?

So what I always tell someone in this situation is like, we don't know any of those things yet. We might not know most of them until we get there, like we will cross that bridge when we get there kind of thing, right?

So I love this analogy, because it makes the most sense to me that when we do this, we are trying to put together a 500 piece puzzle - you ever done a 500 piece puzzle? It takes some time. It takes a lot of like testing out pieces and thinking that this piece fits there, but then actually it didn't. So let's test another piece. It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of trial and error, but it's doable. It's doable, right? 500 piece puzzle, especially if you have the box there and you know what you're trying to create and you have all the pieces, then you can organize the pieces. You can get them set up. We're really amazing problem solvers, us human beings. Okay?

So the problem with this kind of future thinking and the reason I recommend you steer away from it is because you're trying to do a 500 piece puzzle, but you only have 15 to 20 pieces. And they're random pieces. They're not pieces that all go together. And you don't even have the box cover to the puzzle. So you don't even know what you're trying to build. And the brain freaks out. It's like, I've got these pieces and I can see they go together and I know they probably make a puzzle. I just can't make them fit. And I don't know where they're going to go on the tabletop here where I'm building this puzzle. And it's making me crazy because I know there's an answer. I know there's a solution. I just can't find it.

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

This is your brain trying to solve a future problem that doesn't really exist. In other words, maybe your kid isn't going to graduate from high school or get into college or make friends or whatever you're worried about. Well, is that happening today? No. Right? Today, maybe they're a senior in high school, but it's not graduation day yet. So, if and when it does happen, and the closer we get, the more information we will have, the more puzzle pieces we will gather.

But as of today, what do we know? What decisions do we need to make this week? Do I want to make the kid go to school or not? And these answers are different for different people and with different kids and even at different times in your experience with your kids. Sometimes what feels right to you might be a little bit of holding them accountable and telling them that you have certain expectations and if they don't meet them, these are the consequences and you love them, but this is the expectation as long as they're going to be supported by you.

And other times what feels like the right thing might be a more generous outpouring of unconditional love. And listen, you don't have to do any of that stuff for us to love you. You're always welcome here. We'll figure it out later. I don't know what's the right thing to do, and I think it depends. And you're the best one to know that as the child's parent or caregiver.

So we don't have to know is the good news. We don't have to know what we're going to do next year or how we're going to help the child in 10 years if they're still struggling. Because that's not even happening. That's not a real problem right now. All we have to know is actually what we're going to do in the next minute.

So the more extreme your challenge, the more severe your challenge, the more emotionally charged your challenge, the shorter you want your lens length to be. So for example, if there is a fire, if suddenly like I'm sitting in the back office right now, back behind my house, and if there's a fire, then I don't need to think about what we're going to make for dinner, which even though dinner is only in a few hours, I don't really need to be focused on

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

that. I need to be focused on how am I going to make sure I get out of this room and get to safety and get all the people who could be impacted to safety and alert someone to help me put out this fire in the next minute. That's it. That's all I need to be focused on. I don't need to worry about what's happening next week or what's happening tomorrow, right?

That's an extreme challenge that could have extreme consequences, I only need to focus on the next minute to minute. If I have something that I could focus on for a day and all I need to know is what are we going to do today, but you can come to answers about the rest of the day, great, I'm in.

You test it out, right? You go, what if I focus a week out? What if I make a decision about how we're going to navigate this challenge or problem, whether or not I'm going to stay in my marriage, whether or not I should talk to my kids about this, whether or not I should - all these decisions that have to be made.

If I try to make them for the next week, do I know what to do? Can I get to, I think I'm going to do this this week. I think this feels right for the week. Okay. Then go to a week. Can I do it for a month? If you try to go to a month and you suddenly find yourself panicking or worrying or feeling afraid, then that you've gone too far. Pull it back in. Okay. Just for this week. The next week we'll decide again. Or again, just for today. All I have to decide is for today, right?

When we are in the thick of depression, it really is minute to minute, right? If we're really down, really struggling, it's what do I want to do for the next minute? Can I just tolerate being a human for the next minute, for the next five minutes, for the next hour?

So the more severe your challenge, the more emotionally charged, the more difficult it is, the more decisions there are that are going to need to be made that we don't have enough information to make, the shorter we want our lens length to be. And here's the really good news I have for you. You are probably an amazing problem solver. You are an amazing puzzle doer. I

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

don't mean literally, I mean with the puzzles that life gives you, the challenges that come up. And the truth is I'm always amazed at human beings' ability to get creative and solve problems.

So there were a bunch of moms texting in the neighborhood where I live today about school assignments because the school assignments came out, who has which teachers and who's going to be in which class. And the assignments weren't supposed to come out or they weren't going to be posted in the place where we can see them really easily until three o'clock today.

But at like nine o'clock this morning, my phone started blowing up and people were like, I figured out that you can go to this place and see who the teacher is. But then you had to have certain logins and passwords of your kids in order to get to it. And of course, our kids don't know what any of that is. So then everyone was figuring out, oh, this is how it works. They combine some kind of ID code with a birthdate and a graduation year and whatever. And if you put that all together and then you add this email to the end, then this is the password, then you can get in.

I was just like cracking up at the ingenuity of people to figure out how to see this information because they didn't want to have to wait till the end of the day because they're just so excited or maybe their kids are excited or anxious or whatever. Trying to get this information, I was like, look at what amazing problem solvers we are when we know what we're up against.

We're like, okay, this is the information I need. These are the challenges getting in my way, the roadblocks, I use my amazing brain to go to work problem solving. And you will do that with whatever challenges come up in your life if you choose to. You can do that at any time.

What you can't do is that level of problem solving when we don't even know what the challenges are. We don't even know what the roadblocks are. We don't know that there's a login and a password that our kids have, but don't

475: When to NOT Think About the Future

remember that we need to get into the website. We couldn't have known that until we got to this point saw the roadblock. Are you with me?

So sometimes you have to remind this amazing part of your brain that's capable of trying to avoid problems that it can settle down because we don't actually have that problem now. All we have to figure out is the next week, the next day, the next hour, the next minute. And you can stop thinking about it. The future now, brain. Thank you for looking out for me.

All right, everybody, thanks for joining me for today's podcast. If you have questions about this, shoot them over to me on Instagram, in my DMs, I like to pop in there from time to time, or you can bring them to me in The Lab, of course, if you're in there, or call into our podcast hotline and leave me a message at 888-HI-JODY-M. I would love to hear from you. Thank you for listening. Thank you for sharing. Have a beautiful rest of your week.

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