

## 487: It's Simple. It's Complicated.



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jody Moore**

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

## 487: It's Simple. It's Complicated.

Human brains are so fascinating. Mostly they take really good care of us. We don't even have to think about it and we have unconscious or subconscious things happening that really make our lives better and easier and make us better. But occasionally, our brains need a little bit of management, a little bit of direction. And I find the best way to do that is with some awareness.

Today I want to bring awareness to this funny thing that the human brain does, which is to take complicated topics and simplify them, or to take really simple things and complicate them. Why do our brains do this? How do we know when we're doing this? Why is it a problem? And what do we do about it? That's what I'm going to be teaching you today. This is episode 487: It's Simple. It's Complicated.

Welcome to *Better Than Happy*, the podcast where we transform our lives by transforming ourselves. My name is Jody Moore. In the decade-plus I've been working with clients as a Master Certified Coach, I've helped tens of thousands of people to become empowered. And from empowered, the things that seemed hard become trivial, and the things that seemed impossible become available, and suddenly, a whole new world of desire and possibility open up to you. And what do you do with that?

Well, that's the question... what will you do? Let's find out.

Sometimes, listening to a podcast is enough. But sometimes, you'll feel inspired to go deeper. If you hear things that speak to you in today's episode, consider it your invitation to a complimentary coaching workshop.

On this live, interactive Zoom call with me, you'll get a taste of the power of this work when applied in real life. You can participate, or be a silent observer. But you have to take a step if you want to truly see change in your life... two steps, actually. Head to [jodymoore.com/freecoaching](http://jodymoore.com/freecoaching) and register. Then you just have to show up. Your best life is waiting for you. Will you show up for it? [Jodymoore.com/freecoaching](http://Jodymoore.com/freecoaching). I'll see you there.

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Hello, everybody. All right, I have this theory and I'm gonna talk about it here on the podcast, and I've thought through it well enough that I feel comfortable doing a podcast episode on it, but as I talk it through with you all, sometimes I surprise myself by some insights and discovery. So let's just see if that happens today.

But I wanna talk about how our brains take things that are complicated and simplify them, and then we take simple things and we make them complicated at times. And my theory on this that I'm going to test out as we speak through it is that we can know when we're doing this because we will be creating some kind of dirty pain.

Okay, so there's this concept created in the world of behavioral psychology called clean pain and dirty pain. And I love this concept. I find it to be really useful because I'm not a believer that we should feel positive and happy all the time. I don't think that's normal or necessary and I don't think it serves us to try to be happy all the time even.

I think that we should learn how to allow negative emotions. We don't want to think positively about everything. And just learning to be with our emotions, to process them, to breathe through them, to make it okay for ourselves and also for our children or for other people that we have influence over is a big part of my work. It sets you free to learn how to just feel your feelings. But clean pain is the kind of pain that is really refining.

It makes us better versions of ourselves as we experience and allow clean pain. The best way I can think to describe clean pain is it almost feels spiritual, right? Like grief when we've lost a loved one or a relationship has ended or we've gotten some kind of bad news that we want to interpret as bad news. That is clean pain. It's natural and normal to go through a grieving process, which can include all kinds of things, right? Sadness, anger, bargaining, denial, et cetera, all the emotions that come along with grief, right? Necessary, useful, moves us through an experience so that at some point we look back and realize that we are more expanded, maybe

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more patient, maybe more generous, more grateful. In some way we are better for having gone through that experience.

Now, when we're in the thick of it, none of us wanna hear anyone remind us that you're gonna be better on the other side of this, but it is the reality of what happens when we experience and allow clean pain. It can move us through an experience and refine us and make us better, right?

Dirty pain, on the other hand, is not necessary. Now, I don't want to imply that that means that you're bad if you're experiencing dirty pain. I don't think it's useful to judge yourself when you notice dirty pain. It's just that if we clean that up, if we can clean it up anyway, through thought work is my favorite way to clean it up. But if you can clean it up, then it's useful to do so. Because experiencing that kind of pain is not making you more expanded, more patient, more compassionate, more grateful, more of all the things that we all want to be more of. More spiritual, more enlightened, whatever you want to say. Okay?

Dirty pain actually, instead of moving us through an experience, keeps us stuck in an experience. In fact, we can stay stuck in a negative place for decades if we're not careful, right? You've seen this happen before. You've seen the person who's still bitter and angry about the thing that happened in their life 40 years ago, and you get it. It's justified to be mad about it, but you wonder at some point why they're continuing to let it make their life worse than it needs to be by hanging onto it for so long, right?

So dirty pain is the kind of pain that we want to let go of when we can, as soon as we can. It's not going to make us more of the kind of people we want to be. In fact, it can make us bitter and cynical or fearful, etc. So the reason I'm fleshing out this concept is because my theory is that dirty pain is always a result of us either making something simple complicated, or making something that is complicated too simple. Okay, so hear me out and we're going to play with examples.

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One form of dirty pain is confusion, and not always, but often, this is dirty pain, right? When we're feeling confused, frustrated, maybe even some righteous indignation. And I hate to say it, but this is what happens for a lot of people right now in regards to our political landscape. Okay? So, and it happens equally, I see it happen equally on both sides of the spectrum, so this is not to call out any one political party. I think I see it happening equally on both sides, okay?

But if you have, let's say, a candidate or a policy or something that you feel strongly about and you're super frustrated and you find yourself saying, I don't understand how they couldn't see it this way, how could the other side possibly see it their way, then usually what that means is we're taking what is a very complicated, multi-layered, multifaceted topic, oversimplifying it down to one simple thing. Right?

It often sounds like, how do they hate people like that? Or why do they think that we shouldn't have freedom? Why do they think that we shouldn't love everyone? Right? We say things like this, that like when you make it that simple, right? When you oversimplify it, like for sure the reason that person voted that way is because they hate people or they hate money or they hate anything that you know is good. Or they love anger. They love violence.

We fill it in with something negative that most people actually don't love that stuff. And maybe it doesn't sound like that. Maybe it sounds like they hate women. Why do they hate men? Like we just take these things and we simplify them down into our interpretation of the other side. And then we feel angry and frustrated and we say, I'm just so confused.

I don't understand how they could vote that way or see it that way. Okay. And my answer is, yeah, we don't understand when we don't want to understand. And when we simplify what are complicated things, it's not out of a desire to understand. It's out of a desire to be right, to feel justified in our anger or frustration.

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And I'm not saying you shouldn't be angry or frustrated, okay, no matter what. I'm just saying that when you notice yourself feeling this way, pause and go, wait a second, have I taken what is a really actually complex topic, like why people vote the way they vote, and simplified it down into one soundbite? Because if so, you're likely gonna feel angry and confused. And it's okay to, but just know that that's punishing you to feel angry or confused.

And if you genuinely want to understand the other person's point of view, you're going to have to open yourself up to the complication that is our political decisions. Okay? Politics is just one area. It just happens to be very relevant this week in the United States. But we do this with religion too, right? We say things like, well, you know, our church teaches, fill in the blank, our church teaches that women should be at home with their kids. Really? Or is that like kind of an oversimplification of maybe what you heard someone say or what you think the overall message is. Is it actually a lot more complicated than that? I don't know, I'm just saying maybe.

And I think, again, the way you can tell is ask yourself, how do I feel when I think about it this way, if I feel upset, angry, and that doesn't feel like a useful way to feel in this situation, maybe it is useful. I'm not saying anger is never useful, but is it? And if not, ask yourself, wait, am I oversimplifying what is actually pretty complicated? I'm trying to think of some of the other oversimplifications I've heard people say when it comes to, like the LDS church, for example. People say things like, you know, you either have to be all in or all out. You can't just be part way in. I'm like, really? Says who? I mean, that's not how I see it.

And so again, what we've done is we've taken some part, I'm not saying that you don't have a valid case for it, I'm just saying it's kind of an oversimplification. It's just a quick soundbite. And gosh, our world today is full of quick soundbites. Right our phones love a quick soundbite. That's actually the only thing you can do. You can't put a reel on Instagram that's longer than 90 seconds. So what can you say in 90 seconds? Not anything

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very complicated. Not anything that might not get misunderstood if it's very complicated. Right?

So politics and religion are two where we do a lot of oversimplifying. And you will know because you will feel some kind of dirty pain. Some righteous indignation, some frustration, some confusion, something like this.

How about parenting? Parenting is another one where we sometimes do this over simplifying thing. Like I don't understand. Why would you let your kid do that? Maybe you like to put your kids in sports and you know somebody who doesn't put their kids in sports. And you're like, wouldn't you want your kid to be more confident and get exercise? Okay, so notice how we just totally oversimplified what is a complicated decision.

Someone might have a whole bunch of reasons for not putting their kids in sports or in public school or any other parenting decision. But we simplify it down to, I don't understand. Do you hate kids? Do you hate your kids? It's like, no, there's probably not a lot of people walking around going, I just don't want my kid to be confident or to get any exercise. They just simply have prioritized different things.

By the way, I've listened to myself do this very thing just this past week, where I've oversimplified something down to a soundbite so that I can feel justified and righteous about my decision when it's all complicated in the end. It's complicated. There's a lot of factors to consider in any one of these decisions, right?

I see people over simplify when it comes to big decisions they're trying to make in their lives sometimes. Right? Like, well, I can't decide what to do. Do I leave my marriage or stay in the marriage?

Now I'm not saying there's never a time to make a decision like that, that's that black and white. But oftentimes what we're forgetting is it's, it doesn't have to be that simple. Everything doesn't have to be binary. Maybe there's a way that I want to stay in my marriage, but I changed the arrangement. Maybe I changed my mind about what marriage has to look like or could



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look like. Maybe we want to stay married, but we want to live in separate houses.

Or maybe we want to, I don't know, like there can be millions of options in between get a divorce or stay married, the way that our minds have simplified marriage and how it should look. What if we let it be complicated? What if we let it be like, I don't know, just there's so many options. It might serve us to consider a lot more options.

I see people do this with certain results in their businesses too, when I'm working with entrepreneurs, right? They say things like, well, my Facebook ad isn't working. I'm like, wait, I have no idea what that means because you just simplified what is actually a kind of complex thing. Like if you've ever run ads on Facebook or through Meta, Facebook, Instagram, et cetera, there's all kinds of metrics like click through rate and frequency and conversion and cost per lead or cost per conversion. And like, there's just a whole bunch of dynamics.

And when they say my Facebook ad isn't working, I'm like, what does that mean? Oh, well, I've only gotten two people on my email list. Okay, you're still oversimplifying. I need you to give me more details. This is a complicated thing to discover. Like how much money did you put into it? How much time has it run? How much testing have you done? How many versions of the ad did you run? Like all of those factors are very relevant before I would say your Facebook ad isn't working, right? But we just simplify it down.

My business isn't succeeding. My business is failing. My business is shrinking. My business is declining. I mean, It's actually all pretty complicated, right? Now, there are some metrics we could pull out, like I made less money this month than I made last month.

Okay, but let's look at all the complicated dynamics about why that might be before we just slap a really simple label on it of my business isn't working. When people say to me sometimes, I had a business, you know, 10 years



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ago, I started a business and it crashed and burned. I was like, what does that mean? That's a very simplified way to describe what is a very complex thing.

Does that mean you walked away from it? You gave up? Does that mean somebody sued you? And, or does that mean, like, what does that mean? That can mean so many things. But we just try to simplify it into a quick soundbite, which I'm okay with if it feels good. But if it feels like dirty pain, which is resentful, full of guilt or shame or blame or confusion or frustration, that's all dirty pain. It's not helping you become a better version of you. It's just weighing you down. It's like a heavy, heavy weight. And that's because you oversimplified what is something very complicated.

So if you're going to simplify it, make it something that feels good. Like that business was complete. My time with that business was complete. Now that's simple, that's just over simplification, but it feels good to me. So that would be a win, right? That's when we want to simplify it, when, and again, it needs to be believable to you, but if that feels believable, my marriage was complete instead of my marriage ended in failure. Simplify it if it's gonna make you feel good, but not if it makes you feel bad.

The other area, because I've been talking a lot about health as I've been working on my own health journey a lot the last year or so is results of your, we'll call it your diet or exercise plan. Like I'm not losing weight. Okay, what does that mean? Because if you look at my chart, where I chart my weight every day, it goes up and down and up and down and up and down, and it's making a gradual decline, and then sometimes a gradual uphill climb and then sometimes just steady and then sometimes down again.

And like, I mean, I'm not losing weight is just a gross oversimplification of the facts of the reality because all of this actually takes a long time and it might be more accurate to say I'm not eating on plan, which is still a simplification. But just be careful about oversimplifying what are really complicated, interesting, but full of all sorts of variables, all sorts of factors, topics.

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Now, the other thing we do is we complicate what is actually very simple. Okay? Now why do our brains do this? I don't know. My guess is that it's because it's just a lot easier to be confused or uncertain or undecided than to actually sit down and do what we want to be doing and feel that we need to be doing or should be doing.

And obviously those aren't always useful ways to think about it but I'm just saying get into work. Taking useful action is something that our brains will try to avoid if it means we're gonna have to forgo pleasure or experience pain or do anything that feels like it's going to take a lot of energy or figuring out. And one way that we avoid it is just by overcomplicating things.

So let's go back to what we were talking about with diet and exercise. Like I said, we tend to simplify the result part, like it's not working. I'm not getting stronger. I'm not lowering my glucose numbers or I'm not losing weight. We oversimplify the result, but we overcomplicate the process or the how-to. People are like, I just don't know what to do. I mean, I have this plan that I'm following, but I'm just not losing weight. I'm like, really? Are you following your plan? I mean, kind of, pretty well. I don't know. What did you eat yesterday? I don't know. Oh, so it is actually really simple.

I mean, I'll take myself as an example, right? Because yeah, I'm still losing a little bit of weight, but my main focus right now is my glucose numbers. Like, I want to keep my glucose regulated, and I got it down to where it was regulated, and then it's kind of come back up as I stopped monitoring it. So I put my CGM back on and monitoring it again. I'm going to dial it in. I am determined to not get diabetes.

Okay? So my brain wants to be like, I don't know, it's just so hard. I don't know what to do. I don't know what to eat. I don't know how to do this, but it's not complicated. It's actually very simple. I need to eat more of the foods that don't spike my glucose and less of the ones that do. And I need to move my body regularly. That's it. It's really that simple. Like I need to eat less sugar and flour and I need to eat more protein and the kind of carbs that have fiber with them and I need to move my body after I eat as

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much as possible. Like it's actually really simple, but my brain doesn't want it to be simple because then I have no excuse. I just need to go do it.

I want it to be complicated and hard because you know, what are you saying? I should never eat sugar again? Come on. This is so confusing. I just don't know what to do here. I hope I'm not the only one that has that voice in my head.

Even the reasons why we're overeating, right? Sometimes when I'm coaching people on this, I'm like, okay, so you ate, whatever. You ate a bunch of junk yesterday. Tell me what you ate. We get it down on paper first. We make that really simple. It's not confusing. I don't know. I just ate so many things. No, it's not. Tell me what you ate. Okay. We make a list.

Now, why did you eat it? Next thing we want to do is, I don't know. It's so complicated, right? We make it so complicated. I'm like, no, it's not complicated. You just told me you ate chocolate chips. Why did you eat chocolate chips? Because chocolate chips are delicious. Because you get a dopamine hit when you eat chocolate chips. And you told me you ate them right after you put the kids down to bed. I wonder why.

Maybe it's because you were stressed and overwhelmed and exhausted and you felt sort of deprived and you don't have enough joy in your life. It's actually really simple. You wanted something fun and pleasurable and that's what chocolate chips are. It's really simple, right? Oh yeah, it is.

When I say it that way, everyone's like, oh yeah, it is really simple. Why did I not see that? Because you have a human brain that wants to complicate simple things.

How do you know you're doing this? Because you will feel what we call dirty pain. You will feel guilty or ashamed or confused or overwhelmed or undecided. Most times this is dirty pain. It's not the kind of pain that feels spiritual and expansive and enlightening. It's the kind of pain that keeps you stuck. You can't progress from dirty pain. You'll just spin and spin and

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spin like a hamster running on a wheel. So you're either overcomplicating or oversimplifying something when you have dirty pain.

Let's talk about your kids. I see us go to this overcomplication piece a lot when it comes to our kids, right? So for example, I'll coach somebody who will say something like, my teenager keeps lying to me and I don't know why. Like we talked about it and they said they weren't going to do it anymore. And I feel like they trust me. I feel like I handle it really well when they misbehave or whatever, so I don't know why they're lying.

I'm like, really? Are you sure you don't know why? Give me an example. Now tell me a story about the last thing they lied about. They were gonna go to the library, then went to their boyfriend's house instead, let's just say, okay? And then I'm like, if it were really simple, the reason that she lied, what's the reason?

Well, because I didn't want her to go to her boyfriend's house. I worry about when she goes and spends too much time over there and I want her to get her work done. And so she knew I was going to be upset or there was going to be a consequence or punishment of some sort if she went to her boyfriend's house. That's why she lied about it.

Yeah, it's actually really simple. You know why people lie? Because they don't want to deal with what would happen if they told the truth. The end.

So what do we do with that? I don't know. You get to decide. You either just know that that's why people lie and you stop being confused about it and then you choose who you want to be and what you want to do. Maybe you do want to enforce the consequence and you just know that's the way of it, that they're gonna try to lie at times, or you decide you don't care enough about that, you would rather they tell you the truth, you would rather make a safe space to tell the truth and then you change who you're being on the other side of it. I mean, either one you can play with, but my point is that spinning in this confusion, I don't know why they lie, doesn't work.

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Sometimes it's us that we're confused about, right? Like this is so common that I'll be coaching someone who will say something like, maybe it's not their teenager lying, maybe it's like, "Hey, my dad always says he's going to do these things and then he never does. He doesn't follow through on them. And recently he said to me, I can tell that you don't trust me and I feel so bad. I want him to know I trust him." I'm like, but you don't trust him, right? Like, it would make sense that you don't trust him if he has a history of saying he's going to do something and then he doesn't do it.

So we don't need to make this complicated. I don't know why I don't trust my dad. No, The reason you don't trust your dad is because your dad hasn't behaved in a way that tells your brain it's safe to trust him. It's actually very simple. But we get confused and frustrated with ourselves and then we're blaming ourselves and we're judging others because we've overcomplicated what is actually really simple.

I see people do this too when they're like, I don't know why I can't stop yelling at my kids. I don't want to yell at them. I feel like that's bad parenting, but I just don't know why I can't stop. I'm like, I do. Because when you ask them to do something, they ignore you. But when you yell, they do it. It's really simple the reason why. We don't need to complicate it.

And people think if we make it simple and obvious and we just admit the honest truth, then that means we're never going to change our behavior. We're never going to improve. We're never going to get something different. And I find the opposite to be true. When you can just embrace the truth and not let it be complicated, not let it be confusing, then you have a reality in front of you that's very simple and then you have many choices you can make on the other side of that. Don't let it be complicated.

Last example I'll mention here where I see people overcomplicate is again with how to when it comes to building your business. Remember I talked about we tend to simplify the results of the business. Like my business isn't making any money. Like really? Say more. Okay, give me the details. Tell me the real story. But we complicate the how-to of the business.

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Same thing we do with our health, right? We go, I just don't know how to get clients. I just don't know how to market my business. All of a sudden we've made it so complicated. I don't know how to market my business. That does sound complicated. That sounds overwhelming. It sounds confusing. But what is marketing, by the way? And how do we do it?

It's three simple steps. It's finding people who want what you have to offer, giving them some help and inviting them to get more help. That's all it is. It's really simple actually. Don't let your brain make it complicated. Your brain wants it to be complicated because then if we're just confused and not sure where to begin, then we don't have to begin at all. But that's probably not going to get you what you want in the end.

So pay attention when you have dirty paint, especially confusion, judgment, or shame and guilt. So whether you're judging others or judging yourself or you're just very confused and overwhelmed, then you are likely simplifying something that's actually very complicated or complicating something that's actually very simple.

If you're not sure which it is, and you're in The Lab, you know you can send it in to us at Ask a Coach or you can bring it to our coaching calls. We can help you. And if you're not in The Lab, come to a free coaching call and let's give it a try and see if we can help you as well. You can go to [jodymoore.com/freecoaching](http://jodymoore.com/freecoaching).

All right. Thanks for joining me today, everyone. I will see you next time. Have a beautiful rest of your week.

Oh wow, look at that. You made it to the end. Your time and attention is valuable, and I don't take it lightly that you made it this far. In fact, it tells me you might be like me; insatiably curious about people and life and potential and connection. Maybe you have big dreams but a small budget and no time. You're tired, but bored. You're content, but dissatisfied. Sound familiar? Come to a free coaching call and see for yourself what's possible:

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