

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

You know that feeling when you just need to be calm and cool and you need to access the most useful part of your brain, the critical thinking part, the wise, brilliant part, and yet, that's the moment when you find yourself sweating, panicking, freaking out, temperature rising, face getting flushed, maybe your body is literally shaking, and it's the worst possible timing. You need to be on right now.

Well today, I have a question from one of you that called in, left this on the podcast hotline a while ago. I apologize. I'm just now circling around to some of your questions here, but such a brilliant question. A caller who's in this situation, she's going to tell us why in just a minute, and I'm going to tell you the art of not freaking out. What do you do in this situation? This is episode 506. Let's go.

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 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. I'll see you there.

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

Hi, everyone. What's happening? How's life? How are we doing today? You're not freaking out, are you? I hope there's nothing in your life that is requiring any freaking out or is causing you or your brain to freak out. But if so, or if you have situations that come up on occasion that cause you to freak out, then you're definitely going to love what I'm going to be talking about here on today's episode.

And you might be surprised too. This has been coming up a lot lately. People say to me, I'm pretty sure I know what you're going to say, Jody. I'm pretty sure I know what you would tell me, but, and then they'd give me their question or whatever's going on. And then they almost always say, that is not what I thought you were going to say. And I just laugh because I'm not trying to trick anyone or fool anyone. I don't know what I'm going to say half the time either.

But I do know what I want to say today. I have listened to this question that's coming in. For those of you that think, I have a question I want to ask, you can always call in to our podcast hotline. It's 1-888-HI-JODY-M. H-I-J-O-D-Y-M as in Moore, 1-888-HI-JODY-M. You can leave me a question. You can give me feedback. I'm trying to make this podcast next level.

The podcast does really well. I so appreciate all of you who listen and who share it. Please keep doing that. But I'm like, let's take it on next level. Let's make this our podcast. Instead of me deciding what I feel like talking about, why don't you tell me what you want to hear about and what formats you like?

Last week we did a coaching call. We might do more of those. Today I'm doing a question. Sometimes I just kind of ramble about what's on my mind. Call in and tell me. 1-888-HI-JODY-M. Tell me what you want to learn about. Tell me what questions you have personally. Tell me what formats you prefer. And let's really make this thing take off. Let's make it really applicable and relevant for everybody. Are we in? Who's going to help me on my mission? Okay. I thought so. Thank you.

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

All right. So let me go ahead and play this caller's question. Let's take a listen, and then I'm going to tell you how I would answer it. Here we go.

“Hi, Jody. I love your podcast. Love the work that you do. I have a question. I have horrible stage fright and it gets to the point where I feel like I black out. I don't know what I'm doing and it almost feels like a physiological response. I start sweating and you know those things are really common.

I don't know if they're normal but I just know that the brain is powerful and I don't know if it's my thoughts that are causing this But I would love help with controlling my emotions, controlling my body when I am performing, whether it be musically, just talking. I just feel like I lose control. Any help is appreciated. Thanks for all you do. Bye.”

Ooh, can anybody else relate to this? It's that moment you're stepping on stage to perform when you want to be at your best, or it's when you're meeting up with your ex to exchange the kids and you just want to be brilliant or at least brief and get out of there. And that's when everything starts happening in the brain and in the body, and it feels like it's sabotaging you.

So let's dive in a little bit. First of all, it is kind of sabotaging you, but not on purpose, right? Our brains do this thing called fight, flight, or freeze, which I know you've heard of before, right? When we think we're in danger, one of the ways that we try to protect ourselves as human beings is by either shutting down or running away or just being so still that nobody notices us. It's the idea, I think, behind fight, flight, or freeze, right? It's like what animals do in the wild. It's a basic, primitive survival mechanism.

So does that mean that we think we are in literal danger before we get on the stage? Yes, kind of, but also no. Okay? So survival can mean all kinds of things to this part of the brain. Obviously, like life or death is survival, but oftentimes what we're trying to avoid nowadays is not even a physical death so much as like an emotional death, if you will. Like this mental, emotional overwhelm or embarrassment or fear or rejection by others or

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

judgment of others that on some level we believe is so dangerous, we move into a fight, flight, or freeze response in order to try to protect ourselves and keep ourselves alive.

Now, when we slow it down in coaching, we'll talk about these scenarios sometimes, right? Like what would really happen if whatever you think is worst case scenario went down? Like when you're walking on the stage, why is speaking in front of an audience or performing or whatever it is that you do in front of an audience, why is that so scary to so many people?

Well, because the brain thinks we might be rejected. It thinks that people might have opinions, negative opinions of us, and they might. Some of them will, right? That they will judge us, that they will have criticism of us, and for whatever reason that feels intolerable to us.

Again, if we want to take it all the way back to survival, it's because if we were rejected by the tribe at one point, we literally would have died. But it doesn't matter. It's very natural, healthy human behavior that you care about what other people think of you. Okay?

Only sociopaths don't care what other people don't think of them or people with other mental illnesses. Okay? So it's not wrong that you care, but when you slow it down and notice, hey, it's not dangerous actually. Like even if I went out there on the stage and I tripped and fell and I forgot every word I was supposed to say. And everybody laughed or made fun of me behind my back.

Whatever you think is the worst case scenario, even if it happened, it would be fine. You're not going to die. It's not a big deal. Most people actually would probably come to your aid and comfort and love you even more because they saw you in a vulnerable state, which is what connects us as individuals, not seeing each other all perfectly put together.

But at any rate, part of your brain doesn't believe that. It thinks it's dangerous for people to see your weaknesses or your vulnerabilities or for you to be on stage as a supposed expert or somebody who has something

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

worthwhile to say or somebody who's gifted enough at music to be up there playing a song or singing a song or whatever, and then for you to be terrible at it. Your brain thinks that is very dangerous. Okay. And again, this can apply in all kinds of situations.

You're going to meet up with your ex. I don't know why that one keeps coming to my mind. I remember coaching someone, At least one person, many people who say, I go to meet up with the ex, I just want to have it together and that's when I panic. And I'm like, yeah, because your brain thinks it's very dangerous for your ex to see you at your worst, but it's not, right?

For your ex to see any weaknesses or shortcomings or faults is not dangerous, even if your ex is going to rub your face in it or talk about you behind your back or whatever, post it on social media how terrible you are. Even all those things still aren't deadly, still don't have to negatively impact your quality of life even. Okay?

So we do want to bring some level of awareness to this somewhat irrational part of the brain. Now, some experts would say that part of the reason we react this way is because we have what we might call unhealed trauma. I'm kind of careful about using that word trauma because I hate to pathologize just our whole life experiences. So I just want to be very clear that what I mean is that it might be a really severe traumatic experience that you went through, but it also could just be that one time when you were a kid, you were embarrassed.

I just told this story the other day about being in, I think I was in second or third grade. We were playing basketball in PE and I didn't know how to play basketball. And they said to me, "It's fine. You can totally do it. All you need to do is guard that girl. That girl over there, she's your person. Just stay right on her, keep your arms up high and follow her wherever she goes and make sure that she can't pass or shoot the basketball. That's your job, Jody." And I was like, "All right."

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

So I'm following this girl around and then somebody on my team like knocks the ball out of bounds and my girl goes to get the ball to throw it in and I'm like right there all over her. I'm not going to let her throw it in. Well, that's not really appropriate. That's not how you play basketball, right? You guard them when they are on the floor, not when they're throwing the ball in, you actually have to get out of their way so they can throw the ball back into play.

Well, I didn't know this. All the kids are yelling at me, shouting out that I'm doing it wrong. I can't even understand what they're saying because they're all talking at once. After a minute, I realize it and I'm so embarrassed, like filled with shame. I can't believe everyone here seems to understand this except me. I'm such an idiot. I'm so embarrassed. They all saw me and I decided that day that I don't do team sports. The end.

So that is not anything that we would say is heartbreaking, earth shattering, tragic, like, "Oh, wow, poor Jody Moore, your life is so hard. Some kids made fun of you in second grade." Okay, that's not what I'm saying, feel sorry for me.

I'm saying at that moment, my brain memorized that it's dangerous to go out there and try to do something you don't know how to do, because especially if the people around you know how to do it, they might make fun of you when you mess up and you probably will mess up. And so if there's a situation then after that where I feel like it's a similar scenario, my brain has now memorized, this is dangerous. We should avoid this. We should try not to be made fun of because that did not feel very good.

So this is often what's happening over and over again in our lives. We all have been through experiences, some more severe than others, where we memorized that certain situations could be dangerous, could be physically painful, mentally, emotionally painful, or just downright hard. And then we react accordingly in order to try to protect ourselves.

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

And at a kind of more extreme level, it looks like fight, flight, or freeze, which is what's happening when you're sweating and feeling like you're going to black out and shaking. It's your body trying to shut you down or get you out of there to protect you. Okay, that's what's going on.

Now, in answer to this person's question, what do we do about it? How do we control? She asked about controlling her emotions and her body. She wanted to feel more in control. Well, here's what I want to tell you first, my friend. Before you try to control any of it, maybe even instead of trying to control any of it, I want to recommend that you just allow it, that you just decide, I'm going out on stage tonight and I'm probably going to freak out. I'm probably going to be sweating. I'm going to feel like I'm going to black out. I'm going to feel this panic coming over my body. All right, let's go. I'm in.

Why in the world would I tell you that? Well, because that's been the reality, right? And my guess about why it feels so out of control and you're having such a hard time reining it in is because you don't want to feel it. You're resisting it. Do you know what happens when we resist what's going on in our bodies and our brains?

They fight harder to tell us because they're like, she's not hearing me. This is dangerous. She's still going out on the stage and she's not even acknowledging what we're trying to tell her, which is, this is very dangerous. This could be very embarrassing. This could be humiliating. This could be all the negative things, right?

And so we should shout it louder. And then we build up emotions too, because now we have panic and fear or stress or whatever it is, along with some resistance on top of that, some dislike of that experience, some judgment of ourselves that we shouldn't be feeling it.

And now we just have judgment or resistance or dislike on top of panic, fear, worry. Now we've created like a triple-decker sandwich of negative emotions. Okay? So this is why the first step is to genuinely just be willing

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

to experience it. I want you to just go, you know what? I'm going to go give a talk today. Probably going to do some freaking out before. I'll probably sweat. I'll feel out of control. Probably shake. And I'm down for it.

Are you down for it? I know you are, you know how I know? You're still doing it, you're asking me this question because you could just be like, that's it, I don't speak, I don't sing, I don't play the piano, whatever it is that you're doing on these stages, you could just opt out. Did you know this? I don't know why you're doing these things. I don't know if it's part of your job, but you could find a different job. I don't know if people ask you to do it, but I could teach you how to say no. Like you literally don't have to do it.

Why are you doing it? My guess is there's a part of you that feels called to do it for some reason, wants to keep this job or wants to say yes, or wants to go out and speak and wants to do whatever it is that you're doing. So if you want to do it, okay, cool, then just decide I'm gonna panic and freak out before I go on stage. And you know what? It's going to be fine. So that's the first thing. Open up to it and embrace it and be willing to experience it.

Even go this far, decide like, what about if somebody has never felt this feeling before? Maybe they've never experienced stage fright. They don't know what it feels like to have this kind of mini panic attack almost happen. And they're asking you to please describe it to them. And you kind of describe it, right? You're like, I mean, I feel sweaty, like I'm going to black out. And they're like, oh, so like when I'm on the treadmill? And you say, no, no, no, no, it's different. It's different than being on a treadmill.

And then you describe it again and they ask you something, you're like, no, no, no, no, not like that. Okay, you know what? I'm going to pay attention next time it happens so that I can describe it a little bit better to you. So I can tell you how it's different than being on a treadmill or about to get on a roller coaster. Maybe it feels just like a roller coaster. I don't know. But like, how can you describe it? What else is going on?

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

Go through all the parts of your body, right? As it comes up, I just be like, tonight I give a talk. Can't wait to see what this is like. What do my feet feel like during this whole experience? What do my knees feel like? What do my shins and my calves feel like? Do my ankles feel any different? Do my toes feel any different? What about my upper thighs? What about my hamstrings? Are they feeling any different?

What's going on around my waist area and in my gut and in my chest? That's probably where you're feeling it the most, in the core, right? But then what about my fingers? Can I feel it in my pinkies? Can I feel it in my thumbs? What's happening with my hands and my arms? Do I feel it in my shoulders and my neck? What about my ears? Do they feel hot?

Right? So go through. Notice what I'm doing is I'm like getting into my body and experiencing it and opening up to it. And like, what does this feel like? And it doesn't mean I'm running away with thoughts.

A lot of times when we give advice to like, allow your feelings, just lean into them, just feel your feelings, feelings are for feeling, and all this advice we're given, what people do is they think we mean run away with the thoughts in your head. And they start fueling the thoughts, right? They get in their heads. And I don't even know that it's wrong to do that. I'm just saying that's not what I mean.

What I mean is open up to it in your body. What does it feel like? Now, if you can become aware of some of your thoughts, that's cool, but you don't have to. You can just have the visceral experience, decide that you're totally willing to experience it. It's not a big deal. In fact, people sign up to feel this feeling when they go to haunted houses and they get on roller coasters and they jump out of airplanes, they go skydiving.

We sign up for this feeling. We pay money. I will pay you a lot of money to take me in an airplane and throw me out with a parachute so I can experience sweating and almost blacking out and fear and panic. Why do we do that? Because when we're willing to feel it, it kind of makes you feel

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

alive, actually. Because it is an alive feeling. It is part of the human experience.

Okay, so that's step number one. Allow it. Experience it such that you could even describe it better to someone who's never experienced it before.

Okay. Now, what do we do after that? Well, usually that's enough, if I'm being honest. Because here's the craziest part, and I'm a little hesitant to tell you this part, but whatever, let's just give it away.

This is the irony of it. When you open up and allow it, remember I said we're layering all these emotions, right? When you open up and allow it, you actually remove the top layers of those negative emotions. You remove the resistance, the self-judgment, the dissatisfaction or dislike of the experience. Then the experience itself is not that big a deal, and therefore it does not grow. It does not become bigger. It does not take over. And it turns from feeling like a panic attack to just feeling kind of nervous.

You'll stop having, most likely, either you'll just keep doing it and you can sweat and almost black out, it's fine, that's what we do when we go to the gym anyway, right? Or it will simmer down quite a bit and eventually at some point, you'll just say, I get a little nervous. I get some butterflies in my stomach. Or maybe it'll go away altogether. But it won't feel like this big thing that overtakes you.

But when you say, how do I control my emotions and my body? My answer is, you don't. Don't try to do that. Because the word control implies to me that you don't want it. You're trying to stop it. You think that something's gone wrong, but nothing's gone wrong.

If it's helpful, you can say things to yourself like, this is just because of sentences in my brain. Sentences in my brain. I wouldn't even try, I did say if you could figure out what they are, great. But sometimes when it's really intense for me, if I try to figure out what they are, I'm just going to get lost in my head. So be cautious of that. And if that happens, then you just say,

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

sentences in my brain, that's why I'm feeling this way, sentences in my brain.

Like I'm fine. I'm just standing here behind the stage of this thing. And yeah, there's a lot of people out there, but that's not dangerous. Even their judgment of me is not dangerous. I just have sentences in my brain creating this intense visceral reaction. Isn't it fascinating? Isn't it amazing to be alive and be a human being?

That's it. Remove the top layer, remove the resistance of it, and take a deep breath. Be like, tomorrow I'm giving a talk and I'm probably going to freak out and I can't wait. I'm all in. Let's go.

Now, lastly, only after you do this for a long time and you notice, all I do is get a little nervous now, you can go in and examine some of the thoughts and I'm going to give you one, one other redirect thought to play with. But I don't want you to even entertain this until you do what I just taught you. Okay? But here's the redirect thought.

You stop thinking about you and you start thinking about somebody in the audience. Maybe it's someone you know who you know is there to hear your music or listen to your talk or whatever. But often I don't even try to think about any particular person that I know. I just make somebody up in my head. I'm just like, maybe there's somebody in this audience who needs a little inspiration, a little motivation, who needs to know that they're doing a good job, or who is going to have their heart touched by this song I'm about to sing.

I personally don't sing on stages. They don't really let me, but I'm just saying for you maybe, right? There's somebody who's going to be impacted. They're going to feel whatever it is you want them to feel. They're going to have an idea. They're going to have some insight. They're going to leave motivated.

Think about that person and think about where they are right now and the transformation that they're going to have after you do what you do, even

506: The Art of Not Freaking Out

though it's not you doing it for them. You're not the magic pill. Don't worry. It's them. It's divine unseen forces, okay, but you just get to be there. You get to be the vehicle that helps a little bit.

Think about them. Stop thinking about you. Whether or not you're going to sound good, whether or not you're going to look good, whether or not they're going to like what you have to say, whether or not you're going to mess up. All of that is so scary when we think about us. You realize that? It is for me anyway.

So a quick redirect, start thinking about somebody in the audience, but only even try that after you just allow yourself to panic and freak out. That's going to be so fun. Everybody go try it. Come back and tell me how it goes. I want to hear.

Thank you for joining me today. Again, you can call into 1-888-HI-JODY-M. If you have a question, you want to be on the podcast. I'd love to answer it. I'll see you next time. Bye.

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: JodyMoore.com/freecoaching to register. That's JodyMoore.com/freecoaching.