

526: Understanding Emotions, Raising Teens, and the Nervous System



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

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Have you ever been in a situation where emotions just come up and you have some guess about why, like some experience from your past, but you're not exactly sure why? And you find that it can overtake you and you can even start crying in certain situations. We're going to talk about that today.

Do you have teenagers or young adult kids who you are trying to guide, and that means sometimes giving them restrictions or consequences or boundaries or rules, and then you question, am I doing the right thing or am I actually making some of their struggles and problems worse? Am I guiding them more towards the life I want for them or pushing them towards all the things I don't want for them? How do we know? We're going to talk about that today.

And finally, what's the deal with all this talk about the nervous system and processing emotions? Do we have to do that? Can we just neutralize them? What's going on here? We're going to talk about that today as well. This is Episode 526: Understanding Emotions, Raising Teens, and the Nervous System. Thanks for being here. Let's do it.

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.

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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.

Did you find yourself thinking this seems like a random combination of topics to do a podcast episode on? Well, the reason why is I pulled three of the questions that we've received on our podcast hotline, which you can call into and leave me a question anytime, and I thought I would address them today. I pulled three that I thought would be really relevant and interesting to all of you. I love hearing your voice. I love putting your voice on the podcast. So thank you in advance to everyone that calls in. I know I don't get to all of them, and I probably should be doing these episodes even more than I do, but I like to just throw them in every now and then.

If you have a question for me, you can call it in at 1-888-HI-JODY-M. That's Jody with a Y and M as in Moore. 1-888-HI-JODYM. But today, I'm going to play three questions from three lovely callers, one at a time. I will play the question and then I will tell you how I would answer and coach and help this person.

Now, before we listen to these questions and dive in, I have a favor to ask of you. This podcast is so successful and it's not because of me, it's because of all of you. I show up here and say what I think would be helpful, but you guys are the ones who listen and follow and share it and get the word out, and that's the reason we have such a big following. And I'm so appreciative to that. I just can't thank you enough. But I would love to recruit your help in taking it to the next level. I feel like it's time. We've been doing this podcast, I don't know, 10 years now, and it's grown very successfully. And now I'm like, let's go next level, how about, right?

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So, in order to make that happen, I need your help. First, I need you to be following or subscribed to the podcast. You probably hear podcasters talk about this all the time. Make sure you're following or you're subscribed. It depends on what platform you're on, what they call it. But the reason for that is when you follow along with the show, first of all, you will automatically get updates every time a new episode is published. So, hopefully that's a win for you. But second of all, it tells the algorithm people like this show enough that they want to know when a new episode is coming out. And that means we should maybe put it in front of more people. The platforms want people to be on there listening to shows they like, right? So, that's the first thing.

The second thing is to just keep talking about it when appropriate. You can directly recommend episodes to people if you think they would be helpful, or you can just bring it up in casual conversation, and or you can just share it, you know, in your stories online, if you're online, if you're on social media in some place. It's really helpful when you do that. And make sure if you're sharing it online that you tag me so I can give it a reshare and give you a shout out. But all of those things just help spread the word better than anything I could do. So, thanks in advance for helping me out.

Let's go ahead and dive into today's topics. Like I said, I got caller questions here. I'm going to just go ahead and play the first one and then we'll get started.

Caller 1: Hi, Jody Moore. I'm a 63-year-old grandmother, mother. And I have this weird situation that every single time I am with my oldest brother, I cry. I just cry and I have no idea what it is. I lived with him for a couple of years in high school. My parents were parents of nine kids and I was the youngest, and my mom was kind of coming off of prescription medications and they needed to kind of get rid of me. So I went to live with my brother in Dugway, Utah of all places. I had a wonderful, horrible experience where I

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felt abandoned by my parents, but loved by my brother. So he was kind of like a surrogate dad.

And now, all these many years later, I get together with him and his wife and I kind of melt. And I don't know why I do that. I know there's just such deep-seated, rooted feelings of love and something that I'm not sure why. What in the world am I doing? It feels really isolated. It feels really weird, but I'm sure you have a really logical explanation as to why I am doing this. Anyway, love what you do, love everything about you. Thank you so much.

Jody Moore: Well, thank you. Thanks for your question. Thanks for calling in and sharing this. I know it's somewhat vulnerable. Okay, so first of all, crying is an expression of really intense emotion. And I always like to remember this about crying because it's interesting, like we see people cry when they're extremely sad. We cry at a funeral, but we also cry when we're really happy, like winning the Miss America pageant, or we cry at a wedding, usually for a combination of things.

Maybe there's a grief and a sadness over a certain chapter ending or feeling like your loved one is, you know, moving on in a way that's going to impact you. But there's also like a lot of joy usually and feelings of love and abundance. It's a mixed bag when we're crying in certain situations, right? We can cry out of negative, cry out of positive, cry out of just a lot of emotions happening at once.

So when you say every time you see your brother, you cry, all that tells me is that you're having a lot of intense emotion happening or a certain intense emotion happening. And when you share a little bit about your past, right? A couple things I'll just say. So there are people that believe that there are unprocessed emotions from your past that need to be processed. And if that feels true to you and that feels like a useful path to go down, by all means, I'm not here to say that's not true.

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The way I think about it, though, is that any emotion I'm feeling in the present is because of thoughts I'm having in the present, even if they are thoughts about my past. And so if you want to become aware of your thoughts, you already shared some, the experience that you had before and a sort of like memories of past emotions and your thoughts about what you experienced in the past, maybe coming up for you.

But the first question I would ask you if I were coaching you is, is this really a problem? And if so, why? Because if you're saying this is a problem, I don't like crying in front of my brother and his family. I don't want to cry when I go there. I would just say, why not? Because especially we can hear this in your tone, that there's a lot of love and appreciation and there's kind of a tenderness in the way that you tell this story, like tenderness for your past self, tenderness for your brother and appreciation to him. And it's all kind of beautiful. I got to be honest.

So maybe it's not even a problem. You could just try on the idea that it's okay. I just feel a lot of love and I feel a lot of emotions and maybe yes, there's also some pain associated when I go see my brother and all of that comes to my remembrance and I have thoughts even if most of them are unconscious, subconscious thoughts, have thoughts and stories about him and so I feel emotion and that's okay. And I can just cry when I see him.

And you can name it whatever you want. You could say, I just love him so much that I cry when I see him. I'm just so appreciative to him that I cry when I see him. You can even name it, I have some unhealed trauma from my past that comes up when I go visit him. And you can just chalk it up to that or, and/or, I should say, you can also investigate some of these things, especially the trauma piece.

And that's where coaching is not going to be the solution for that part. That's going to be somebody more clinical like a therapist. I do not have the tools and skills to heal past trauma, but there are a lot of people that do. I'll give you one recommendation I really like is Dr. Don Wood, W-O-O-D. If

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you go look up his work about healing trauma, I really like him, but there's lots of people out there that would be able to help you heal past trauma if you want to investigate that a little bit if you think that might be coming up.

All right. So, I love how much you love your brother. I love the way you tell the story of your past. It feels to me like it's very loving and generous and kind. And I also love that you cry when you see him. I think it's kind of a beautiful thing. But if it's not for some reason, if there's more to the story, there are some things that you could do. And then the reason why, who knows, my friend? You get to decide. What do you think is the reason? Or what do you want to name the reason why as? It's not so much a figuring out as deciding. This is what I decided to make this mean. Because no one can tell you exactly the reason. So that's where I would want to empower you to decide. All right, thanks so much for calling in. Let's go to the next question.

Caller 2: Hi, Jody. I have a question about my son. So there's a couple of circumstances we're dealing with. We had to make some changes due to some poor choices that he was making. So we've limited who he is allowed to, you know, spend time with just because they weren't bringing out the best in each other. So he's going through probably a somewhat painful process of maybe feeling a little bit lonely and a little bit isolated, just having to make new friends.

So, you know, the circumstance would be that he's not permitted to hang with the same group that he was. He's a teenager, he's 16. And so then I have my negative thoughts about that are am I causing him, you know, harm socially? He has some depression. So am I, you know, making that worse by having him go through this discomfort? And then the second situation with him is that he doesn't have a job for the summer and I'm frustrated.

My negative reaction to that is frustrated that he didn't take care of it in February when they were posting the jobs and setting them up. And so I

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feel like, you know, that he's falling behind or that he's not learning to be self-sufficient, that he's, you know, not going to be prepared for college to have any money.

So I'm having some negative thoughts about some of the circumstances with my son. And I just love when you talk about like how we're all having the experience we need to have. And I just wanted to see if you can dive into that a little more as a parent for our children, like even adult children, you know, we have older children as well, and just like knowing that they're living, you know, and learning the things that they need to at this time. If you can, you know, kind of dive into that a little bit, I would really love that.

Jody Moore: Okay. Hi, mom. Not my mom, but a mom. I'm a mom myself, so I can relate to a lot of these questions that you have, a lot of the concerns that you have, and I know we have a lot of parents here, so thanks for calling in and sharing that, and thanks for the good work you're doing of raising kids. It's not easy, right? It's no joke, this job that we all signed up for.

Okay, I want to speak first to kind of what you said at the end there. You said, I really like when you talk about how everybody's having the experience they're supposed to have. Can you speak to that and how do we know if they're having the experience that they're supposed to have? So, that is a thought that I offer people sometimes. And so, is it a fact? Is it true that everyone's having the experience they're supposed to have? No, it's not a fact. We can never prove it. We never actually could say, yeah, I know for sure, but could we ever prove and make it factual that they're not having the experience they're supposed to have or that they may not be or that there's even such a thing as that? The answer is no. We couldn't prove that either.

So this is one of those areas where our brains want to look for what's "true" in the world, in the people that we love, in the universe, you might say, in reality, and there is no absolute truth. So this is where you get to decide

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what you want to believe. And I find that when I believe, you know what, everybody's having the experience they're supposed to have. And let me expand on it a little bit and relate it to this example of our kids, our teenagers, our adult kids, especially.

When I choose to believe, okay, my kids are going to have the experience they're supposed to have in this life, it brings me some peace, it calms me down, it brings my rational, logical, prefrontal cortex back online so that I can make the most wise decisions. I don't want to be making decisions from my primitive, panicky, insecure, childlike brain, right? Which is where I go when I'm like, oh no, what if something's going wrong? What if I'm not doing it right? What if they're not having the experience they're supposed to have? I panic and I move more into the lower brain and out of the higher brain. And so I don't see any upside to that. It doesn't feel good, but it also doesn't make me a better mother.

But what I want to say is that having the experience they're supposed to have doesn't mean they won't suffer and struggle. It doesn't mean that they will make all the best choices. It doesn't even mean that I will always make the right choice or do what is "best" by them. That's what you have to really wrap your head around. The experience that we're all supposed to have is partly amazing and good and peaceful and fun, and it's partly painful and terrible and hard and full of suffering. That's the experience we're all supposed to have.

So the reason the brain wrestles with that question is because we're looking for everything to go smoothly. But that's not the way it was meant to be when we came here to earth, right? It was meant to be a mixed bag. It was meant to help us grow and evolve and exercise our agency. And the only way that we grow and evolve is through trial and error, right? It's through classes, "classes." Okay, so if a class is too easy, it's not going to help me grow. So I don't mean that the class has to all be painful. It can be

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fun to learn, it can be invigorating, but it also sometimes painful. It's uncomfortable at times, right?

Anyway, back to kind of the more specifics of your situation here with your son. Some of these questions that you're asking me, I just want to reframe the questions just a little bit because if we ask a better question, we get better answers in our own minds. Our brains, you guys, just want to answer questions on default. So, in other words, if I ask my brain a question like, what's wrong with me, then my brain will immediately go, so many things, where should we begin? First of all, you're ugly. Second of all, you're not smart. Third, like it just will literally answer the question I ask, right? And usually it doesn't do it right away. Usually it just goes on the lookout for, okay, let's pay attention to what's wrong with her. That's what she wants to know. Oh, there's something. Oh, there's something else, right?

So the questions that we ask tell our brains what to filter for, what to look for, what's relevant information to bring into our awareness, okay? So if you ask a better question, you're going to bring more useful things into your awareness. And I don't think your question here is terrible when you say, am I causing him harm socially? Am I contributing more to his depression? Am I making it worse? It's not a terrible question. It's just hard to answer because we don't know. How could we possibly know?

If we don't have a crystal ball or something, then we have no way of knowing if you restricting the time he spends with certain friends, for example, that's one of the examples you gave me, is that making his depression worse? Is that contributing to depression? Or is that the right thing because these friends seem to not be ideal influences in his life? How do we know? We don't. And so then it just actually creates more uncertainty, more worry, more fear. So it's probably not the most useful question if there's not a pretty obvious way to find out the answer. Okay?

So what might be a more useful question might be, what feels like me being the mom, best possible mom I can be? What feels like the right

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decision to me right now as his mom? What's the decision I'm going to make? I don't know if it's the right decision. It might be that we get down the road and a therapist tells me, you probably made his depression worse by not letting him be with those friends. And even then, we don't know if that's true or not. That might be somebody's opinion. These are unknowable questions.

So what I want to ask myself is what feels like the right thing to do? And then how do I go all in on that decision? And how do I provide myself the support that I need to believe in myself so that I do the best possible job of making the decision right? And how do I also support my son? How do I want to be there for him through this? Who do I want to be? Not who is my son going to be? I'm not saying that's totally irrelevant. Like we consider our children and how our decisions are impacting them, but you're already doing that part. What you need to do now is redirect to who do I want to be? What feels like me being the best possible version of me?

Now, I got to tell you something, my friend. The best possible version of you is not always a great mom. Just like the best possible version of me is not either. None of us are perfect at being moms. So the best possible version of both you and I as a mom is going to do a lot of things that serve our kids well and some things that don't, some things that even contribute to their problems. We're not doing it on purpose, right? But that's the reality. We are meant to be both a blessing and a trial in our kids' lives. Everybody hear that?

You are meant to support and love and provide for and help and all these things for your kids. And you're going to be, at least in their minds, some of the reason that they struggle and have limitations, limiting beliefs even or whatever else going on, trauma even. Yeah, because of you. You're not trying to do that. It's just that you're not a perfect being. You're not a robot. You're a human being in human form making mistakes. Okay?

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So, all we're doing is trying to operate at our best. And then we stop asking, is this causing him harm or not? Because - and back to what I said in the beginning of everyone's having the experience they're supposed to.

Sometimes I have to remind myself, hey, listen, this feels like the right decision to make. This feels like me being the best mom I can be. I hope it's going to serve my kid best. It feels like the thing that will, but I don't know in the end. So if down the road at some point, I decide that was wrong, then what I have to remember is maybe my kid is supposed to struggle in that way then.

And if I wasn't the creator of that challenge, maybe someone or something else would have offered it to them instead at this time in their lives or later in their lives or whatever. But they're supposed to have this challenge apparently because they do. I know that's a thought that not everybody likes. If it doesn't bring you some level of peace and get you back focused on what you can control, which is yourself, then you can feel free to reject it.

But for me, it's been very powerful. Like, I am not supposed to control all the things outside of me, and people are supposed to have whatever trials and struggles they're having. I don't mean supposed to like they deserve it or something like that. I just mean that's the way of it. Apparently that was supposed to happen because it's happening, because it did happen. And I want to bring love and abundance and support and faith and trust and love to all the people that I love, but I have to bring that to me first. I have to. I cannot offer it to people beyond what I'm able to give it to myself.

So, last thing I want to say to you, the second part of your question where you're frustrated that he doesn't have a job, you're worried he's falling behind, he's not going to be self-sufficient, he's not going to have money for college. That's all what I call dirty pain that I would definitely clean up. There's some clean pain here when we see our children struggling, but there's a lot of dirty pain here. There's no reason to be frustrated with your

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son. Okay? When we're frustrated with our kids, we're basically punishing ourselves for their what we're calling, "bad behavior." Okay?

So your son not getting a job, you can have expectations. You can say, you need to have a job by this date and if you don't, this is the consequence. And you can do your best to enforce that. But if he doesn't do that, your job is to follow through on consequences, or you can decide, I really want him to have a job, but I don't want to have a severe consequence that I implement that would motivate him. So I'm just going to not be mad about him not having a job because it seems like he's not motivated to get a job. He doesn't want to get a job. He's not motivated by making money or he, whatever is going on for him.

So you either can show up and be the mom you want to be and he still may or may not get a job. And then you either get to enforce the consequence or let it go, right? But we can't control our kids. Is he going to fall behind? This is such a terrible question, again, back to what I said about useful questions, because if you ask your brain, is he falling behind? Your brain's like, okay, got it. Go to work looking for proof that he's falling behind. That's what our brain's here. Is he not going to be self-sufficient? Okay, got it. I'll look out for proof that he's probably not going to be self-sufficient. That's all your brain is hearing. And it's going to start looking for it and it's going to find it, as we would with any person. Okay?

So instead, you are allowed to just decide he's going to be just fine. And I'm going to know what to do. I'm going to know when to push him when the time is right. And if we get to a certain point and I think I need to push him more, I will. Or maybe I want to push him more right now. I can, but I'm not going to be frustrated about his lack of follow through. Why would I want to punish me for him not following through? If you need to be looking down the road and letting him know, "Hey son, you're 16 years old and in a couple of years you're going to go away to college and just so you know, this is what we are or are not able to support you financially with for

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college. And the answer might be we're not going to be supporting you in college. You're going to need to take out student loans and support yourself. So you might want to start planning for that right now." If you need to have that conversation, great, do it.

Whatever conversations you need to be having, have them and be clear and up front with your child. But then, this is the hard part, you have to let them make their own decisions. And you get to again, have consequences if you want. But your frustration is all yours and you can let it go by just deciding this is not a problem. He's going to be fine. This makes perfect sense. He's a 16-year-old. He wants to just hang out. And if I'm not okay with that, I need to have a different expectation as a parent.

All right, thanks for your question. Let's go to the last one.

Whitney: Hi, Jody. This is Whitney. I absolutely love the podcast. I love the work that you do. I just think you do a phenomenal job. My question that I wanted to reach out and ask you is, over the years as I've learned more about the nervous system and especially processing our emotions, I have just been wondering if there's a way to be able to neutralize your emotions more than thinking that you have to fill your way through every single emotion throughout the day. I feel like for myself, as I neutralize my emotions or almost dismantle them, obviously, through feeling them, I do a much better job throughout the day of almost not even noticing that my emotions are there. So I just have that question for you and I hope you have a wonderful day.

Jody Moore: Hey there, Whitney. Thanks for your question. This is such an interesting topic, right? And we've had a lot more information, I feel like we've gotten from the people that study the brain and the nervous system and everything over the last 5 to 10 years. And I'm by no means an expert in it, but I have studied it a little bit and I've coached a lot on this. So let me tell you what I hear you saying and offer you some things to consider. So when you say, is there a way to neutralize our emotions? The answer is I

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don't know. Sorry. I don't know because that is playing in the thought line, right?

Like, some people would say, yeah, you can absolutely neutralize emotions. Here's how you do it. And others might be like, no, that's not what's happening. Here's what's happening instead. So I think if it's helpful for you in your experience, what I love that you're doing is you're playing with it. You're kind of paying attention to your emotions, you're playing with how you want to think about it.

So if for you, describing it as like, I know how to dismantle, you said, my emotions by feeling them a little bit, and then I'm less aware of them like I've neutralized them a little bit. If that helps you feel how you want to feel and operate how you want to operate in your life and it's serving you, then I'm all in. I'd be like, yeah, that's totally what you're doing. You're neutralizing them, you're dismantling them by feeling them, and then they don't like take over the rest of your day. Cool. And I think that could be a thing.

But what I hear you saying is that you're feeling them or I always call it processing them, but whatever words you want to use, and then they're not so powerful. They don't overtake you, which is exactly the point. So I always think of emotions as just chemicals in my body. They're hormones and chemicals that get released, I think by my internal organs at the direction of the brain. So, cortisol, adrenaline, right? These are some of the ones we hear about a lot. So those chemicals get released in my body and then they create a sensation in my body and maybe a pressure or a rush or an increase in heart rate or something like this. Body temperature can go up and down.

Again, if it's really strong, we might have sweating, we might have tears. So these chemicals give us a sort of physical experience, if you will, of what we're thinking. And so if you are open to them, as you clearly are because you're you're paying attention to this, you're experimenting with it, you're

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opening up to it, you're not going, oh no, no, no, no, what is this? I don't want to feel this way. I got to get rid of this. I shouldn't be thinking this or I shouldn't be whatever. What's the matter with me? I got to hide. I got to push this away. I need to eat food. I need to whatever it is that you do to distract from it. If you just open up to it, then those chemicals, your body processes them. Your body knows what to do with them. And they eventually settle down.

And that is why throughout the rest of the day, it doesn't mean that you don't still have the thoughts, the thoughts are sort of coming up a little bit, but they're less urgent in my experience because I sort of acknowledge them, right? I acknowledge the emotion, which acknowledges the thoughts and then they're still kind of there a little bit because I still believe some of them, but they're not so urgent like, hey, pay attention. And so I have that same experience as you where it's like, I have emotions, but they're just not really a problem, is what I hear you saying. They're not so demanding. I don't have to let it throw my day off. I can do the things I want to do and still have emotions, even if they're negative ones.

So, again, that's the way I think about it for me in terms of what happens with emotions. It really is kind of mind blowing how much just allowing emotions, processing them, feeling them, whatever you want to call it, takes the edge off them, and then they do become sort of like what you're describing here as neutral.

You asked about the nervous system, and I took a really intense class on the nervous system a couple of years ago. But again, I'm not an expert on it, but here's one of the things that stood out to me that I'll offer to you, is that the instructor kind of described it as we have a comfort zone, right, a zone of comfort in which the emotions aren't super strong. It doesn't mean we're not feeling emotions, but they're not so emergent and they're not so powerful that they throw us into fight or flight.

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And depending on what's going on, if you have lots of trauma or you've resisted a lot of emotion, then your zone of comfort might be really narrow. It might be pretty small. And on the other hand, the more you do this work of healing yourself, of allowing emotions, of even working on your thoughts and reframing, sometimes it does require therapy or clinical intervention to do some trauma healing and things, but not always. The more you do that kind of work, then the wider your zone of comfort becomes. And you have a big range you can live within that doesn't send you into fight or flight, even though you're still feeling some emotions.

And so I do think that's a pretty empowering thing to experience as you widen your zone of comfort. And I do know a lot of people that have done a lot of work to broaden that zone of comfort, myself included, but some people that have I've seen go through much more severe trauma than I have who've been able to do that work. So, it's kind of interesting.

All right. So, that's what I got for you guys today. Thanks again for your questions. Again, if you have a question for me, call it into 1-888-HI-JODY-M, Jody with a Y, M as in Moore. I'd love to answer your question on a future episode and otherwise, thanks for joining me today, everyone. I'll see you next time. Bye-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.