

540: Family Holiday Survival Guide



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

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Here we go, head first into the holidays. And that means a lot of great things that a lot of us look forward to, but it also can mean some challenging things. Today we're going to talk about one such thing. I'm going to talk about how to spend time with people who you find it difficult to be around. Maybe they're your family members, maybe they're in-laws, but here we go. This is the time when it's hard to avoid them. But guess what? It doesn't have to derail your experience. And in fact, it can be an amazing opportunity for personal growth and closer connection. Let's dive in.

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.

What's happening, everybody? Happy Thanksgiving. Happy holidays. I am just returning from a trip to Europe that was amazing. It was my first time going to Europe. We went to London, Paris, Barcelona, where else? Marseille, Cagliari, Naples, Rome. I got to go to the temple in London and Paris and Rome. I got to spend time with some good friends and my

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husband. I got to meet some new friends. It was amazing. I'm feeling very blessed and very fortunate that we got to do that. I did post a reel on my Instagram if you want to go see some highlights from my trip.

I'm also really looking forward to Thanksgiving, to having my college kids home, seeing some family, having some downtime. But I know that is not always the sentiment that we share at this time of year. I know some of you are headed to family gatherings that you're not looking forward to as much, or maybe you're even dreading. And that's what I want to help you with today as your life coach. I've got you, okay?

So, I'm going to review a couple of basic things, and then I'm going to give you some more advanced things to consider. If you've heard me talk about this topic before, make sure you listen to the end because I have kind of some new things that I've noticed are patterns as I'm coaching on this topic that I'm going to offer you today.

So, let me begin by reminding you that everything you're feeling and experiencing internally, meaning your emotions, are coming from your own mind, from the meaning that you're giving to the things happening outside of you. Other people do not have power over you. And I'm telling you this because this is the best news I could give you. You have the power over your own emotions because your emotions are created by your thoughts.

How do we know this is true? Well, if outside things could create our emotions, then we would all feel the same feelings in any given outside circumstance. So for example, if somebody says to me, you're so extra, okay? I might laugh and be amused by it. If somebody says to my son, you're so extra, he might be offended by it because he has an understanding or gives that saying meaning that I may or may not be giving it. Or vice versa, maybe I'm offended and maybe my son laughs at it, okay?

So, those words, even that person's opinion, that person's judgment of me or my child or whoever the person is, their judgment doesn't make us feel anything, our interpretation of it does. What we make it mean, what we are

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predicting about what this means for our future, what we make it mean about who we are, about the world in general, about our value or our goodness, about our success in whatever it is that we happen to be caring about at the time. And inclusiveness and fitting in with others is a basic human need, so that's going to come into play.

So there's a lot of factors, right, involved. But my point is, if that person's opinion or words made us feel something, we would all feel the same thing, and clearly we don't in different situations. Maybe you've had this happen with your spouse where something happens that your spouse is really worried about and you're not bothered by it at all. I see this with couples in cars, right? Sometimes one person tends more to get upset and frustrated at another driver than the other person.

Or maybe you're the one worried about something going on with a child or a distant family member and your spouse is more laid back and doesn't seem worried about it. This is just proof that what creates our emotions is the meaning that we give to the outside thing, which we call the circumstance, right? The other person, their opinion, their words, etc. It's not the person themselves.

So, this is important to understand because if you don't understand this, your brain will give lots of power to things that are outside of your control, namely other people, other people's behavior, other people's opinions, other people's words. Those things are not up to you to control. And this is why we sometimes turn into crazy people trying to manipulate the people around us. That is not a recipe for a peaceful life.

So, what you want to do is redirect yourself away from the emphasis on becoming aware of the other person and become more aware of yourself. Okay? It is natural to spin on what they said, what they did, especially when we disapprove of their behavior. We become a little bit more fixated on it. Can you believe she would say that? Can you believe he would behave this way? It's very tempting to indulge in conversations where we are talking to other people, sharing stories of people's bad behavior, especially if the

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person we're talking to is someone who knows this other person and interacts with them and shares our same opinion. Then we can feel validated, we can connect with one another over our shared judgment of this person. It's a very tempting, very human thing to do.

And what I want you to do is to simply decide, I'm going to spend less time on that. I don't mean that you have to be completely unaware of other people or lose your humanness, but like, what if I spent less time observing and processing and analyzing and thinking about them, and I spent more time observing, processing, analyzing, and thinking about my own self, my own internal experience? What am I making it mean? And where did I get the idea that this is the best way to behave?

Now, this starts to shift us into the second thing I want you to do, okay? As you become more aware of yourself, less aware of them, and then you decide to understand and recognize that all of our opinions and stories about how people should be are just made up. Okay? Now that doesn't mean you have to let go of your opinions. I just want you to loosen your grip on the idea that this is just the right way to be. People should or shouldn't behave in certain ways.

Let me give you an example. Sometimes I'll be coaching a client who says something like, "Well, this person's just really direct. They say whatever's on their mind and it can be really offensive and it can come across abrupt or harsh." And another person might say to me, "This person doesn't know how to communicate and they just bottle everything up or they shut down and they're hard to read and they're passive aggressive. So they say one thing, but they mean another." Notice how these two people are describing opposite behaviors, and both of them are describing them in such a way that we'd be like, yeah, that's not good. Shouldn't behave that way, right?

But what they're doing is making a case, and we could make the alternative case. To the first person we could say, well, maybe it's healthy to actually speak up for what's on your mind and to be straightforward and honest. And to the other person we might say, maybe it's appropriate to censor

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yourself and to not be unkind. And maybe that's what they're trying to do. So it's all in how we spin it. And we all do this. Every healthy human being on planet earth is spinning the story to fit their worldview, to make themselves right, and to justify why they're right. That's what we do.

And it's okay that we do this, but if you're feeling a lot of misery, if you're suffering and you're committed to your story that this other person in your family is wrong, you're going to just continue to punish yourself. It's not controlling the other person. It's likely not changing their behavior. It's not even influencing them in a positive way. It's probably not even making you show up as the version of yourself you want to be. It's simply punishing you.

So again, it doesn't mean you have to let go of your opinion, let go of your story. But if you just decide this is just a story, this is my worldview, this is what I believe about how people should be. I picked it up from wherever I picked it up from, and I don't even have to be wrong about it. I just want to acknowledge that obviously this other person who's not behaving this way doesn't view it that way. They don't share the same worldview I do. Okay, interesting. Doesn't mean I'm wrong, doesn't mean they're wrong. We just have different ideas about how to behave in a situation like this. Maybe the other person even would, you know, if they were calm and rational, agree with you that they're not behaving at their best, but they weren't capable of it at the time. They weren't able to behave in the way that they wanted to.

And again, what I make it mean is going to create what I'm going to feel in the end. If I make it mean something personal about me, I will feel hurt. Other people can't hurt me. My interpretation that it means something about my value or worth is what hurts, or that it means I'm in some kind of potential risk or danger. That's what feels bad.

Okay, now, here's the next layer. Remember I said, if you've heard me talk about this before, stay tuned. So when I teach people that, often, if they go and they try it out, and by try it out, I mean, you allow yourself to be around the person and you spend a lot of time noticing your own thinking, noticing

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your own interpretation and meaning making that you're giving to their behavior. And you just be curious about it, and you become more aware of it than you are of their behavior. That's a great first step. But what I see happen sometimes is then y'all go from judging the other person to judging yourself.

And then you come to me saying, "I want to behave better. I noticed that I made it mean something personal and I hurt my own feelings, and then I showed up defensive or I just shut down or I withdrew or maybe I lashed out and I reacted back. And I became the same, you know, negative version of myself that I was judging them of being in the first place. And I don't want to do that, Jody. So how am I going to show up as my best self?"

And that is a sentence that I've said a lot of times. How do I show up as my best self? Because how we show up is within our control. How other people show up is not. So it can be a useful thing to focus on. But, this is a big but. Are you ready? If you find it challenging to do and you can't do it, and then you're frustrated with yourself, then you're simply going from judging the other person to now judging yourself. So you're still stuck in a space of judgment. And this is not useful either, my friend.

I'm not suggesting that we would stop blaming other people for our emotions and then start blaming ourselves for our emotions. That is not what I want you to do because that doesn't work. I call it the shame-blame trap. Because shame is what's wrong with me, blame being what's wrong with them. And the way out of this trap, the way into peace and actually eventually showing up how you want to, is just to make peace with where you are right now.

So, you may not show up as your best, especially in the beginning. You may not feel even as ideal and peaceful and loving as you want to feel. You may feel frustrated. You may feel hurt. You may feel defensive. You may feel all the same feelings you've been feeling, but the key is to give yourself the credit for them, but not blame yourself for them. Those two things are very different, okay? Blame sounds like, "Ah, I know I'm taking this

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personal and I shouldn't. I should just let it go. I should know that this is about her. This isn't even about me," or, you know, whatever. It sounds like that. It sounds like shoulds and shouldn'ts about yourself instead of shoulds and shouldn'ts about the other people.

What I want you to do instead is to just be fascinated and curious and really compassionate with yourself. What you need the most when you're upset, you're feeling hurt, you're feeling frustrated, you're feeling defensive, you're feeling afraid, whatever negative emotion you're feeling, what do you need the most from yourself in that moment? It's not your judgment. It's not your criticism about how you've done it wrong. It's your own compassion, your own patience, your own love, your own curiosity.

So awareness doesn't have to equal judgment. It's just a choice you're going to have to make, though, to let go of the judgment part. So it sounds more like this, "Oh, I see what I'm doing there. I see what I made that mean. Huh, okay, interesting." So my mom said, whatever it is that your mom said, right? She said those words. I made it mean this about myself or about her or about my life or about my childhood or my past or my future or whatever. I made it mean that she shouldn't behave that way or that if I were better in some way, you know, she wouldn't be judging me like this, etc. You'd figure out what you're making it mean, right? And you go, "Huh, interesting. That's curious. I see what happened there. I see why I'm feeling hurt. I see why I'm feeling defensive. Makes sense." Because if I interpret her behavior to mean these things, I'm going to feel that way. That makes sense. Huh, how very human of me. How very understandable.

Okay? And that's it. And people say to me, okay, but then how do I show up around my mom? And I'm like, I don't know. How do you show up? And they say, well, sometimes I shut down. Sometimes I get defensive. Sometimes I don't know what to say, or I cry, or I just leave the room, or whatever. And I'm like, okay, all of those sound pretty understandable to me. If you're feeling frustrated, scared, hurt, etc., defensive, then it makes sense to me that you would show up that way. So again, what if you offered

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yourself a lot of compassion and support and love and went, okay, hon, I see why you shut down there. I see why you didn't know what to say or why you said that thing that maybe later on you wish you hadn't said. It makes sense because of how you were feeling, because of what you were thinking. That's what you did there. Okay, it's all right. I got you. I love you. You're a human being. This is how human beings behave.

Now, what are you afraid will happen if you do that? Are you afraid that you'll stay stuck in this behavior forever? Because I promise you, you won't. The awareness of it shifts things immediately. And I don't mean it's an immediate shift. Maybe it takes some time. Maybe you need to be aware and compassionate and embrace where you're at for a while before you start to see shifts. But you will see shifts.

If you just decide, here's the simplest way I can sum this all up, is you make the decision to stop judging anyone as doing it wrong. Now, this is a courageous decision. Don't get me wrong. But if you just decide, all right, I'm going to try on the idea that nobody at my family gathering is doing anything wrong, including me. We're not wrong for seeing the world the way we do, for feeling the way we do, for behaving the way we do. We're just human beings having human experiences. And I'm just going to be fascinated and curious about myself. I'm going to choose my thoughts and my feelings and my actions when I can, because there are a lot of times when you can, my friends. Don't get me wrong. But when I can't or I don't in that moment and I thought I was going to be able to, I'm going to be nothing but compassionate towards myself. I'm going to remain curious and open and compassionate. I'm done judging people.

Now, this might mean boundaries. For those of you that have a situation where you are in danger of some kind, physical danger, emotional danger, what have you, or you just decide that's where I draw the line. Now I remove myself from this situation. Absolutely 100%, you're allowed to have boundaries. Okay? But you don't have to judge people to have boundaries. Did you know this? You could decide for whatever reason, this person

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behaves in a way that I choose not to tolerate at times. And so I simply remove myself when that happens. You can have boundaries. Maybe you even need a boundary with yourself. If you know that you have a tendency to really lose your temper to the extent that's inappropriate for you to behave around people, maybe you need to remove yourself from a situation. You need to withdraw. You need to say, "I'm extremely emotional right now. I'm going to go for a walk or we'll discuss this later or what have you." Okay? All of that's appropriate at extremes.

But most of the time, we're not even dealing in those extremes. Most of the time, we're just talking about human beings having human behavior that we tend to prefer or not prefer, including yourself. And I want you to try being curious and compassionate because if you can do it for yourself, it will be so much easier to do it for the other people, the people in your family, the people that you're going to see over the holidays.

Now, I do want to speak to one other topic, which is politics, okay? Because we are in a situation that is more volatile than I've ever seen in my lifetime, anyway, when it comes to politics. So many emotions, so many thoughts, so many feelings come up around politics. And I'm going to be teaching a class for those of you that are in The Lab in the month of December, very beginning. So coming up in just a couple of weeks here, I'm going to teach a class on how to navigate family relationships where you have different political views because I do not believe that it needs to be scary. It doesn't need to be divisive. It doesn't even need to be a topic that you avoid if you either don't want to or can't. And I think it can be really good for us to learn how to navigate this topic.

And like I said, everything I've taught you today, if you can just be accepting of yourself and the experience you have and less fixated on, a little bit less judgmental of the people around you, you will create a space for honesty. Honesty is the way that we connect with one another. This is why we talk so much about authenticity, right? If we're telling the truth, we can sense it in one another. We also can sense when the other person is pretending or

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being passive aggressive or just outright lying. We're very good at reading each other, especially our family members that we know really well. So that is disconnecting because it feels unsafe to the brain to let down your guard, so we keep our guard up, and there's no opportunity for connection like that.

So telling the truth is the best way to connect. And telling the truth is really easy with somebody that you think behaves lovely, that happens to have a really similar worldview to your own. It's easy to do. It's the people that view the world so much more different than we do or who behave differently than we do or who just we don't even understand. Can you tell the truth with kindness and compassion?

So the truth might be, "I'm feeling really upset right now and so I don't think I want to keep talking about this topic because I might say something I regret." Or the truth might be, "I don't even know what I'm thinking right now. I'm just feeling so triggered and that's not your fault, but I need some time to process it before I can have this conversation." Sometimes that's the truth. Other times, the truth is something a little bit simpler and more specific around, "Hey, I have a hard time not taking it personally when this topic comes up or when you make these comments to me. And you're still allowed to, I'm just telling you this is my experience of it." Or maybe you're making a request of someone, right?

But when you own your emotions and you talk to people honestly about your experience, it's very connecting and it provides an opportunity anyway for more connection. Whether or not that other person meets you in that opportunity is to be determined, right? We don't get to control them. But I have found in my relationships in life that if I do my part to try to show up as best I can and when I don't, to keep the ownership of it and be compassionate with myself and not judge myself, but to simply become more aware, use it to become more aware of myself, then relationships become a lot easier to navigate because I get to feel good about the way I'm handling things. And you know, not everybody chooses to meet me

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there and I'm certainly not perfect at doing it. But I promise you that there's a lot of peace available to you when you just own your side of the street.

All right. So if you have specific situations, questions, challenges, you can always call into me at 1-877-ASK-JODY-M. That's Jody with a Y and M is in more. And I'd love to take your specific situations. You can also come to a free coaching call at JodyMoore.com/freecoaching anytime and learn a little bit more about how we dive into specific situations and really make this come alive in your life because I promise you, no matter what's going on in your family, no matter how difficult people might be around you, it does not have to disrupt your peace. And I want you to enjoy this holiday season.

All right, thanks for joining me today, everyone. Have a beautiful Thanksgiving and 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.