

555: Circumstances Are Neutral



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

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Did you know that every single thing that happens in the world, that people say, what people feel, what they think, what they do, the weather, what's going on in the government, what's happening in the school district, what your house looks like, what you look like, every single thing happening that we would call a circumstance, is neutral until we think thoughts about it. And understanding this will change your life. I know that sounds like an exaggeration. I promise you, it is not. We're going to dive into why that's true today. Welcome to *Better Than Happy: Circumstances Are Neutral*.

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.

Hey there, my friends. Welcome to the podcast. Thanks for joining me today. This is a really core concept that I've been talking about for many years, but I did a podcast years ago called *Circumstances Are Neutral*, and it's the one that people refer to the most often when they talk about first being introduced to the work that we're doing here and having this aha

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moment and realizing that they could never view the world the same. And so I went back and listened to that episode, but it's pretty old, and I decided I could do a little bit better job with it now after a few more years under my belt. So I was just going to re-release that old episode, but I decided to do a kind of updated version. It doesn't change the concept, but I'm going to try to bring in some more current examples and other insights and ideas that I've had as I've been working with this tool for such a long time.

Okay? So the concept basically says that circumstances, the way we want to define a circumstance is by thinking about things that are outside of us for the most part. Here's what I mean by that. Other people are circumstances. The world at large is a circumstance. Things that happen, material objects, other people's reactions or emotions, all of these things are circumstances. Now, when we go to define a circumstance, when we use it in coaching, our coaches with me know this, we want to just get the facts. Okay? We don't want to muddy up the circumstances with our opinions or our summaries or our interpretation of things.

So a circumstance is not, my husband is mad, because that's not very factual, right? Even if he says, I'm really mad right now, it's hard to really define that. We couldn't do a blood test and say, yes, he is positive for anger. We might be able to do brain scans or something or measure the chemical amount of cortisol in his body or something, but for the most part, we just want to keep it simple when we go to get circumstances.

So we might say something like, my husband said whatever words he said. And I might even let people add, he said it in a loud tone, his face looked angry and aggressive as he said it, right? We're trying to make it as factual as possible when we go to get a circumstance. A lot of times for the sake of convenience and summarizing, we say things like, my husband is just really a negative guy, or he has a lot of fear, or my husband's a great guy. He's a really hard worker. He's really fun and funny. None of these things are circumstances, okay? There is the reason I'm bringing this up, because that

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is your summary of your experience and your interpretation of your husband. Okay?

So when you think circumstances, I want you to think specific facts. And often we do this by just starting with a specific example. If somebody says to me, my husband is really grumpy, I say, okay, give me an example. And then they might say, yesterday he came home and he said this or he acted this way or whatever. And if they start generalizing again, like he always does this, I'm like, no, no, no, come back to the facts. What exactly did he say? Describe as best as you can the tone in which he said it. And then that's a circumstance, right? Even if again, there are 75 other examples we could come up with. We want to keep it really factual because the reason why is because showing your brain how neutral a circumstance is sets you free. It begins to empower you to create what you want.

Because if the circumstance is the problem and the circumstance is negative and the circumstance is to blame, then we have to try to control your husband. Very difficult to do. Have you noticed? We have to control things that are outside of our control if those things outside of our control are the problem, but those things are not the problem. They're not the root cause of the problem. The root cause is everything that happens afterwards. Okay? So we're going to dive into that in a little bit more detail. Let me start by talking about this word, trigger, right? We like to use this word nowadays in modern society for some reason. We say things like, that triggered me. I got triggered. It's a word that comes from clinical therapy and it can be useful at times in a therapeutic setting. But many people use it to actually disempower themselves by giving the credit to the circumstance.

If every time my sister says this certain thing to me, I get triggered, then that means my sister's the one who has the power over how I'm going to feel, what I'm going to experience. But the truth is, only guns have triggers, or other objects that have some kind of a mechanical release like that, right? You do not have a trigger button. You are just a human being with a

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human brain, and nobody else gets to control your brain unless you stop managing it yourself and let it just be at the effect of other people. Take the initial default thoughts that it offers you. That's what a trigger really is. A trigger is just a memorized immediate thought or set of thoughts. We might call them stories, beliefs, patterns, right? That get immediately released in the brain that then create emotions. Okay? So we all have these memorized thought patterns, memorized stories, habitual thoughts, if you will, okay? We all have them. Many of the ones we have serve us very well. They create great emotions that help us be who we want to be. They help us live the lives we want to live. And that's a very useful thing.

But sometimes we have picked up ones along the way that are not serving us. Okay? And your brain will try to default to memorized thoughts as much as possible. You know why? Your brain's trying to save energy, and just letting default thought patterns come up in the mind is a lot more efficient. It doesn't require any energy from you because you don't have to consciously choose it, right? So this is what we mean when we say triggered. Now, as these thought patterns come up, then our bodies create emotions as a result. These stories, these thoughts tell the body what chemicals or hormones to release and create, and that's what we call feelings. And that's why we start saying, every time my sister talks about this topic, I feel triggered. What we mean is, every time your sister talks about the topic, you have memorized thought patterns that create the feeling of whatever the feeling is, stress, anxiety, etc., shame, whatever. Okay?

So that's just good to know because it means we don't have to manipulate your sister. And by the way, I'm okay with you having boundaries anytime you want to. I'm okay with you deciding you're not going to hang around your sister or you're going to tell her if she talks about that topic, you choose to leave. That's one way to do it. Sometimes we can manage the circumstances that we expose ourselves to. And I'm all for you doing that. It's actually an important part, I think, of all of this work, okay, is to manage yourself and the circumstances that you expose yourself to.

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But sometimes it's unavoidable, right? Sometimes we end up in situations or circumstances that then we have thoughts about and then we create emotions about, okay? So knowing that the circumstance itself is neutral until we have a thought gives you back your power. It redirects you away from spinning in, why does my sister have to talk about that all the time? To, what do I want to intentionally think when she does? What is true for me, but just not my initial go-to thought pattern? What would create more of the emotion I want and less of the ones I don't want? What would empower me to show up in the way that I want to for myself or my sister in this situation? And again, that might mean you removing yourself from the circumstance, but it also can look like a whole bunch of other things.

So you have to begin by neutralizing things. That is different than making them positive. I'm not saying you should think positive about everything. There are many, many things that I want to think and feel negatively about. And so would you as my guess, okay? So what makes this challenging to do, first of all, is the lack of awareness. If you are not aware of the thinking patterns that come up so quickly, and if you're not aware that they're not just facts, they're not just your observation of what's true, they are in fact stories, beliefs, interpretations of circumstances. If you don't have that kind of awareness, you're not going to be able to do anything about it. You're going to think that you're just walking around experiencing the world. Instead of knowing what's true, which is that you are walking around creating your own experience of the world, which is entirely different.

Okay, the next thing that makes this challenging to do is that all of our brains want to be right about what we're thinking and believing. And that means we are constantly looking for proof that we're right. We're scanning for it, we're collecting examples of it, we're building a case for it. And so if you have a story or a belief or a pattern of thoughts that you've been thinking for any amount of time at all, you've been collecting proof that it's true. And so if you try to go, wait a second, it's not untrue, but it's also not true. It's just one way to interpret this circumstance. It's one possibility of how to think about it. And there are many others. Your brain initially will

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reject that because it's worked really, really hard to build a case for this one. And it has so many examples that you've filed away that it will say, no, this just is true. Remember? Remember all the proof we have? Okay? So that's going to make it difficult.

I want to go through with you today some examples of things that most people either just think are positive or think are negative. And I want to show you why they are actually just neutral. It's just an exercise. It's not to say that you shouldn't think positively or negatively about any of these things. That's not what this is about. It's just about an exercise to demonstrate to your brain how powerful you are in choosing the way you want to think about any circumstance. And more than anything, again, showing you the neutrality of circumstances. So let's start with some things that most people would say are positive. Let's say you get notice that you're getting a lump sum of money for some reason. Maybe it's like a relative left it for you, or it's money that you were owed from the IRS and they just realize and now they're paying you back or something like this. Okay? You're going to receive an unexpected big lump of money. Okay? Most of us would say, that's a very positive circumstance. I like that circumstance. I'll take that circumstance, okay? So let's just back up from it a little bit. Totally fine to think about it that way, but it is just neutral. It just is a thing that's happening.

It is, what is money anyway, right? Money is just paper or metal or gold or actually numbers in a computer. Money's just a placeholder for value. That's how I like to think about money. It's actually just a social construct. It's just a mental construct of like, this number represents a placeholder of value. I've created enough value to have this much money in some way, and now I have that placeholder of it and I can exchange it for something else that I find to be valuable at some point if I choose to, or I can just keep it there holding its place, or I can use it to create even more value, right, in other ways. But that's all money is.

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So I have some kind of value placeholder that's going to be put in my bank account, if you will. Okay? It just is a thing. Is it good to have a lot of money or is it bad? There are actually all kinds of opinions about this. Surprisingly, a lot of people have a lot of negative thoughts about people with money and that it's wrong to have too much for some reason. Sometimes I find myself thinking, oh, if I have too much money, am I going to have a target on my back? Am I going to be putting myself or my loved ones more at risk, right? I mean, there's just so many ways to think about getting more money. And that means getting more money is neutral. It is neutral until I think a thought about it. Interesting to notice, right?

How about new babies? I mean, come on. This is one that I talked about in the original episode, whatever it was, nine years ago when I recorded this. New babies. How could they not be amazing and positive and good? I mean, I like to think of them in positive ways, and I recommend that you do too. You totally get to, but they just are. It's just a spirit entering a body or whatever you believe about where human life comes from. And we are drawn to just the, I think divinity of that. But is it amazing and wonderful and beautiful that this baby has now come to Earth? Or is it also like, oh, hang on, baby. I'm sorry. It's going to be brace yourself. Like the human experience is amazing and beautiful, and it's also really hard, really challenging, right? And new babies coming into families, some people at times have very positive thoughts about that, and sometimes they're unexpected and not planned for and a lot of stress now. So again, think positively about any of these things that you want to, but just notice they are just neutral circumstances until we then add our story, our thoughts, our interpretation of them.

How about when your kid gets on the team that they tried out for? Your kid wants to be on a sports team, they try out and they make it. Is that a positive circumstance? I think some of these are easier to see than others, right? I think if you've had kids for very long or observed human beings in the world at all and thought about it, you know that yeah, that might be a great thing or maybe it's good for the kid to sometimes not make the team.

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To work really hard and not make it and then to figure out how to work through that kind of rejection or quote unquote failure and how to believe in themselves anyway and how to keep going. Like there can be pros and cons to either, right? Or maybe they get on that team and then they have a really bad experience or something tragic happens. Then we'd be like, oh, I wish they wouldn't have made that team.

So your kid making the team, it's great. It's fine to feel good about it. It's fine to have positive thoughts. I'm just saying it actually is neutral. We don't know if that's going to work to their detriment or their benefit. And odds are, it's going to be some of both, whether they make the team or don't make the team, whether they get good grades or don't get good grades, whether they make the decisions you think they should be making with their lives, or they make totally different ones. There are pros and cons to any circumstance.

And we think we're so smart. We think we know what would be best, what's going to be easiest, what would be ideal, what's good news and what's bad news. But how often are we wrong? So much. We're wrong so much of the time, right? So let's think about this for a minute. Let's think about some of the things that maybe people initially think are negative. And let's just notice that they are neutral, that they could be good or bad. They can they have pros and cons, that we get to shape the way we're going to think about any circumstance. And so let's look at some of these. We talked about maybe your kid not making the team, but what about if your kid has an eating disorder or has an addiction of some sort or has some other kind of what you would call a bad habit? Okay? Is that negative? Is that positive? Or is that just a complicated thing that has pros and cons and might be an experience that they need to be having, that they are going to be able to work through or not, and either way, it's going to create the exact life they're going to have they're supposed to have, right?

What if your kid is angry at you? This is when I coach on all the time. Nobody wants other people to be mad at them. Listen, I got to tell you

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something. People are going to be mad at you. People are going to be frustrated with you. People aren't going to like you at times. The sooner you embrace that, the more awesome your life gets. Okay? Sometimes people might be angry at you, even people that you love and you care about. So that is neutral until you think a thought, oh no, what am I going to do to make them calm down? I don't want them to be mad at me. It sounds like such a reasonable thought, but it makes it negative. And then you have someone mad at you and you're mad that they're mad at you. Now we've just doubled up on the anger, right?

Or you're afraid of them being mad at you. Now we have somebody angry and somebody in fear. But it's neither good nor bad when somebody's mad at you. I'm not saying it's a beautiful thing. I'm not saying it's okay even. I'm just saying it just is neutral. It's a person having thoughts that create their emotions. And maybe they act out on those emotions and you're very aware of them. Maybe they hide them and push them away, but you can just sense them. Maybe you don't even know about it, but you just have a guess. It's still neutral. Somebody having thoughts that creates their emotions is a neutral thing until you add meaning to it, until you make predictions about what this means for you and what it means about your past and what it means about your future, etc. Okay?

How about the results in your business? I see entrepreneurs, when I'm working with entrepreneurs, do this where they're like, this thing isn't converting. My webinar didn't convert, my people aren't opening my emails, my email open rates are low, my whatever. I mean, like so many things that they tell me as though they're like, so this is a problem, right? What are we going to do about this? And I'm like, well, first of all, what's your story about this? Because if your story is that didn't convert well, let's just call it a launch. My launch didn't convert well. Then first of all, that's not a fact. That's not a circumstance. Okay? Circumstance would just be the numbers. This many people enrolled in my launch, this many people took whatever steps you wanted them to take. Even if the number is zero. Zero people took the steps or zero people enrolled in the launch. I put out a launch, zero

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people enrolled in the world. Okay, those are circumstances. It didn't convert is a thought that for most entrepreneurs does not feel very good, right? But I put something out and zero people signed up for it. Did you know that's neutral?

I'm going to give you an example. So I remember I had a client years ago who said, I think I want to change my coaching business. I don't want to do one on one coaching anymore and I don't want to do all the Zoom coaching. I just want to do live events. I love doing them. People get so much out of them. They're very transformative. It's where I thrive. I think I'm going to transition and just do all live events. And I'm going to start with like, I think they were going to do three big live events per year and they were going to go all in on selling them and that was going to be their whole business. And so they put the first one out there and they tried to sell it and they didn't get very many people signing up for it. They only got a few and they were really disappointed. Like that was the circumstance. I put out my live event, I don't know, let's just call it five people signed up for it. I need to have 100 to make the kind of money I need to make in my business, right?

And they thought that was so negative. And you know what happened right after that? COVID hit. COVID hit. And so this person had kept on running their business the way they had, right? With online coaching and Zoom and things like that. And when COVID hit and the world shut down, I remember this client and I having this conversation where we were like, oh my gosh, what if we had shut down all the rest of your business thinking all we were going to do is live stuff, we would be in such a mess right now. And we'd have to figure out how to pivot. Thank goodness nobody signed up for those live events and we kept going with your Zoom, your online stuff, right?

This is all I'm saying. We think we know what's going to happen in the future. We think we know what's good and bad. We don't. It's neutral until we bring our thinking to it, until we bring our predictions. And here's the key. What we're thinking is creating how we feel and that's driving everything

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else. So if I feel discouraged about my business, guess how I show up for my business? Not very well. I don't work very hard. I don't have very many creative ideas. My energy that I'm bringing is desperate and discouraged. So I have to try to fake it and pretend. It's just not ideal. If I just can even neutralize things a little bit more, recognize that it is neutral to begin with. I don't know if this is good news or bad news. It's just is the news that we have for today. Then I can show up better and differently and I can create more of what I want.

Your body is neutral, my friend. The shape, size, weight, condition, everything else that your body is physically is neutral. We think we know what would be ideal in a body. We think we know the ideal weight. And people love to tell me, no, the doctor said I'm overweight. I'm like, that's the doctor's thought. Okay, that's the doctor's story. And he or she is supposed to have that story. That's how they're trained in medical school. They're given a little chart and it says if they don't fall in this category, then there's something wrong with their body. And that can be useful at times to look at that data, okay? I'm just saying you can walk around thinking there's something wrong with your body and it should be better or you can go, this is my body. Huh. Interesting.

Even if you want to change your body, even if you want to improve your health or lose weight or whatever you want to do, starting with neutralizing it is so empowering. Like, different cultures have different ideas about what shape and size bodies should be. And at different periods of time we've had different ideas about how long someone should live even, right? So just notice it's neutral until we add our stories.

Let's talk about something really obvious, like murder. That's what people love to say to me. Okay, Jodie, so you're saying murder is neutral? I'm like, yes, it is. Until you think thoughts about it. And many times the thoughts that I want to think if somebody gets murdered are a bunch of negative thoughts that give me negative emotions. But there are times when that's not the case, right? Like in the Book of Mormon, God commands Nephi to

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kill Laban so he can get the plates. I don't find myself thinking a bunch of negative thoughts about murder in that scenario. And when I'm watching movies and what I have decided are the good guys are killing off the bad guys, I find myself cheering them on. I find myself cheering on murder in that situation. Now, again, I get it. You're like, okay, well there's different, yeah, that's different. I'm just saying murder, even murder is neutral until we think thoughts about it.

And the reason I'm telling you this again is because I want to empower you, my friend. I want to set you free from feeling like a victim to your circumstances because you're not a victim to your circumstances. You are at the effect of your own brain. I promise you this is true 100% of the time. You are at the effect of your own brain. And if you can stop being so simple-minded, this is what tends to happen, is we're like, well, it's either good or bad. But guess what? Most things in life are not binary, and there are more than two options of how you can think about any circumstance. Let it be nuanced. Let it be complicated. Let yourself play with it. Let it take a minute to decide. Let yourself know that two things can be true at the same time. And I'm not talking about just thinking a positive thought about what you think is a negative circumstance. I'm talking about two things can be true at the same time.

For example, my child didn't make it onto their sports team, and I'm sad for them because I see them feeling disappointed and I want to feel sad about that. And also, this might be the best thing that ever happened to them. Okay? That is different. That's two things being true at the same time. That's different than they didn't make it on the sports team, but at least they tried out. At least they met somebody. I'm making the circumstance itself both negative and positive in that first example. You see it? This is disappointing. I'm sad for them, and this might be the best thing that ever happened to them. Okay, that's very different.

What I see a lot of you doing when you come on my calls, you're like, I know, I'm trying to remember this, but this sucks. I'm like, okay, you're

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trying to think of a positive thought about what you think is a negative circumstance, but first we just have to recognize the circumstances is never negative. It's just neutral. And then we get a lot more leverage over how we want to think about it.

All right, you guys, this is honestly work that has just expanded my life in so many ways. It's expanded my view of myself because I recognize that I am neutral. I'm neither amazing or awful. I just am this complicated mix of thoughts and feelings and behaviors, and I'm dynamic. I'm always changing and it's all neutral. And that's true for everything else in my life, all the people in my life, all the situations in my life, they're all neutral. And I get to think what I want about them. And I will say that 90% of the time, maybe even 95% of the time, I just let my brain decide on its own what it's going to think about things and it's fine.

But there's that 5 to 10% that makes a huge difference. And I go, wait a second, I get to think whatever I want to about this situation. What am I currently thinking and do I recognize that's not just my observation of what's true? And what do I want to think about this? What do you want to think, my friends, about what's going on at your kid's school, about what's going on in your family? What do you want to think about what's going on in our country, in the government, about the economy? What do you want to think about it? Because everybody's out there trying to tell you what to think about it.

They're trying to tell you this is good news and this is bad news. And then the opposing side will say, no, no, no, this is bad news and this is good news. And you're going to have whiplash and emotional fatigue if you just let the world tell you how to think about things. You're also going to have a lot of fear and anxiety and scarcity. But if you decide, wait a second, there's a lot of ways to think about this. And some things I want to think negatively about, but some things I want to think about in a way that serves me better.

That is not the same as thinking positively. It's the way that serves me. What will serve me better? Well, I don't know. How do I want to show up? If

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I want to show up with courage, I need to think a thought that creates courage. If I want to be brave, right? If I want to say difficult things, I need to find thoughts that generate courage for me. If I want to do something that my primitive brain doesn't want to do, then I need to think thoughts that generate commitment, right? These are not always positive feelings, but these are the kind of feelings that serve us. Sometimes we do want to feel positive about things, but many times I go, what would be the most useful emotion here? Would it be courage? Would it be curiosity? Would it be compassion? What would be more useful? That's the key.

All right, thanks for joining me today. I hope this episode really resonates for someone, and I will say it's a really good one to share with anybody who might be new to this work. And again, I say that because I hear that over and over again. I hear people say, I thought this was all just kind of silly or whatever until somebody sent me that episode called Circumstances Are Neutral. So I would invite you to share it if you know somebody that you think could benefit from it. And I thank you for doing so because it helps my podcast as well. Have a beautiful rest of your week 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.