

572: How to Take Criticism Like a Boss



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

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If you're going to continue to learn and grow and develop new skills and become new versions of you, which I hope is your life plan, then you might want to get some feedback sometimes. You might want somebody to, yes, point out what you're doing well, but even more importantly, show you where you might want to make adjustments, where you're falling short, where it could be better. So many people I notice really have a hard time receiving that kind of feedback. They take it so personally, they're embarrassed, they shut down, which doesn't help them in whatever they're trying to learn, but it also makes them avoid situations in the future where they may not be good at things. That's not going to create your best life. So we're not going to do that. I'm going to teach you today how to receive criticism like a boss. I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*. Let's go.

Welcome to *Better Than Happy*, the podcast where we apply all the tools of psychology, human behavior, and mindfulness to live our best lives, navigate challenges, and achieve our goals. I'm Jody Moore and I'll be your coach today. Let's do it.

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So I have a huge disclaimer I want to give as we dive into this episode where I'm going to talk to you about how to receive criticism in a way that not only feels better than what you may be doing right now, but also really supports your ultimate goal and what you desire. But my disclaimer is this: you don't ever have to receive anybody's criticism if you don't want to. I'm not saying that you should listen to somebody who wants to tell you all the

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things that they don't care for about you, all the things that they think that you should be doing differently. And I really want to emphasize this because I think that unfortunately, there are a lot of people in relationships maybe, for example, where somebody brings their baggage, their unhappiness, their dissatisfaction with life to this other person and says, "This is your fault and here's what I need you to do differently to make me happy."

And that is not what we're talking about here today, my friends, okay? I'm not talking about somebody dumping their unhappiness on you. I'm not talking about somebody gaslighting you or blaming you. I actually want you to have no tolerance for that at all. I want you to say, "Oh, you know what? This is about you, actually, and this is not about me." And anyway, there's lots of ways to navigate that. I'm not going to get into that today, but I just want to be clear that's not what I'm saying here, okay?

So if somebody is wanting to tell you why they're unhappy with you out of their own unhappiness and the purpose of their conversation is for them to feel better or get what they want out of life, then you get to decide if that's a useful conversation for you to engage in and how you're going to show up for it and all the other things that go along with that, okay? What I'm talking about here is when somebody is giving you feedback because you want it, because they want to help you and you have a desire to hear it because you want to change or grow or evolve or develop in some way. So it really is apparent by where the person's coming from. Are they coming from unhappiness or are they coming from a place of belief in you, positivity about you, seeing the potential in you of what's possible? Are they here for them or are they here for you? That's just a really important point to me to make. You have to navigate what's what and I can certainly help you with that as your coach if you're in one of my programs.

But what we're talking about today is the kind of criticism or feedback that you ask for. I will say also that sometimes there are gray areas and it might not be super obvious to tell. Like sometimes you might have clients or

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customers or something who want to give you feedback and they're unhappy and it's for their sake, but maybe you feel like there are times when you want to hear them out, okay? So again, not a black and white situation, but again, just a very important disclaimer as we dive into this topic.

So that said, I'm going to give you five things today that you can do, that you can incorporate, tools, resources, principles to consider that will help you to receive feedback in a way that doesn't shut you down. So I have a group of coaches I'm working with right now who are becoming certified coaches. I have a coach training program. We work together for seven to eight months. I run it once a year and it's one of the most fun things I get to do because it's an intimate group. So I really get to know these people well and I just grow to love them and they all grow to love each other and it's just a very fun, and powerful and transformative experience. They have massive insights as they really dive deep into these tools and learn to use them to coach others. So they're in the phase of their program right now where they are coaching clients. I give all of them clients to coach. They do lots of coaching and they self-assess on some of those calls and on some of them, my coaches or myself gives them some feedback to help them, okay?

So what we noticed the other day in class is that some of them are very open and able to hear and receive the feedback and some of them, they all want it. They're all trying to be open. They have great attitudes as far as I know. But for some of them, in their honesty, they've admitted that it's hard to hear someone point out maybe where they could be better or different. And it brings up a lot of emotion, right? And it makes you want to shut down. There's this part of your brain that says, "Uh-oh, somebody just saw some weakness in you. Somebody just saw something that you're not good at. You should hide. You shouldn't let people see that." Okay? And so what I want to talk to you about today is how to be the kind of person who is open to it, who receives it, who is able to hear it and go, "Oh, interesting. I hadn't thought of it that way before. Thanks for pointing that out. I think I'm

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going to try that." That's how we want to receive the kind of criticism we're talking about here, right?

Five things I'm going to give you that will help you to do that. Number one, be willing to be bad at things and notice what you make it mean. Okay? So, I had, again, somebody recently on a call say that one of her customers actually, she owns a business and one of her customers had accused her of not doing a good job at the service she was providing and the customer wanted to tell her all the things that she could do differently.

Now, my client, for whatever reason, felt like this customer actually kind of knew what she was talking about, right? And so I asked her, "Okay, so what did you make it mean? When this woman pointed out to you all the things you could do better or different, what did you make it mean?" She said, "That I'm not good at this." And I said, "Okay, what if that's true?" That's just a thought, but what if we decided that's true? What if, what if according to this woman and even according to your own standard, maybe I agree too. Maybe you're not good at this. What do you make that mean? What do you make that mean about yourself? Are you saying that you should be good at this? Because that's an interesting thing to notice. What if you gave yourself permission to be not good at things? You're not going to be good at everything.

Now, you might be thinking like, "Hold on, shouldn't she be good at whatever service it is that she's providing for her customer?" Well, I mean, ideally, that's where she's going to get to. That's where we want to go, right? But if she noticed a part of it, which, by the way, was only a small part, not that she wasn't good at any of it, but if she wasn't good at this one thing, then can you go, "Oh my gosh, you're right. I didn't even realize that I was dropping the ball in that way. Let's figure out a way to make sure you're taken care of. Here's how I'm going to compensate you for that, or here's what we're going to do to fill in the gaps. I appreciate, I hadn't even considered that," right?

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So you're not going to be good at everything, my friends. You're not. That's just the reality. You will get good at some things and there will be a whole new set of things you're not good at. So can you not make it mean something negative about you, which is what my client was doing, right? I shouldn't be doing this. I shouldn't be trying. There's something wrong with me, which makes no sense at all when we look at it with the logical brain. Of course, there are going to be things that you're not good at. So can you still try things and do things? We want to be honest, we want to be straightforward with people. We don't want to lie and pretend we are good at things or charge money for something if we don't think we should be charging money yet, but you sometimes have to start out being not good at it and don't make it mean something about your value or your worth or whether or not you have any right to be participating in that activity.

Okay? So what are you currently making it mean and what do you want to make it mean if it's true that in this way, you're not good at this thing? Make it mean something empowering. I like to make it mean, "Oh, look at me doing things I'm not good at. I'm so proud of me." Because I decided years ago that I want to do more things I'm not good at. You know why? Because that's how I get better at those things. So I don't just do anything I'm not good at. I do something I'm not good at that I think it would be awesome to be good at. Whether it is going to serve my family, serve myself in my personal goals, serve my clients in my business, or it just sounds fun.

I told my friend the other day that when I go on long drives, I used to sing along with my favorite songs and my favorite artist. And lately what I've been doing is going to YouTube and pulling up the karaoke version of whatever song and singing it by myself without the artist. You know why? I'm not good at singing. And I think it might be fun to be better at singing. So you know what I'm doing? I'm singing a lot because that's how I'm going to get better at it. Now, so far, I'm still just singing by myself in my car, but I don't know, maybe one day I'll take a voice lesson or maybe one day I'll sing somewhere in front of people and be not good at it. But if I, and again,

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this is just purely something that sounds fun. I love music and I think it would be cool to be able to sing better. That's it.

So you don't have to have a big agenda behind it, but I want to do more things that I'm not good at. So when somebody gives me the criticism and says, "Hey, I noticed in this way, you could do a better job or you've dropped the ball or you've fallen short," then what I make it mean is, "Look at me doing things I'm not good at. I'm so proud of me. Keep going. Good job." Okay, try it on, my friends. Be willing to be bad at things and make it mean something empowering, something connecting, not something negative that shuts you down.

Okay, number two. When you get this criticism, this again, invited negative feedback, I want you to welcome it openly. Now, welcoming it openly is the opposite of what our default brains think we should do. Our default brains for most of us go, "Oh, put your guard up, quick. Shut it down. Put a hand up. Stop it. We don't want to hear this stuff we're not good at for reasons we just talked about in number one," right? But instead of that, I want you to try welcoming it openly. So, again, this might be formal feedback, which then it's easier to do because you knew it was coming. But what if it's not?

What if it's your spouse saying, "Hey, would it be all right if I share with you?" Again, I'm not talking about a spouse attacking you and dumping their unhappiness on you. But, "Hey, can we have a conversation about the way we are handling this thing with the kids because I have some concerns and I just want to share how I'm feeling. What can we discuss it?" "Yeah, absolutely, let's discuss it." "Okay. Well, I noticed that you seem to react this way or that," right? They start giving you some useful, constructive criticism. The default is to get defensive, right? That's how we shut it down. We get defensive, we start justifying our side of the story, and we maybe then start accusing our spouse. Instead of that, go, "Tell me more. Say more about why you feel that way. Hmm, interesting."

Now, notice, I didn't say that you have to agree with it. To welcome it is not the same as agreeing with it. I usually need time to process. And because

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my defensive part of my primitive brain is trying to fire alarms and go, "This is dangerous," I know I'm not thinking entirely clearly in the moment. And so I give myself lots of time to think through it and process it before I'm going to say, "Yes, I agree, or no, I don't," and whatever I'm going to say next. So opening it is not either of those things. Excuse me, being open to it is not either of those things. It's just going, "Huh, interesting. Say more. Hmm, okay." And then sometimes I'll say, "I'm not sure how I feel about that yet. I'm not sure if I agree or disagree. I'm going to need to process that. Give me some time. I want to think through this. I want to think through how I feel about this. But what else? Is there anything more?" Notice how I'm even asking for more instead of shutting it down.

This is useful in your interaction with other people and your dynamics, but I even find that for me, it's much more empowering because it tells me you're not in danger here, Jody. This is not dangerous. You don't have to worry. You can be open to this and it helps me really engage and it also, like, creates a dynamic where we're not now fighting, right? So be open to it. I've even had, like, somebody at - I've told this story before, but at the end of a talk I gave somewhere, a woman came up to me and told me that she didn't think my outfit fit my body right. She didn't think I'd picked the right outfit, right?

So immediately my brain wants to be like, "What? What is happening? Why would you say that to someone?" And get all defensive and feel all insecure. Instead, I just said, "Oh my gosh, really? Say more. Tell me why. I want to hear. What is wrong about this fit on my body?" And, "What do you think I should be wearing?" She specifically didn't like the style of jeans I was wearing, right? And I said, "What kind of jeans do you think I should be wearing?" So, like, really be open to it. It doesn't mean I agreed with her. I didn't say necessarily, "You're right. Thanks for telling me that," or I didn't get defensive. I just said, "Oh my gosh, tell me more. Why do you feel this way?"

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Okay, so be open to it. Welcome it. Number three, take what you want and leave what you don't. You don't have to take anything they give you. Even if, like I was telling my coaches this, when we, when my coaches and I give you feedback on your coaching, we are simply trying to provide some insight for you because we've all got a lot more experience coaching than you have. So we're probably seeing some things that you may not be seeing. We're also an outsider, so we can see it from a different perspective. And that's all. That doesn't mean that the feedback that we give you is the right way to do it. You can take what you like and there might be things we give you that you're like, "No, I don't like that. I'm not going to coach that way. That's not me. That's not my personality or that doesn't feel right or I disagree with how you interpreted the client." Like, you are absolutely allowed to take what you want and leave what you don't.

And you can do that just on your own quietly. You can say, "Thanks so much." Like we talked about being open, right? I like to be very open, especially if my clients are giving me feedback or my husband or my children or somebody who I really care about their opinion, right? I will say, "Tell me more. Why do you feel that way? I want to hear it." And again, I might need time to process it, but at some point, I will take what I want and I will leave what I don't. And maybe I say to them, "Thanks so much for your feedback." And that's the end of it. Maybe I feel like it's appropriate to share with them this is what we're going to implement and this is what we're going to leave behind and here's why. That's a personal decision. It's case by case. It depends on the situation, right? But you get to take what you want and leave what you don't.

Another thing I like to do is if there's something someone's offered me that I'm not sure about, but I trust this person, I can see some of the logic, but I'm not sure it's right. I'm not sure it feels good to me. Then I just try it out. You can take some of it temporarily and try it out and see if you grow to like it and if it creates what you want. And maybe you keep it and maybe you discard it at some point. Isn't that a beautiful thing? Take what you want, leave what you don't.

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All right, let's talk about the fourth thing. The fourth thing is to remember that ultimately, you know what's best for you. You do. I really do believe that. Even if you're taking a class and you have somebody much more experienced and educated or smarter than you for whatever reason, you believe this person knows what I should do. I still don't think there's anyone who ultimately knows better what you should do than you. This applies to how you run your business. This applies to how you raise your children. This applies to how you should just be living your life, what food you should eat, what kind of exercise plan is going to be best for you, like, literally you know better than anyone else. You know why? You know you.

You know your strengths, you know your weaknesses, you know what is going to be long-lasting and more fun for you and what's going to be harder. And it's not about never doing hard things. It's just about how do we maximize you? How do we get more of what you want for you out of your life? You know who knows that? You do. You do. I don't know about you, but I've learned this the hard way because I don't want to have to pay attention to me and figure it out on my own. I don't want to have to trust my own decisions. I don't want to have to go through the trial and error that's going to be necessary. So I want an expert to tell me and I will still continue to ask experts for advice because that's where I get ideas. But what I know is that I'm the one who ultimately knows.

So maybe I want to know, how do I build muscle in my body? How do I change my body composition to increase muscle, decrease fat? I might go look up three or four people who I trust in the fitness industry and get their input and get their feedback and then try each of them out or try out, you know, starting with the one that sounds the most like me. But ultimately, I'm going to be the one who knows. It's my body. I am with me. I know what I can stick to. Again, I find this to be both empowering and disappointing because it seems like it would be so much easier if someone would just tell us, right? But they will. I tell people all the time how they should build their businesses. I tell people what I recommend all the time. And some people

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run with it and some go, "That wasn't for me." Totally fine. Ultimately, you're the one who knows.

Okay, let's go to the fifth and final thing I want you to consider. If you want to take criticism like a boss, you got to be in more rooms where there's criticism available. Okay? If you are the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room. If you are the best at what you do in that room, you're in the wrong room. Unless you're there because that's your business or you're the teacher or the coach or the client or excuse me, not the client, you're the teacher or the coach. There are times when that's the right room for you to be in. But that is not the room where you are going to grow and progress in most ways, right?

You want to be in the room, ideally, where you're the worst one at whatever you're working on in that room, right? You want to be in a room of people who are so much better at things than you if those are things that you want to be able to do, because that's how you're going to learn and grow. But most of us have this part of our primitive brains that thinks that's dangerous. You don't want to be the worst one in the room, because again, back to number one, if we make that mean something about our worth or about what other people are going to think of us or any of that other nonsense, that's going to feel dangerous to you.

But if you noticed that you are the least skilled one in the room, you're in the right room, right? Or at least not the best at it. You don't want to be the best if you're in that room in order to learn and grow and develop yourself. So be willing to be bad at it. Be willing to be the most improved. Be willing to be the one who's truly going to increase your skills by learning from all these other people and being around these other people and seeing how they're thinking and absorbing their energy and all of that, and that might mean you're the worst at it. Beautiful. I want you to applaud yourself for that when that happens because that's the kind of situation that will help you really, truly grow.

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All right, my friends, listen, I much prefer a compliment. I love it when people tell me that I did a great job and tell me what they love about what I did. I love to hear that. But I also really manage my mind and have practiced over and over again being comfortable being not good at things, being comfortable receiving criticism. Sometimes people give me feedback and I think that's a great idea. Thanks for telling me. Thanks for pointing that out. I actually hadn't seen that. And other times I say, "Thanks, I appreciate your input," and then I toss it aside because I disagree or it's just not something I care about or not something that I'm ever going to change.

So this isn't about people pleasing. This isn't about turning yourself into what everyone else wants you to be. It's just about receiving useful criticism and having engaging conversations when necessary. All right, thanks for joining me today, everybody. Again, make sure you're following the podcast. Please share it with a friend if you found it to be helpful. And I so appreciate your attention and time here today. I'll see you on another episode next week. Bye-bye.

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