592: Stop Overthinking



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jody Moore

592: Stop Overthinking

When somebody's really hanging on to the fear of being wrong, I will sometimes say, being right isn't going to be as good as you think it is. Because life will continue to happen. So if you create a business that's amazing, don't worry, market dynamics will change, something will happen. It's going to get hard again. There's no decision you can make that will set your business up permanently on easy mode. That doesn't exist.

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.

Hey friends, just a heads up that during the recording of today's episode, we had some tech things. We have totally compensated for it in the editing process of this video, but that's why certain parts are going to look a little bit different than you're used to. So excited for you to hear today's episode.

—

Jody: Okay, Mark Butler. Do you love the surprise that is our podcast episodes? I'm like, surprise, this is what we're talking about today.

Mark: You know I do.

Jody: I've wanted, this is something I hear commonly from people. They call it sometimes overthinking. They say, I'm an overthinker, or sometimes it's, and we're going to talk about some specific ways that, I have four ways this shows up in people's lives. I thought we could dive into, but sometimes it's, I'm just exhausted because I have so many thoughts all the time. Sometimes they'll talk more about how it shows up in their life, like I can't move forward, I can't make decisions, I can't whatever. But I thought it would be interesting to dive into this, this phenomenon of overthinking, which is, I don't know that's a real thing, but that's what I'm going to call it because I think that's what other people call it.

Mark: I'm excited because…

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Jody: Yeah, tell me your thoughts.

Mark: I mean, I tend toward, if we had to pick a direction we lean, I lean toward overthinking.

Jody: You think so?

Mark: Oh, absolutely. You've told...

Jody: I told you this?

Mark: I think you've said that I'm an overthinker before. I think you have called me an overthinker before, and I think it was fair. I, okay. I again, if we have to pick one, I don't underthink. I overthink.

Jody: Yeah. Don't you think though, and I think this is a good way to frame it, is I think it might be for most of us topic specific. Right? Like there may, and maybe certain personalities tend or whatever, tend towards it more than others. But I think there are certain areas of my life where I would call myself an overthinker and then there are other areas where I would definitely say I'm not. I'm just like, whatever, let's just, let's just go. So I think, don't you think it's a little bit topic specific?

Mark: Yes. And I can even think of examples in my own life as you're saying that, situations where I am a non thinker.

Jody: Like we were just, I was just commenting on nice choice of the black t-shirt again today, Mark.

Mark: Yep.

Jody: Do you think that's like, is clothing an area where you don't overthink? Would you say?

Mark: I don't overthink in clothing. Every once in a while, and I'm not exaggerating or being silly, I would say twice a year for some reason. Maybe I'll see a really well-dressed guy who's maybe about my age, and I'll

be like, I should dress a little better, or I should think more about that. And it usually doesn't take hold. And then I go back to black t-shirts.

Jody: Okay. So yeah, but that's not…

Mark: It does come up.

Jody: I mean, honestly, I do probably overthink my clothing. I probably spend more time than necessary putting on clothing and then changing various parts and then trying a belt and then no belt. And I'm sitting here, no one's going to see anything other than the top I'm wearing mostly throughout the day. So I think I do overthink with that, like certain areas. Other things I'm just like, what, who cares? Let's just pick one and go. So I think we, I think we could give people permission to not necessarily call themselves an overthinker.

Mark: Yeah.

Jody: I think you could decide maybe there's certain areas of my life where um, where I do that. And I also think it's important that we kind of preface that what is the appropriate amount of thinking about any particular topic is also up to the individual to decide. So even though I might say that's not worth thinking about that long, just make a decision and go. That's just for me personally, in my life, I choose not to put a lot of thought or time or effort into that thing. It doesn't mean anyone else should. And so I think for individuals, I was asking myself like, how do we know when we're overthinking versus what's the appropriate amount of thinking, especially as we get into the four topics I want, I broke it out to today. I'm like, what is the appropriate amount to think about that? And I'm like, there's no way we can know that. It's a personal decision. So I think you have to decide, is this causing fatigue or a lot of negative emotion for me that I don't like, or is it slowing down my progress? Like maybe I'm not taking action in a certain way. That's when we start going, maybe I'm overthinking this. Do you think that's a fair definition?

Mark: I really don't know if I could put it better actually.

Jody: Okay, good. That's my theory.

Mark: The way I would evaluate whether something is overthinking or underthinking in the other direction, would be the costs. Like how is it impacting other areas that we've said are important to us?

Jody: Exactly. And I could say that I can think of instances where I've underthought something as well. So, okay, well let's just dive in. Like I said, I went to the end all be all expert, Chat GPT. But I'm starting to learn like there's a lot of things I don't like using AI for, and then there's a handful of things that I'm like, actually, it is really useful for this. So I find that it's useful to get information about what people are saying, what words people use, how they describe a certain problem, how it shows up in their life. Then I don't have to take the time to comb everybody's blogs and comments and social media feeds and whatever. Like it kind of does like, I don't know how thorough or accurate it is, but it pulls in what feels to me like a pretty good summary of this is what people are saying about this topic.

So I did ask, how do people describe this overthinking? And it gave me a bunch of areas. I condensed it down into the four that I liked better. But the first area I thought would be interesting is overthinking about what we would now call mistakes from our past. And this one, I don't know if you hear this with your clients, but I hear it a lot with mine. Like, I just can't stop thinking about how if I would have made a different decision or done a better job in this way, or even not said that thing, the thing that I said. So it could be, past could be as recent as earlier in the day or the day before, or it could be years ago. Sometimes we just overthink things from our past. Right?

So let me give you like the kind of verbage it said people use just so we have some context here. People say things like, I beat myself up over things I did years ago. I keep thinking about how things could have been different. I know I can't change it, but I can't stop thinking about it. I hold on to things longer than I should. I can take one small mistake and use it to prove that I'm a failure. Right? So things like this about the past. Even

again, like I wish I hadn't, I think it broke it out like conversations into a separate thing. It's like I replay conversations in my head over and over again. Why did I say that? I sounded so stupid. I realize now what I should have said. I can relate to that one.

Mark: Yeah.

Jody: Like, oh yeah, I should have said this. I worry that they're really upset with me, etc. So let's talk about that. Do you ever find yourself in this camp at all, by the way? Or hear this from your clients?

Mark: The one that I do the most of from those that you've given so far is I will leave, I will leave social situations and or social situations that also have maybe have like a professional element to them, like a public speaking thing, or like a church speaking thing, or a church teaching thing or something. Or I'm in a meeting at church with other people with, you know, talking about all of our assignments or something. In these kinds of situations, I very often will leave those, and sometime in the next hour or two, have a little bit of, panic is way too strong a word. But it's like this thing will come up in me where, I was I was way too much in that meeting, or that was really rude. That's a big one for me, is looking back and thinking that I was rude or mean or disrespectful. And kind of having a little bit of a, what's a softer word than panic? Maybe a...

Jody: Like just a little regret or disappointment?

Mark: Or worry. It's more worry. It's worry like, oh, those people think I'm so annoying. They wish I would shut up. Could I just shut up? Like I will do that after social interactions or meetings, that kind of thing, yeah.

Jody: Oh, that's interesting. So it sounds like more kind of group social interactions, you're saying versus a one-on-one conversation.

Mark: Which is tend to be where I'll feel more anxious in those situations.

Jody: Really? Okay.

Mark: Not cripplingly. I like to be in those situations and I will look back on them and say, that was really fun. We should do that more often. And also, it'll come with kind of like, yeah, but dude, you've got to take it down a notch, and why did you say that?

Jody: So I'm curious, do you consider yourself someone who gets annoyed by people who dominate the conversation or are too much? Is it coming from like... your own preferences in a group dynamic?

Mark: Yeah. Not universally. Sometimes you can be, sometimes I can be in a group with somebody who is maybe loud or dominant, but for some reason, I'm entertained by them and I enjoy them. And I'm like, that person's a lot, and I really like hanging out with them in small doses. But to your point, there are times if I feel like somebody chronically dominates, I do not do well with that.

Jody: Yeah. Because I can relate to that as well. I think that I have sometimes judgment or irritation of people who sometimes do that. So then I can be critical of myself because I am a talker, definite, I'm a lot sometimes, and... I do a little bit of that, but I'm just surprised to hear you say that because I know you enjoy public speaking. You're a great speaker. You're a good teacher.

Mark: Thank you.

Jody: I think you know you're good at those things, right?

Mark: I do feel confident in those settings for the most part. So those tend to be the settings in which I have less anxiety and then less worry after the fact.

Jody: Okay.

Mark: It tends to be more small group social dynamics where I think I can feel more anxious and then with that anxiety more after the fact kind of worry.

Jody: My friend Alex Palos, who really is an expert in personalities, he says that there are people who are talk-ats and people who are talk-withs. Like more naturally dominant by nature. And, you know, he's like, you, Jody, are very obviously a talk-at, which I, it makes me feel terrible. I'm like, I don't want to just talk at people, I want to talk with. But his point is, if I'm going to give a talk or teach a lesson or something, even though a lesson would be interactive, I hope.

Mark: Yeah.

Jody: It's still I'm in control. I'm leading the conversation. I know where it's going to go. That's why for, you know, 10 years I've done a solo podcast because I can talk at. I'm comfortable with that. I have control over it. And it's actually more natural for me than the talk-with, where there's another person involved in the dynamic. And I have to sometimes hold myself back or let go of the control a little bit. And therefore, I become more vulnerable, and I don't always like how I show up from that place.

Mark: That's super interesting.

Jody: Anyway, kind of interesting.

Mark: I don't know if this resonates with you. I'm kind of projecting myself onto the same scenario, and I also tend to prefer more of a solo podcast, probably for similar reasons. I know what I want to say, I know how I want to say it. I'm excited to say it. I don't need or want a co-host. For me, and this is where I'm curious with you, maybe our collaboration is the proof, but if I hold the other person in high enough esteem, then that anxiety goes away for me where I will say, yeah, actually I would prefer to be talking with that person because I will be more interesting if they are present.

Jody: Yes. I would agree with that. But I still, in terms of my own self-reflection, will get off a podcast episode with you and be much more critical of myself than I would if I were just doing it on my own.

Mark: Interesting. Yeah.

Jody: Yeah, because I'll think, yeah, it's just, it's less scripted, if you will. And not that I script my solo episodes, but it is just a much more real and therefore vulnerable situation.

Mark: But it is. It is that.

Jody: Yeah. Anyway, I also tend to, I don't know, I'm not the kind of person who spends a lot of time ruminating in the past. And I'm going to talk about some of the strategies I've executed that we can offer to people here and I'd love to hear what you do too. But I don't overly obsess about little things, but I tend to do more of the big kind of grandiose blanket like, oh, I should have probably made my kids play more sports while they were growing up or be more involved in extracurricular things. I probably should have been tougher on them in some way or I should have pushed them outside their comfort zone more, right?

Like these kind of like vague blanket statements that I kind of know what I mean, but they're not very specific and they're they're like big like that was a good 15 to 20 year period of my life that I'm criticizing myself for. And I don't spend a long time ruminating on it, but if I am going to feel bad about something, it's usually like big like that as opposed to like that one time this thing happened and I said this and then this went wrong, you know.

Mark: I'm fascinated by this. Like I want to ask you about this because I think it's such a relatable experience. I'm curious if you have any awareness of the moments in which that feeling or that self-doubt, that question, is most likely to enter your mind and kind of start to dominate your consciousness for the next little while. Do you have any sense of that?

Jody: Yeah, it's when I'm listening to a friend or somebody I respect for some reason talk about the way they are with their kids. And I think back to, yeah, I didn't do that with. And I you know, I have two that are out of the house and two that are still very young. So I'm still really raising kids, but it's more with those older two that I'll think, you know, somebody for example will say, well, my son just, football season just ended. And so now

I'm saying to him, well, what are you going to do next? Because if you don't have an activity that you're in, you're just going to, I know you, you're going to sit around, you're going to be on your iPad, or you're going to play video games. So you got to find something. And then I'll think to myself, oh, yeah, I think that's the right way to do it. I probably should have done more of that with my two older kids. So it's not even like I'm looking at them now going, yeah, he's probably struggling or whatever, whatever, he's probably having this challenge because I didn't do it right. It's it's hearing someone else who's doing it in a way that I think that sounds like the right way to do it.

Mark: The right way.

Jody: And I didn't do that.

Mark: And when you do that, does it go beyond, I liked how you used the word vague. Does it go beyond the sort of vaguely defined self-criticism of, you know, I should have been generally more like this or generally more like that? Does it get into any more specifics? Does it does it become at any point a productive thought stream? Or does it just feel like, like what does it feel like when you do it?

Jody: With this one in particular, I really don't indulge it for very long. And that and that's what we'll talk about here in a minute, is because I don't find, I know very well intellectually that it's not a useful line of thinking. And I this is a line I'm constantly saying when I'm coaching clients, is like, well, we don't have a time machine. So unless you have one, what is the upside? Is there an upside? Like you're saying, like is there some interesting insight?

Because on the other hand, I do still have a fifth grader and a seventh grader, right? Who I could decide you need to be in a sport or you need to be in an activity. Maybe I want to enforce that now. So there could be some useful lessons. I find that those lessons though are usually so obvious that I don't need to spend a long time if they are really lessons I'm going to take, I don't need to spend a long time thinking about how I did it wrong in order to get the point. Um, and so, I don't know if that answered your question.

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Mark: That does answer my question. It's very relevant. Kate and I were just having a conversation yesterday and or the day before. We've kind of been in this conversation, because I get certain - things will come up in client conversations and I'll kind of grab on to them like a little bit of a dog with a bone and I'll start to think very hard at them. Sometimes I overthink. Think very hard about them.

One of the things that has come up lately for me is this exact idea about feeling regret or anxiety about the past. And I completely agree with you that there is so much indulgence available to us in just sitting there and ruminating and punching ourselves in the face. What I've noticed, I think, is that oftentimes people will attempt to self-soothe or soothe others by saying something like, well, I was just doing the best I could, or you were, but you are, you just you were doing the best you could. And I will confess to you that I think that is a completely useless sentence.

Jody: Yeah, say why.

Mark: I don't think there's any upside in this idea of doing the best I could or doing the best you could. Not because I want anyone to punish themselves, but because for all the hundreds and maybe thousands of times I've heard people say it, I don't think I've ever observed anyone feel better after they said it. It doesn't seem to deliver anything.

Jody: Do you think that they just don't genuinely believe it?

Mark: I don't think it's specific enough to be useful.

Jody: Okay.

Mark: So, I actually think there could be real power if a person is in a place where it feels like they wouldn't, uh, like collapse under the weight of the exercise because this thing could go the wrong direction. But I think there could be real power in saying starting with a should or a shouldn't. Oh, I should have done X or Y or Z. And then getting into a calm space in our head and saying, in what way is that actually true and useful? How might I

would have, if I did have a time machine, what would I actually do differently and what do I think I would get from having done that differently?

Jody: Okay.

Mark: Because if we can find anything in there, then we get to apply it today and going forward.

Jody: Okay.

Mark: If we can't find anything in there, then there would hopefully be some relief in saying, I've thought hard about it, I've considered how I was in that situation, given the information I had, I like how I acted. I would probably act that way again. And if that's true, then to whatever degree it's possible, we get to now lay that to rest and say, I've done the hard thinking about that. If there was repair to make with myself or with someone else, I'll make that repair. But if not, I don't have to keep thinking about this. It's done.

Jody: Okay. I love that. It actually goes along with the solution I kind of brainstormed for this.

Mark: Great. Let me hear it.

Jody: I think because if this overthinking and again, personal decision, how much do you want to think about the past? Like you're saying. I think there's some value actually to thinking through, would I do it differently or would I not? And I'm saying I don't spend very long there. I can't think of very many times when I've spent a long time there anyway and found it useful. But I think if you're overthinking about the past, the solution is to start thinking more about the present and the future instead of thinking about the past. And even if it's, and it would be in many cases around the same topic.

So if I'm going to spend a lot of time, one of my kids was a freshman in high school in 2020. Or, no, 2021 actually because, well yeah, 2020 to 2021 was his freshman year. So the year he was supposed to start high

school, we were all home on lockdown and then, you know, did some version of a little bit of school that whole year, right? And um, so that really like just triggered a bunch of like as a as a very introverted, socially anxious person anyway, it gave all of us a lot of excuses for him to like lean into that in a in a way that now I go, should I have pushed him more? Should I have not let him, you know, play it so safe?

So, back to my point, if I'm going to spend a lot of time thinking about what I could have done, even though it was COVID, what could I have done anyway or what could I have done the next year or what should I have done? And I don't have a time machine, I don't see the upside to that. But I could say, okay, so how old is that child now? And what is going on now? And are some of his challenges now a result of the way I raised him? Maybe. But for all I know, he would have had these challenges in a different version anyway. I don't really truly know for sure if doing it differently would have been better or worse. That's why I don't like to spend a lot of time arguing with the past because I don't actually, we think like, no, if I would have just done this, then probably this would have happened. I'm like, maybe, but how can we say for sure?

So instead of ruminating on the past, I like to go to the present. Well, what's going on with that kid now? What can I do right now? What kind of mom do I want to be to him now? Even if the kind of mom I want to be is to say, hey, listen son, I got to tell you something. I think I maybe dropped the ball in as your mom in some ways. And I don't know if that's true, but it's possible. And I'm sorry for that if so. But here's what I see now, here's what I would think we should do today, here's what I want to tell you, here's what I want to offer to you. And what can we do today in the present or create for the future? It's just so much more useful than spinning in the past.

Mark: I mean, honestly, on so many levels. Like what you just said, I think, I'm being a little bit dramatic, but I just think it's so important and inspirational. The idea that a parent would sit with their kid, especially their kid that's old enough to understand what's happening and to just say, hey,

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I'm looking at how I've been and I'm not happy with all the ways that I've been with you. And I want to point at a couple of things and I want to apologize where it's appropriate. And I want to talk about today and going forward. That models such healthy everything. Like self-esteem on your part, uh inter healthy relational interaction with another, it's pretty incredible. There's like, talk about a major upside. There's huge upside in that.

Jody: And I'll tell you what, it for me, it's actually really uncomfortable to do because I know it makes him uncomfortable because and it makes, I mean it's just uncomfortable anyway, right? Not, I don't know, I don't have a lot of pride around it, I don't think. I'm not afraid to admit I make tons of mistakes, but it's just vulnerable and I know that for him it feels vulnerable and so it is awkward and uncomfortable. But we're talking about a specific situation, but I think this is true with anything. If I'm looking back at the way I've been with my money in the past and feeling terrible about how I've managed my money, I can spend a lot of time feeling bad about that or I can go, okay, well what's the bank account say today? And what do we want to create for the future? And I'll tell you that is actually a lot more difficult for our brains to do. I always think of it as being the difference between like, let's watch an old movie or let's get a blank piece of paper and I'm going to say, go ahead and draw me anything you want to, Mark on this blank piece of paper.

Mark: Oh, that's a good exercise. I like that. I like that a lot.

Jody: People are like, I would much rather someone say draw me a house than just give me a blank piece of paper. Yeah. Right? But the future is a blank piece of paper. And so the brain's like, I don't I don't know, but let's think about the past maybe. That just feels easier.

Mark: Well, it is. Because you're just recalling, you're not just recalling things which are generally available to you just through your memory, but you're also recalling them using like the emotional wrapper that you're most accustomed to. So that is the easiest exercise there is. Nothing would be easier than to be like, tell me a story about when you didn't really like

yourself. I mean, every human being's going to be like, oh, well then in seventh grade. I mean, that's an easy exercise to do, painful but easy.

Jody: Yeah. Yeah.

Mark: But the blank piece of paper exercise is terrifying and difficult.

Jody: Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

Mark: I like it a lot.

Jody: So yeah, so that's what I think is the solution. And in a practical sense, you know, if you find that your brain just goes to this. This is what people say, I don't know how to stop it. I wake up at night thinking about it or it's constant, right? This chatter about what I did wrong, what I said wrong, what's what I should have done differently. I think even just having more hobbies. Like what is a pro, like create something, decide to build something. I don't care if you're going to put together a Lego set. You don't have to build something noble. And it maybe you do want to take a class or build a business or get a job or whatever. Great, if you want to do that. But I don't even think it has to be that. I think this is why people do puzzles. I'm always like Mahjong. Does Kate play Mahjong?

Mark: She is literally playing Mahjong right now.

Jody: Right now. I knew it. Okay, all these women are obsessed with Mahjong, which I think is great. I like to play Mahjong too, but not as much as most of my friends because I have this business that requires a lot of my brain and my creativity and strategic thinking.

Mark: Don't you just love the memes? All of these things are memes. They just make their way through.

Jody: Oh my gosh, the Reels are hilarious. And some of them you have to understand the game to even get. Some of the Reels I don't even, I kind of know the game, but there's still levels of the game I don't even know. It's very complicated and layered. I don't know and I'm not going.

But that's such a healthy thing because you get to try to solve a problem, you get to think strategically. You're, in essence, it's like I was, I love the idea that God created us and then he, he told us to go create things. He created us in his image. He's a creator and we're meant to create things. And even if that's playing a game, putting together a puzzle, it doesn't matter. That gets you out of the pas and into the present and into the future. So I always just say like, my sister and I always say this too, like if you don't have a problem to solve, your brain will just start making up problems.

Mark: Okay, I totally agree with that. I'm living proof of that. I think the one thing I would say about that scenario that you described is first of all, I agree with everything you just said. There's something about getting into a creative space that will loosen our grip on that negativity and dread and rumination. So I have no notes on that whatsoever. If a person is losing sleep and just feeling like crippled by regret about the past or something, I would also encourage that person to sit with a trusted other and try to find some truth in it.

Now here's why I say that. Because if you're feeling that much resistance to it, then it could be that there's a truth in there that you're scared of or that you think might actually kill you.

Jody: Okay.

Mark: And I'm I'm not really even being dramatic. I think our brains kind of do that. They can they can be like, no, no, no, but if you admit that or if you acknowledge that, then you'll actually die. But what we find is that if we can sift through the noise and find the truth, then especially if we're sitting in this with the support of somebody who loves us and wants to be with us in that process, then you'll find that the truth may have some pain in it. You may actually have to deal with something you haven't wanted to deal with. But that pain like all emotions, once it is felt, it starts to move through. And once it moves through, then it doesn't keep you awake at night in the same

way that it used to and you don't ruminate about it. So the rumination and the lost sleep could be resistance driven.

Jody: Yeah, true. Like not just allowing the processing of the disappointment or the regret or the whatever emotion.

Mark: Or the anger. Maybe and I don't say this lightly. There are people who may be avoiding things where they were harmed in some significant way.

Jody: Right, right.

Mark: And I am not trivializing that.

Jody: Right.

Mark: Get in a safe space with the right person and process that so that it stops being so present in your conscious and subconscious day and night.

Jody: And to wrap up this one, it reminds me of what you said in the beginning of just offering the thought like you did the best you could. And you said that you didn't find that to be a useful thought. I actually find so many times when I'm coaching clients that the most useful thought is, yeah, maybe it's true. You messed that up. And maybe that's okay, right? So it's like rather than and that's what everybody else offers them, "Well, no, you're a good mom. You were doing the best you could."

And I do think that is partially true. This is what I tell them is like more the 50/50 concept, like opposition in all things, right? It's like, we can acknowledge that, no, you're a good mom or you're a good dad. And also, sometimes you're not. Sometimes you fall short. You're not always doing your best. Sometimes you could have done it better, but that's kind of the way of it, right? Like it's you're a human being and maybe we make peace with like the negative part that there are things that you could have done better, et cetera.

Mark: Amen.

Jody: Because and like you said process the emotion of it if necessary. And once you do that, then you're in the opportunity to forgive.

Mark: And forgiveness always heals, including and especially forgiveness of self. So if I keep fighting with myself over whether I did it wrong or whether I'm a good dad or a good husband or whatever. If I stay in that fight, then I don't get the opportunity to say, I am a good dad and a good husband and that was a moment that I'm not happy with and I do not want to repeat. And now I can make repair, forgive myself and move on.

Jody: Yeah, so good. Okay, so the second one, a little bit, all of these a little bit overlap with each other. But the second area I thought was really relevant here was ruminating about what other people think of you. You touched on it a little bit when you said I come out of a meeting, a church meeting or whatever and think, I shouldn't have said that. Those people probably think I talk too much or I'm too much or whatever.

Mark: Yeah.

Jody: Here's kind of what the internet said it sounds like. I question what I do. I need other people's opinions. I assume I'm missing something. I feel like everyone else knows what they're doing except me. I read way too much into everything. If something seems off, I immediately assume it's something I did. I analyze people's tone, facial expression. I need reassurance that everything's okay. You know, we're not therapists, so I want to be clear about that. But I did listen the other night when I woke up at my normal 3:00 a.m. and couldn't sleep. This happens regularly for me now. And then I start watching YouTube videos. I think that's what you're supposed to do when you wake up at three and can't sleep.

Mark: Well, it's what I do. So both of us can't be wrong.

Jody: So anyway, I started watching this therapist who has a whole bunch of videos of himself giving therapy to narcissists. Okay? This is my 3:00 a.m. entertainment.

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Mark: I have watched this, my friend, Jody Moore.

Jody: Have you? It's some interesting stuff.

Mark: Yes, it is.

Jody: Okay, one of the common threads and there's all different kinds of narcissism and again, we're not experts on this topic, but what I was fascinated by was how much many of them wanted the reassurance of the therapist. Wanted to know what the therapist thought of them. Because we think of narcissists as they don't care what anybody thinks. They think they're better than everyone else. That's kind of oversimplified anyway. But no, these were people who desperately wanted to know what the therapist thought of them and the therapist wouldn't tell them obviously, right? As part of the treatment.

So that's an extreme version of it and we're not dealing with that population here, but it's unhealthy this level of obsession. At the same time, like I said, we're talking about overthinking here. So I'm not saying that I hate when people say, "Well, you just shouldn't care what people think." or I know I'm not supposed to worry about what other people think of me. And I'm like, no, you're supposed to care about what people think. Like it's actually an a different kind of problem to not care at all what other people think of you. So where do you think the balance is in this and how does this show up for you or your clients?

Mark: Probably in the emotional signals that come with it. This would this would at least be part of it. When I get that way, and it is a self-obsession, by the way. You named that in my opinion perfectly. If I come out of a meeting, if I come out of a social interaction, and I start to do a lot of worrying about whether I said the right thing or the wrong thing, whether they are annoyed by me, et cetera. That is I'm self-obsessed in that moment. I don't know if that's I think it's safe to say that I'm being narcissistic in that moment in my self-obsession. So for me, the emotional signal would be one of the big clues because it would be like fear, dread,

like almost sometimes I keep wanting to say panic, but I'm not - I don't panic, but it just feels like fear in the body.

Jody: Okay.

Mark: Whereas if I think if I have a healthy interest in how other people are experiencing me, that doesn't feel like fear. It feels much more like curiosity and leans toward love.

Jody: Okay.

Mark: Now, love might sound like a weird way to frame it, but it's the direction that it leans. It's kind of like, I'm good with me, I'm good with them. In this thing, it would be, Jody and I go back so far. I value this relationship. I respect Jody. Am I acting in a way that is supportive of our ongoing connection?

Jody: Yeah.

Mark: I don't feel fear when I say that. I feel curiosity.

Jody: Yeah, that's true. That's a good point. I think it's also like it's a maturity thing to a certain extent, right? Like a mature person can consider the people that are around and alter themselves accordingly, right? I think about like when I used to lead activity days with the 10-year-old girls at church. And they are so loud and excited and like fun, but just a lot of energy. And they're not able to realize like, oh, we're in somebody's house and there's other people around and maybe we need to tone down our energy a little bit until we go outside. because they're just less mature, right? Adults, hopefully, a mature adult can consider the environment they're in and what's an appropriate noise level or how do we speak in this environment? Is it casual or more professional? Somebody who swears, that's fine, but are there certain environments when you realize like it's not appropriate in this environment to use that language. It's a maturity thing, right?

Mark: Yes.

Jody: And so that you're right, doesn't have fear behind it and it's not about like it doesn't put myself at the center of it. It's not because I need their approval, because I need to be validated that I'm okay. It's just like an act of consideration. And we do that in groups. So we do it one-on-one as well, like you said. So this overthinking that, you know, people describe when they bring this to me is like, you know, I just analyze replay every conversation. Like, should I have said that? Does she think I'm dumb? Does she think I'm insecure? And that's when it's like, hold on. What's the upside to this? So I want to just point out first of all, like one of the most freeing thoughts that I love and maybe you won't like this one, I don't know. But I love the thought like, what other people think of me is actually none of my business.

Mark: No, I like it. Yeah.

Jody: Like, and again, that's like an extreme. I'm not saying that it's never any of my business. I'm just saying when my brain starts doing that thing of like, and especially with somebody I really respect or look up to or admire, right? That's when it comes up for me. It's like, this person I think is very successful or they're very wise or whatever and I care now what they think of me. And my brain's like, you shouldn't have said that, you sounded dumb, you shouldn't have worn that outfit or whatever. And I just remind myself, listen, I have no idea what they think of me. Frankly, it's none of my business. It's none of my business, right? Because it sort of redirects my brain back to then, well, what is my business?

I'm not very good at meditation and just sitting there having no thought. So that's why like with the last one, I'm like, you need to start thinking about the present, think about the future. With this one, I like to go, what is my business is what do I want to think of them? And can I direct that in a useful way? Not just it's not what do I think of them? It's what do I want to think of them? Because sometimes what do I think of them is going to bring up judgment or critique sometimes. And so I'm like, I want to be

compassionate. I want to be curious. I want to think, huh, I wonder, especially if it is somebody that I initially have a lot of criticism or judgment for, I redirect to what I want to think is, I bet it's really hard to be them. You know what I mean? Like a just kind of a redirect and that takes the focus off of me and I don't know. I just find it to be useful. What are your thoughts on this?

Mark: I love it. I don't know if I even have a lot of notes. I think one of my Jody Moore quotes, I'm adding I'm adding a new Jody Moore quote or a new Jody Moore concept and it is the concept of active consideration. You kind of blew past that, but I think if you come back to it, it's you should teach around that. Like active consideration is if you could and I know you could, but if you could teach people what does it look like to be in an interaction with other people and be in active consideration of their experience, your experience, who they are, who you are. It's a way of describing presence that I think could resolve a high percentage of people's self-obsessed worry, dread, and rumination in real time.

Jody: By the way, I want to be clear that I'm not always good at doing this by any means. But I think having been a coach for a lot of years has trained me to be like, I even just building a coaching practice, building my own business, I had to learn that it wasn't about me. I couldn't have done it had it been about me. I still can't do it if it's about me. Like, if what I'm building is about me, it just shuts me down. But if it's not about me, then I can go help, try to help people, try to say something useful.

And so that kind of active consideration you're talking about is something I've had to train myself to do, especially when I'm listening to clients and coaching. It can't be about me. I have to be all what's going on with them. And so then I can apply that in the rest of my life when I want to. But anyway, that's my thing. What do I that's my get out of their get out of their business into my own business.

By the way, I'm coaching a lot of I know we've talked about adult kids before. I'm coaching a lot of people right now who have adult kids and it's

big with adult kids of, what if my daughter doesn't like that? What if my son-in-law thinks I'm being too invasive? And I say, you know, what your kids think of you is none of your business. Like even your own kids, right? And again, not that we're not considerate, not that we're not mature about it, being mature adults here, but overall like who do I want to be? What kind of mother do I want to be? What kind of mother-in-law do I want to be is the only thing that's your business. Not are they going to like it.

Mark: Yes.

Jody: Is that too extreme?

Mark: No, I don't think it's extreme at all. I think that if somebody can borrow the mindset you're offering them for a minute, I think they also could have the door open to where they could ask themselves, if those concerns are entering in my into my mind, to what degree do I believe them? Am I getting a signal from my own conscience that I am overstepping, that I am being invasive or that I'm being rude or whatever? We have to be people who can honestly ask ourselves those questions and deal with the answers. Now, sometimes the answers will be no. We'll be like, actually, no, I'm not overstepping. I'm not being invasive. I'm being who I want to be. We have to be able to cope with that answer too because then it requires us to practice calming ourselves down. But if we are answering those questions in the affirmative and saying, oh, I'm worried about being about being invasive because that's what I'm doing.

Jody: Yes, that's right.

Mark: This is not I'm not entitled to whatever it is that I'm demanding from this relationship right now and it's potentially going to cause harm to the relationship and I need to check myself.

Jody: Yes.

Mark: So anyway.

Jody: Yeah, so it's am I being who I want to be and what do I want to think of me and who do I want to be and what do I want to think of them? That's my business, 100%.

Mark: That nails it, 100%.

Jody: Okay, so the last one I have here that people tend to overthink around is I'm calling it indecision paralysis. So it sounds like I second guess every decision I make. I can spend way too long researching something that shouldn't take that long. I'm terrified of making the wrong choice. I just keep going back and forth. I wish someone would just tell me what to do. Even after I make a decision, I wonder if I should have chosen something different. So I've done podcasts on this before. I've talked about this topic before. I've taught lots of different strategies. For example, make peace with worst-case scenario, I always say.

I know we've talked about that a little bit. Like when you went through Kate's cancer diagnosis and you kind of processed that. And I do think that's a powerful one. Remembering that with most things there isn't a right choice. But I was curious your thoughts on this because I've been thinking about this lately, that I think one of the things that helps me make fast decisions because I tend to be a fast decision maker about most things, sometimes too fast, but one of the reasons why is because I regularly stop and pay attention to my own personal values or maybe a better word is preferences. Because values to me implies like integrity, be honest, you know? And I'm going to assume that everyone has good values who's listening to this podcast. We want to be good people. We want to be honest. We want to whatever. And those things aren't going to change.

But when I say value, I mean, what do I value at this point in this area of my life? So for example, in my business, I highly value simplicity. And I always have and I don't know, maybe I always will. In fact, to the extent that I started thinking, maybe I'm overvaluing that. Maybe I'm holding myself back by not allowing for a little bit more complication in some areas. But I value simplicity so much that people come to me sometimes with certain

opportunities and my initial reaction is no, because that adds complication. And they always try to explain to me why, no, it's simple. You're just going to do this and I'm going to send you this link and it's going to be really easy \but I know nothing is simple or every little thing that creeps in adds complication. And I just value simplicity because I know myself. I know my preferences. I know how I work best. And I know that a lot of growth is still possible from simplicity. So I'm not willing to add complication unless there's a really, really good reason why. And I think that's served me really well so that I don't end up in a lot of indecision because I know like I'm not saying I would never add complication, but there has to be a really good reason. And there's usually not.

Mark: Yes, I agree. Yeah, when I think about people who are, including myself, who are laboring for a long time about a decision, what I'll ask clients sometimes is, well, are you overestimating the cost of being wrong? But I will also bring to them the possibility that they're overestimating the benefit of being right.

Jody: Overestimating or underestimating?

Mark: Overestimating the benefit of being right.

Jody: Oh, okay, okay.

Mark: Here's why I say it. It's kind of my way of trying to loosen people's grip on the idea that there is a perfect outcome and that they have to make this decision perfectly because if they don't, they'll miss out in some permanent way on the thing that they have decided is really important.

Jody: Yeah.

Mark: Now, I know that there are decisions that are higher consequence and there are decisions that are lower consequence. And for higher consequence decisions, yeah, we they're worth however much time we give them probably. But when somebody's really hanging on to the fear of

being wrong, I will sometimes say, you know, you're actually - being right isn't going to be as good as you think it is.

Jody: That's a really good point.

Mark: Because life will continue to happen. So if you create a business that's amazing, don't worry, market dynamics will change, something will happen. It's going to get hard again. There's no decision you can make that will set your business up permanently on easy mode. That doesn't exist.

Jody: Yeah. Right.

Mark: If you make an amazing investment with your money, yes, that can have lasting benefits and also things will change and the benefit of that decision won't be quite as shiny as it was before. So you just might be over estimating the importance of the decision for worse and for better.

Jody: I love that. That's a really valid point. Like either way, there's going to be pros and cons. And there's no way we can predict what they all are either.

Mark: We really can't.

Jody: Yeah. So, um, I want to give one other example though because I know my business example isn't going to be relatable to everybody. But sometime I'm always fascinated when I go in the grocery store and like there's so many options. There's too many options of everything. Like the we have to have three aisles of drinks now because there's sodas and there's waters, but then there's fizzy waters and then there's energy drinks and there's so many drinks. And there's so many types of yogurt. Like there's a whole aisle of the of the refrigerated section that's just yogurt.

Mark: Yep.

Jody: It's insane. And so I noticed people standing there staring at all the yogurt for so long. And I always just think like, it's exhausting making all of these decisions over and over again is exhausting. It really is. But I'm also

perplexed by the people standing there staring at the yogurt because I always think, don't you just have the yogurt you like and you just buy the same yogurt every time? Isn't that what we do? Why are you looking at all these yogurt types? But I think sometimes our preferences and values change though, right? Like I may at one point really value flavor in my yogurt and then decide, oh, I want to change my body composition. Now I need something with protein or maybe my budget becomes more of a consideration than it was. And so now I have to look for the I'm trying to meet tick all the boxes of flavor and protein and price. And so I think that's why we do that.

But I think to again, stop at times and reassess, okay, what is most important to me in my food right now? Am I going to for the most part prioritize price or am I going to prioritize this certain, you know, health thing that I think is healthiest for my body or and so it's okay to have your preferences changed, but that's why I like to stop and go, no, I value this over that because then when decisions come along, they're mostly pre-made. I don't have to revisit them. I'm just like, no, I'm not a person who eats that. I eat this. And so I'm not constantly remaking all those decisions. I don't know.

Mark: Well, I think your business example, the simplicity of your business, I think it holds up and is applicable across tons of domains. Because what to me, what you're saying with your business example is, I value the simplicity of nothing, which is to say, I value the simplicity that I have by not even considering your opportunity more than I value the potential upside of considering your opportunity.

Jody: Right.

Mark: That applies to friendships, that applies to trips, that applies to lunch with a group of people, it applies to Mahjong groups. I mean, it applies to whether to build a new home, buy a new car. It's always, do I value the simplicity of the status quo? Just what I already have and know and feels good to me, if it feels good to us. Over the potential upside and all you've

done in my opinion is you've said, I actually really do recognize the value of not having to make all those other decisions. So I'm good.

Jody: Yeah. Yeah. And people, if you have if your values are slightly different than the norm, that's when people get confused, right? Because when you think about business, most people value profitability. I do value profitability, but I don't value it over simplicity. And so it's mostly like affiliate opportunities, right? People will be like, hey, I have this launch and if you let me come on your podcast and then you share this link and then you're going to get this percentage of everybody that comes into my program, right? And I literally this last year had a friend want me to do this and somebody who I really respect and I think they have a great business and a great offer. And I said, I'd love to have you on my podcast and promote what you're doing. I just don't want a link. I'm not going to send any emails. I don't want you to pay me a percentage of whatever comes in. I don't want anything to do with any of that.

You know, and because having them on my podcast, that's easy. That's not complicated. I'm very happy to support their efforts. Yep. You know, and he's got a daughter and who's like really young and he kept he kept trying to convince me to just take the money, you know. And I was like, just give my money to your daughter. Put it to her college fund. And not because I'm so generous and giving, I just genuinely don’t - I know it will be back and forth. You all have to give you some way to transfer payment to me. I'll have to fill out some form. You're going to send me numbers. I'm going to have to like, I just don't want to do any of that. I would much rather you just give it to your daughter, you know what I mean?

So anyway, I think for anybody that struggles with this and I will say too, I have other areas in my life where it's not so easy. Like if when it comes to like painting a wall in my house or picking out furniture or something, I so quest I second guess everything and I have so many times like bought furniture or something and then realized I don't like it. It doesn't look right in here. I'm not really a designer. I don't know what I'm doing. And so I get

that. There are like I said, I think there are areas where it's easier for us than others, but I kind of also am like, all right, maybe in that area, I just do nothing until I can afford to hire someone to make those decisions for me. If I value it that much, right? That's why there are people who are interior designers.

Mark: This is actually I'm fascinated by this from you. I don't think I even knew this about you.

Jody: You didn't?

Mark: Because yes, I agree with you on like, I'm going to hold off on those decisions until I can engage a professional to help me make those decisions.

Jody: Yeah.

Mark: I don't think that's a bad strategy. What's interesting to me about you and you're not necessarily like um, I think there are a lot of us that could do this. We don't have to have a business of your business's size or anything. You are one who - I'm actually intrigued by the fact that you are probably quick to make decisions where the consequences are much higher, but in this case you're talking about being slow to make decisions where the consequences are much lower.

Jody: I know.

Mark: Because you can buy a couch and hate it and send it back or give it away.

Jody: I know, right?

Mark: Be like, oh, I hate this couch. I'm going to my friends and neighbors and asking if anybody wants a couch.

Jody: I know, which is a much lower expense than like launching a Facebook ad campaign or something.

Mark: Exactly. Yeah.

Jody: But for some reason I have yeah, I don't know. I just have noise in my head about like the hassle that will be and that's so wasteful versus in my business it all feels like experimental.

Mark: Interesting.

Jody: And in my personal life it feels like indulgent and wasteful for some reason. I probably need to get coached on that.

Mark: Maybe, but I think you might have just cracked it.

Jody: Yeah.

Mark: Because you said in one situation it feels experimental and in the other one it feels indulgent and wasteful. And that alone may be enough to drive those two types of behavior. That's pretty interesting.

Jody: Yeah.

Mark: The reason I appreciate you bringing it up is because it shows me and anybody who happens to listen that humans are quirky and we're not robots and we're not going to be perfectly consistent or rational across all of our decisions and that's just fine.

Jody: True. Yeah. Okay. All right, well, that's what we got for everybody today. Final thoughts on overthinking?

Mark: No, I think you let me I think you let me say my piece. I really like the topic and I like what you came up with.

Jody: I think my final thoughts are going to be it's not really useful to label yourself an overthinker, I don't think. Sometimes when people say that to me, I just have so many thoughts. I'm like, yeah, we all do. Depending on which statistic you look up, it's anywhere from 40,000 to whatever per day. And so to just be like, I find it more useful to just be like, being a human

being's kind of exhausting. Like the brain, we all have lots of thoughts. But and hopefully Mark and I gave you guys some suggestions of things to redirect to. We talked about coming to the present and the future. We talked about focusing on what you want to think of other people and what you who you want to be. We talked about kind of whatever choice you make, there's going to be pros and cons, right? Don't overemphasize the benefits of a good choice or the consequences of a poor choice.

Yeah, I think there was one more, but we're going to skip it. I'm just going to summarize it. Thinking about what could go wrong in the future, which I think goes nicely with the decision thing. Sometimes this worry about the future thing comes up. We might do a whole another episode on that down the road, but I do think that learning to notice my brain and redirect it, like especially with the past decision one, that's what happens. It comes up for me sometimes like right when I wake up or when I wake up at 3:00 a.m., right? Something about the mistake I made raising my two older kids.

And I kind of go, well, we don't know that for sure. We don't know if that was a mistake. And meanwhile, what are we doing now? Do you want to call one of your kids at college when it's a normal hour and everybody's awake? Do you want to tell them you love them? Do you want to encourage them? Do you want to apologize? Like I can pretty quickly go, yeah, we don't even know if that was a mistake. Maybe it was. You definitely did make a lot of mistakes. But that doesn't mean you don't get to be who you want to be now.

So that's kind of my quick redirect. And I would say just for anybody listening, if you take one thing out of what you heard today and decide you're going to practice that redirect, that skill of like redirecting your mind for me has been life-changing. So I would just encourage everyone to try that out. All right, thanks for being here today, Mark.

Mark: Thanks for having me.

Jody: All right.

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