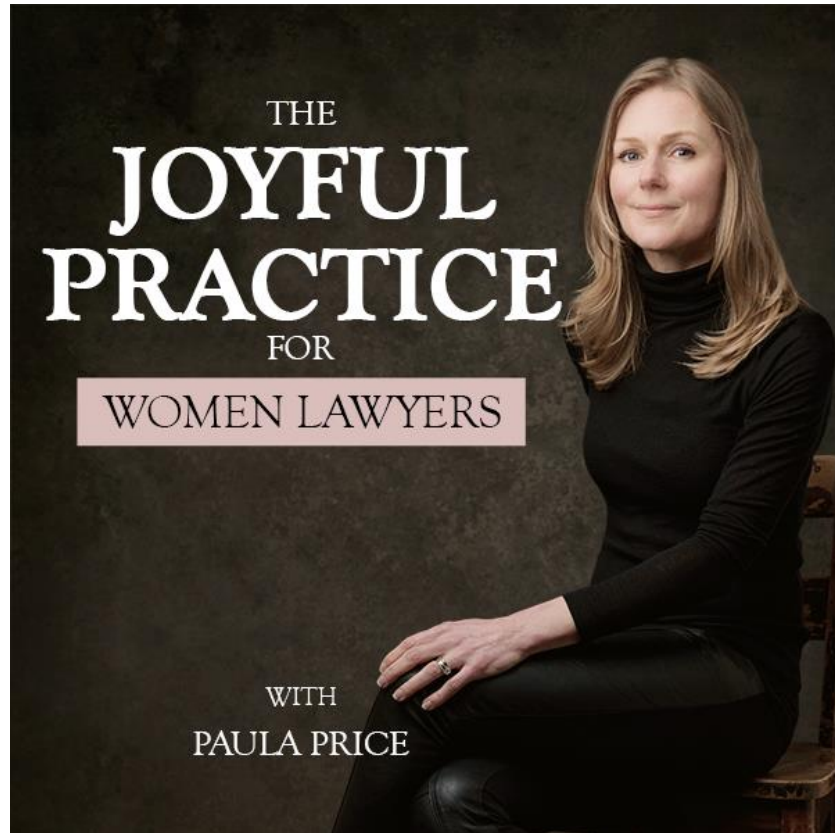


Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Paula Price

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

You're listening to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* podcast, episode number eight.

Welcome to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast. I'm your host Paula Price, litigator turned certified executive coach. This podcast was created to empower women lawyers just like you to create a life and practice you love. It's your time away from the daily hustle to focus on taking care of you. To see where you're stuck, figure out what you truly want, and learn coaching tools that will help you define and create success on your own terms.

If you're over the overwhelm, done with putting out fires, and ready to create a life and practice that brings you more joy, you're in the right place. Ready for today's episode? Let's dive in.

Hi everybody, and welcome back to the podcast. For those of you who are joining for the first time, my name is Paula Price. I'm a lawyer turned certified executive coach, and the host of this podcast. Welcome. For those of you who are coming back, thank you so much for joining me again. It's a pleasure to have you here.

I just wanted to say I'm so grateful for all the amazing feedback I've been receiving from those of you who have written in to tell me how much this podcast is affecting you. I've had a number of you write in to talk about some of the episodes, the episode about perfectionism and fear in particular. A number of you have written in to tell me that after listening to the episode about fear, I believe that's episode number five. You've had some real breakthroughs, and you've been able to take action in relation to problems and questions that you were maybe feeling a little bit stuck around.

So please keep our comments coming. I love hearing from you. You can reach out to me on LinkedIn. You can send me an email. Please if you feel

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

so inclined leave a rating for me on whatever platform it is that you're listening to your podcast on.

So today's topic is a topic that I think is really important for all of us and for lawyers in particular. Today we're going to talk about judgment, and how some of us are using judgement against ourselves. I think this is really important because I have clients who are coming to me. I can hear in the language that they use, the way that they're setting up their challenges that there's a lot of self-judgement. That's one of the things that we get to work on in our coaching sessions. I think it's a really valuable thing for all of us to be aware of.

I know I've certainly had situations where I've held myself back where I've really been judging myself quite harshly. Unfortunately, I don't think it's something that gives us the best results. So I'm going to offer you some tools that you can use to move away from that self-judgement and into a place that's a little bit more empowering.

So with that, we're going to dive right in and talk about what judgement might look like. For some cases, for some of you, it might be really obvious. You may know that you are constantly judging yourselves. For others of you, it might not show up in a very obvious way. It might be a little bit more sneaky. So what I'm going to do is start out by talking about how you might recognize this as a problem.

The problem itself, the reason that it's a problem, isn't so much that judgement is a problem. I mean as a lawyer, you live in a culture of judgement. We'll talk about that a little bit more, but judgement doesn't have to be a bad thing. It becomes a problem when you start to use your judgement of yourself in a way that holds you back that maybe instills fear.

Maybe you're being excessively hard on yourself. When you start from that perspective, you can end up missing out on opportunities, and we don't

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

want that to happen. You can also feel unnecessarily stressed or down on yourself. Again, these are things that we can change once we recognize the problem and take concrete steps to deal with it.

Now you may know that you are imposing excessive or unnecessary judgement on yourself by a few different indicators. One of those is the language that you're using. If you find yourself using the word 'should' a lot— "I should have known that, I should have started sooner"— then chances are you are judging yourself. Other language indicators might be "I never". "I never get my work done on time. Or I never know where to start."

Or maybe it's the opposite of "I never". Maybe it's "I always". "I always have a hard time picking up the phone to speak to opposing counsel. I always have trouble when I start something new." These are expressions that you might use when you're speaking to yourself that are kind of demoralizing. Those two examples in particular really show a type of all or nothing thinking where you overgeneralize yourself and you put yourself into this sort of negative category.

Another language example might be something like "if only I was". "If only I was as smart as that lawyer down the hall from me. If only I had more experience. If only I was older or younger." These are all ways that you might be judging yourself and talking to yourself out of things.

Another example might be "I'm so". Whatever follows that, chances are it's not something that's going to boost you up and help you think better. "I'm so tired of always having to start at the beginning. Or I'm so inexperienced, I don't think that they're going to take me seriously." So think about all the different 'so's that come up in the way that you're speaking to yourself. Once you start noticing those things, you may be able to find some opportunities to turn these things around.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

Another way that you'll know that you're imposing excessive self-judgement is if you find that you're beating yourself up a lot. In the examples that I gave you, some of them are more subtle than others. When you really start getting down on yourself, when you make a mistake, and you administer yourself some sort of a self-flagellation that you've somehow committed a crime. This is wrong.

That can be a sign that you really are holding yourself up to these standards that are not really achievable. That you're judging yourself for the efforts that you are not making as opposed to looking at what you have done. So I really want you to consider whether or not you are beating yourself up. If so, this is definitely an episode for you.

Another way you might know if you are imposing self-judgment is if you find yourself using a lot of labels where you find yourself saying, "I'm just not confident. Or I'm just not that type of person. Or I'm just not a person who runs on time." You can give yourself labels. You might be labeling other people. This is a pretty good indication that you are engaging in judgement that may not be serving you.

Now judgement, self-judgement, judging others, this is something that exists among people in general. This is not something that is unique to lawyers. But I think that for lawyers, the problem is particularly present because of the nature of the work that you do in your practice. So you might look, for example, at the way that law is structured. Judgement is at the core of what law is. Particularly if you're in a common law jurisdiction where you're looking to earlier judgements that are the precedent for how the law will unfold in a particular situation. So judgement already is at the core of the work that you may be doing.

If you're a litigator, you might be looking at a file and anticipating that at some point, this file is going to be judged. That there will be a right and a wrong. There will be a correct and incorrect. So there may be this really

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

bifurcated way of looking at things that requires that you see things in a bit of an all or nothing or black and white way of thinking.

Judgement in a legal context is really in the hierarchy, the judgment is at the top as lawyers, the law—at least the law that is determined through the court system through the cases being decided—ultimately you are looking at the judges who are ruling on the facts and the law that come before them. They are at the top of the hierarchy. So this is a culture that is already steeped in the notion of judgements. There are professional judges who do this for a living.

Now when we live in a culture like that, it's inevitable that judgement is going to become part of our everyday life. Now, judgement doesn't necessarily mean a negative thing. As a professional, you are being paid. You're being retained. You have a duty to your client to exercise your professional judgment.

That is part of what you do as a lawyer when you are giving an opinion about where you think the law will fall in relation to the facts that they've presented to you, when you're making decisions about how to conduct yourself in relation to opposing counsel, when you exercise yourself in your relation to your clients. You are constantly exercising judgement. So judgment in itself is not a bad thing. It's when you take on the practice of imposing judgement on yourself or imposing judgement on others where it's done in such a way where it isn't serving you or others.

That's what we're really going to talk about today is how judging yourself or sometimes judging others. I find that often the two go hand in hand, may or may not be serving you. Now, like I mentioned, it's not just lawyers who do this. I think we all judge ourselves. If you start looking for it, you'll really start to notice it. Your parents are judging themselves. Your friends are judging themselves. People around you are judging themselves.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

Again, the same language cues that I mentioned at the beginning of today's podcast. If you listen for those in the way that others are speaking about themselves, you'll notice that they are judging themselves. So when you're having conversations with them, you might start helping them unpack some of the judgements that they're making on themselves.

I think we do this intuitively. We may be speaking with our best friend, and our best friend is saying, "Oh, I can't believe I did this. I'm so stupid. It was such a dumb mistake to make." You may say to yourself, "Nobody talks to my best friend that way." Then you can help them unravel how their thinking may be flawed.

In this episode, I'm really encouraging you to take that skill and learn how to apply that to yourself. There are a number of ways that we try to cope with judgment, excessive judgement of ourselves and sometimes if we're aware of it the judgment that we may be passing on others. The way that we may first try to avoid that uncomfortable sense of judgement is to be judgement proof.

To do that we may think that we need to do something perfectly. So we work harder, we set our standards higher, we impose even stricter rules than we had before. As we work towards those high standards, we may be really pushing ourselves to get there. We may be using negative self-talk. We may be kind of beating ourselves into compliance. There can be this very fear based way of trying to push ourselves into a position where we are judgement proof, where we cannot judge ourselves because we have done everything that we can possibly do to meet this idealistic standard.

I would say that that is not always the best way to reach your goals. If you listen to some of my earlier episodes, in particular the one about perfectionism which is episode number four, you'll know my philosophy on that. And how I would suggest approaching your work, your professional work, your personal work if you struggle with perfectionism. So if that's

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

something that you're trying to do, trying to be judgement proof, that in itself is not necessarily going to work in terms of helping you solve the bigger problem, which is how you're speaking to yourself.

Another way you might try to avoid being judged is to try to avoid judgement all together. This is where it really gets a little bit counterproductive because it paralyzes you and holds you back from going after challenges where you could really grow. Here if you're trying to avoid judgement about judging yourself, sometimes you're trying to avoid having others judge you, you may completely abdicate responsibility for decision making. Because you would rather make somebody else make the decision and allow that person to be judged whether you're judging that person or if somebody else is judging that person rather than let yourself be judged.

Here I would invite you to think about situations where maybe you've wanted to do something or you thought about doing something, but you didn't want to go through that painful process of being judged, particularly by yourself. So you didn't take on that opportunity. You let somebody else make a decision because you didn't want to bear the brunt of that. So that might be another way that you are trying to cope with judgement.

You may avoid situations where there's risk of judgment. You may also start making up excuses to justify what you're doing instead of just owning the truth. So, for example, you might want to say no to a project because it is completely out of alignment with what you want to do. Rather than simply own that truth, you may make up an excuse or you may come up with a different reason. Maybe the excuse is something that you tell yourself.

So, for example, you might talk yourself out of doing something, and the real reason you don't want to do it is because you're scared about taking on a challenge where you might fail. But you'll give yourself another excuse like, "Well, I would do it, but I don't have time for it. There's no way I can fit that into my schedule." So this is really a bit of a sneaky space, this idea of

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

trying to make an excuse to justify why you're not doing something. So you'll need to really be mindful of it and try to catch yourself in the moment when you're doing it.

Another way you might try to solve or cope with this idea of judgement is to defend yourself. This is, I think, where we see people really judging others. So if you feel like you're being judged, that somebody may be judging you for maybe it's the quality of your work. Maybe they're judging you because of a decision that you've made. Maybe you're taking on a bigger risk than they feel comfortable with.

Maybe your response to that is rather than to address the concern or to look at it objectively and to really drill down and determine what it is that may be bothering you about that particular judgement is to simply apply a judgement to others. You might judge them as being too risk adverse or some other thing. They're too picky. They're too fill in the blank.

So anytime that you find yourself in a position where you're defending and you're judging, you might ask yourself whether there was a judgment that you imposed on yourself or a judgment that somebody else imposed on you before you sort of came to that judgment in your own mind. Another way that you might be seeing this come up is if you're trying to label others. We talked about labels earlier. Really what we're doing is we're turning our judgement outwards so that we don't have to face the judgment that we are imposing on ourselves.

Now, these are all coping mechanisms. So trying to be perfect and avoid judgement, trying to avoid judgement by not making decisions, not taking risks, or defending ourselves by basically judging others. None of these strategies will work when it comes to dealing with the underlying problem. The main reason that it will not work, these strategies will not work, is that what you're doing there is you're really living in a space of fear where you're afraid of being judged by yourself, by your own judgement of

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

yourself and very likely fear of what other people are going to say about you. How they are going to judge you.

When you're operating in a fear based mindset, you'll start to make decisions from a position that really undermines your sense of power. You're no longer making decisions based out of a creative and productive space. You're really much more in that reactive zone.

I've talked about this on earlier podcasts, but I can't emphasize this enough. That when you're coming from a position of fear, when your body is in a state of fight or flight, when you're stressed, when you're reactive, your body isn't functioning at its full capacity. You are, at that point, physiologically primed for survival. All systems less those that you absolutely need to make it day to day have pretty much shut down. So you're not in your most expansive state.

Conversely when you're making decisions from a place of creativity where you're in your rest and digest mode, where you are feeling more open and creative, you're more likely to reach decisions. You're more likely to come up with solutions and ideas that are more productive. So it really is important for all of us to be mindful of when we're operating in a fear based climate and when we're operating in a growth based climate.

What I'm really encouraging all of us to do, and particularly in today's episode, is to look at judgement, look at how we are using it in our lives, and to find a way to deal with any of that self-criticism, that self-judgement in a way that is way more productive. What we need to do is to find a way of getting out of the fear and into that more creative state.

So if you try these strategies, you're avoiding problems, you are trying to be perfect, you are judging others, what you ultimately create is a situation that is not very tenable. Chances are you're able to push yourself, you're able to

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

reach certain levels, but you're only going to be able to push yourself so far.

In that situation, I would argue that you're not really working to your full potential. You may be getting results, but I think that you're probably capable of achieving so much more if you have the courage, if you have the capacity, to try a different strategy. I think if what you're doing is trying to motivate yourself with fear, ultimately what that leads to is that feeling of burnout.

I mean there's only so much of the fear and the anxiety based motivation that we can really impose on ourselves before we start to feel that sense of fatigue, of burning out. That, obviously, is not a desired outcome. We want to look at a more sustainable way of motivating ourselves and encouraging ourselves to move forward.

Now when you are judging yourself quite harshly, what you may find is that you really start to get quite keen on finding other sources of motivation or of positive reinforcement. So we start looking at others for approval. This is where we get into validation and external validation. If you're not able to give yourself the validation that you need and that you're seeking, then you're constantly going to be reliant on external sources for that validation.

This might be familiar to a number of you, especially as you've gone through so many different layers to get to the place where you're at. I mean it starts early. It may start very early in your life where you're a good student. You're getting good grades. Your family's happy with you. You move to school. Your teachers are happy with you. University, you're getting good grades on your papers. You may be running for different offices in the university.

By the time you get to a practice in law, you are now looking to your clients to give you approval. You're looking to other lawyers to give you approval.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

All of these examples are looking outside yourself for validation that what it is that you're doing is good, that it's worthwhile in the eyes of somebody else.

So as long as you are judging yourself and not giving yourself the credit that you really truly deserve, you're going to be dependent on others to do that for you. That puts you in a very vulnerable position. Because if you're not getting that outside approval then where are you filling your basket? Where are you filling that need for feeling good about yourself? I would argue that one of the tools that you can learn that will be so impactful is to be able to give yourself that validation.

Another consequence, and I've mentioned this a little bit earlier, but if you are constantly judging yourself and talking yourself out of doing things then chances are you're going to avoid situations where you'll actually grow. This is where individuals start to get stuck. I see this in lawyers who, for example, maybe in a job that they don't truly love or even like, but they're there because somebody in their family thought it was a good idea. They're there because this seemed like the right next thing to do on the career path that somebody at some point had told them was the career path to follow.

They do it to be safe, right? You may be choosing something because you think it's the safer option. Because it's the known quantity. That there are no surprises. You have a steady paycheck, a steady job. You have a steady identity.

But, unfortunately, that way of thinking is not as safe as it may seem. Because if something goes wrong there then you still don't have that safety that you may think that you have, but you've also not developed the skill of being able to be accountable to yourself, to build up your own self-esteem, to give yourself that positive reinforcement. Then you haven't done that growth work. So I'd really invite you to think about what kind of situations are being created when you are judging yourself and not moving forward.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

Another downside of judging yourself so harshly, and I've spoken about this in other podcasts, is that when you judge yourself, when you speak negatively to yourself, you are instructing other people how to speak to you. How to treat you. I would invite you to think about when you have seen this in other people. I know I have seen this in other people where they start to downplay their own successes.

Sometimes it creates this weird dynamic where all of a sudden you start to believe them. Nothing could be further from the truth if you actually look objectively at their accomplishments, at who they are, at what they're achieving. But by continuously talking down about themselves, even if they don't express it in words. Even if it's happening at an unconscious level. Really, you're sending off an energy to other people, and they are feeding on that energy. So really be mindful of how you're speaking to yourself because you are setting up the relationship you are going to have with other individuals.

Another outcome that this creates when you are trying to deal with this self-judgement problem in the ways described is that you may find yourself judging others. I see this quite a bit, and you may start to notice this quite a bit. Where once you start paying attention to the ways that you're judging yourself, you may also start paying more attention to the way that you're judging others.

Often the things that we think about others—the 'should' statements, the 'they never' statements, the 'they would be better off doing X' statements. If you look at them really closely, what you may find is that these are statements that you actually think about yourself. So it can be quite impactful. If you're able to deal with those root thoughts as they apply to yourself, it may give you increased capacity to have more compassion for others and to be less judgmental when you are considering them. So this is another opportunity for growth that may be unexploited if you're not doing this work, if that makes any sense.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

Then finally the last kind of consequence that I'll talk about here is if you have a habit of judging yourself, what you might be doing is setting yourself up for these neural pathways that are unproductive. I've spoken before about neuroplasticity and the idea that we become very good at whatever it is that we practice.

So if we are developing a practice of judging ourselves and being unkind to ourselves and holding ourselves to these high standards. If we're avoiding risks, if we are getting defensive, these are all pathways. The more we practice these habits, the more firmly entrenched they become.

So if we're not looking at these and addressing them and taking positive steps toward maybe a different more productive approach, what we're really doing is reinforcing those neural pathways. That is something that I would suggest we may want to change.

So the good news is that there are certainly alternative solutions to judging ourselves and beating ourselves up. I'm going to talk about five things that you can do if this is something that interests you. I think we might start by taking a closer look at what judges do in the context of a legal dispute, for example. Because I think with us the judgements happen at such an unconscious level, we don't even realize we're doing this.

I've heard reports that we have something like 60,000 thoughts that float through our minds every single day. Those thoughts are not necessarily true. They are not necessarily processed thoughts. These are simply ideas that have come up in our conscious minds. If you start to look for them, you'll notice just how frequently they come up. If you start to maybe write them down, if you start to really analyze them, what you'll start to notice is not all of them are true. Some of them are just as untrue as they could be true. I'll talk a little bit more about that.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

So judgement when we're judging ourselves isn't necessarily the judgement that we would see exercised in a legal context. So if you're looking at judges who make decisions after a court hearing, for example, look at the process that they have gone through in order to make that decision. They are trained, first of all, to exercise judgement to reach decisions. There is a whole science and strategy there.

When the case is presented to them, they look at the facts. Look at how much work goes into establishing what is considered to be true, what is considered to be a fact versus everything else. Something that is an opinion or a fiction or that is not proven. We will condemn ourselves so quickly, and yet we very rarely give ourselves a chance to go through that process, go through that exercise of really looking at what we're asserting to be the case and what is actually true.

Another thing that they do when they're exercising judgment is that they're taking into account all of the facts. They are going through a process of fairness. They are looking at the law and applying the law to the facts. This is really interesting because their facts, I would say, are much akin to for us maybe standards that we have for ourselves. Maybe they're values that we uphold for ourselves. They are actually looking at this in a very measured way, and then they are reaching a decision. They are reaching a conclusion that is thought out, that is well considered, that is balanced.

Judges operate in a very difficult area. They, as you know, are making decisions where often it's really you could argue either side, and either side has a compelling narrative. This is why decisions, at least in Canada, go through multiple levels of court sometimes. They may start out in a court of first instance, they may be appealed and overturned on an appeal, and then they may go to the Supreme Court of Canada and get overturned once again. So you may have the same case in front of three different courts and have three different outcomes. It is entirely possible because these are gray area questions. It's not always clear cut.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

So in your case, it may not be clear cut either. But I would invite you to give yourself that grace of at least going through a process that is more fair before reaching these decisions about yourself that may or may not be serving you.

So to the tools. When we're judging ourselves, when we are judging others, we're not always giving ourselves a fair process. So here are some ideas that you can use if you want to unravel this habit of imposing judgement on yourself. So the first is to notice when you are judging yourself. As I mentioned, sometimes it's really obvious when you're judging yourself, but sometimes it's really subtle.

So start watching for that. Start looking for those cues of the language that I suggested. The 'I should have', 'I never', 'I always', 'if I were X, then I would...'. Look at the way that you're talking to yourself. Look at the way that you're describing yourself in conversations with others. Start to notice when it is that you're actually passing judgement on yourself. You might also start looking at when you're passing judgement on others, but really the focus here is on dealing with the way that we're talking with ourselves first. So that is where I would encourage you to start.

So once you have identified a situation where you are imposing a judgement on yourself. Maybe it's a question of time management, and you tell yourself, "I always procrastinate. I always hand my work in just at the nick of time. I always reach that filing deadline the minute before the time has elapsed." Whatever it happens to be, look at the statement that you are making. Then we're going to separate the facts from the opinion.

This is such a neat way of looking at something like that. One wonderful example that I would encourage you to look at is a should statement. So maybe the situation is that you cut it really close on a filing deadline, and the thought that you had was, "I really should have started that work earlier." Now, it may be true that you should have started the work earlier

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

for any number of reasons. But it may equally be true that you should not have started the work any earlier for any number of reasons.

Byron Katie, who I've mentioned on earlier podcasts, has this really interesting way of looking at that type of situation. I have mentioned it before. She talks about how if you are arguing with something that has happened, you are arguing with reality. When you argue with reality, you only lose 100% of the time.

If you're looking at something that has already happened and you're saying, "I should have or they should have," you are, in fact, arguing with reality. You are only going to lose 100% of the time. It should have happened that way because that is how it did happen.

What I would encourage you to do is to look at the situation and say, "Well, it is true that I should have started earlier because..." There may be a number of reasons why you should have started earlier, but then there may also be reasons why you should not have started earlier.

Maybe this lesson is as simple as, "I should not have started earlier because this time I managed to make the deadline, but I learned that if I were to do this again and I didn't have this unique set of circumstances, my filing would have been late. So this should have happened this way. Next time going forward, I'm going to start a week earlier." The idea that there may be different ways of interpreting it.

Maybe you have an interview, for example, and you end that interview. You think, "Wow, I really should have approached that interview differently. I should have said this instead of that." It may be true that you should have done things a certain way. However, I would invite you to also consider how it is true that you should not have.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

Maybe an interview goes poorly, but what happens if you have your next interview, and your next interview goes beautifully. Part of that is because you learned from that earlier interview, and part of it is because you were able to have the opportunity for that interview in the first place. Maybe you would not have had that interview had you not said that thing that you were talking about in the first interview.

That may be an example of where it's equally true that you should have had things happen in a way that you may not be happy with at that moment in time, but that leads you to something else that is actually better for you or that you are more pleased about.

So what I'm trying to get at here is to look at the facts, look at the fiction. So look at what it is that you're saying to yourself, look at how you're judging yourself. You may think that this statement is true but ask yourself how it is possible in what ways the statement is not true. What you'll start to notice is that these thoughts that you're having, these judgements that you're imposing on yourself really are much shakier, they're much looser than you may have originally given them credit for.

Now the third thing that I'm going to suggest is to start thinking of yourself as having a judger versus a learner mindset. There is some really interesting work. I learned about it when I went through my coach training. It's by Marilee Adams. She distinguishes between a judger mindset and a learner mindset.

I loved this dichotomy particularly because of my legal background because it sets out these two ways of thinking. I just thought it was so interesting to counter position the two of them, to juxtapose them, and to look at how they're different. They're very similar to some of the growth mindsets that we have spoken about. So the fixed mindset versus the growth mindset. This is quite similar.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

So to give you some examples of what that looks like. In a judger mindset, for example, you may be judgmental of yourself and judgmental of others. Versus a learner mindset where you're accepting of yourself and accepting of others. A little pinpoint here, acceptance is such a key part of all of this. When you are learning to accept the ebbs and flows of life, when you're learning to accept the so-called flaws that we have, the shortcomings, the challenges. Life gets a lot smoother rather than trying to judge them or avoid them. So acceptance is really a big part of the work that I do with lawyers that I work with, and the work that I do on my own.

Another example in the judger versus learner mindset is being reactive and automatic versus being responsive and thoughtful. As I give you examples, I don't want to be giving the impression that judgement and judges have no place. This is absolutely not what I'm trying to suggest. As I mentioned earlier in this podcast, when judges are exercising their discretion in the capacity of a decision that they're making, that is a very measured process. This is not an all or nothing, "I feel like doing it so I'm doing it." Based on an analysis, not based on some sort of framework. So I just want to highlight that.

I want to encourage you to think about how this judger versus the learner mindset is operating or how it might be applying in things that you're doing in your life.

So a few more examples. In the judger frame of reference, it may be a know it already type of thinking versus a values not knowing. The learner might be actually really happy that they don't know what the answer is. It's an opportunity for them to learn more. They can get curious about it. Versus the judger situation where you're thinking, "Well, I already know the answer to this question without doing that further inquisition."

In the judger mindset, we may have blame whereas we may take responsibility in the learner frame of reference. The judger mindset may be

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

inflexible and rigid versus flexible and adaptive. You may be looking at either or thinking, so some of that all or nothing thinking that I had mentioned earlier. Or you might be thinking of the both/and thinking.

It may be that you are self-righteous. Maybe it's being a bit defensive versus a learner mindset where what you're really doing is being more inquisitive. In a judger mindset, you might be defending assumptions versus the learner mindset where you might be questioning assumptions. In a judger mindset, you might be using more statements and opinions versus the learner mindset which is based more in questions and curiosity.

In a judging mindset, you might be thinking that the possibilities are limited versus the learner where the possibilities seem unlimited. Finally the primary disposition in the judger mindset is protective versus the learner mindset, which is more curious.

So how it is that you're approaching the conversation that you're having with yourself, the judgment that you're imposing on yourself and on others, and whether there are different strategies that you can use that may lead to more productive outcomes.

So we've talked about noticing when you're being judgmental or when you're passing judgement on yourself. The second is to separate the facts from your opinions. The third is to think about whether you're in a judger or a learner mindset. The fourth is to plan for more judgment. This may sound totally counterintuitive.

Again, this is an idea that I learned from Byron Katie where the thinking here is that judgement is going to happen no matter what. You will judge yourself. Others are going to judge you. When you experience that judgement, it creates an opportunity for you to examine that judgment and to really think about what that judgement means to you. What is it about

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

that judgement that bothers you? Where is the growth opportunity in that judgment?

So the next level is to start inviting that judgement. To be willing to be judged. When you can reach that level, the judgement itself no longer has power over you. It's going back to that point that Marilee Adams had made in that acceptance piece. When you accept there is judgment and you allow for that judgement, it takes away some of the fear. It allows you to look at it more closely. So that is the fourth step is to be willing to be judged, and to be willing to judge yourself, and to do the work of exploring that judgement after you've recognized it.

Then finally as the fifth step that you might take is to identify the decision that is underlying the judgment. So what does that mean exactly? Well, I would encourage you to take a situation where you've judged yourself and think about what it is that you judged. Maybe there was embarrassment because you did something that you weren't particularly proud of. Maybe there was shame involved. Maybe you regretted something that you did or something that you didn't do. There may be some self-imposed judgement that underlies that.

What I would encourage you to do there is to ask yourself what is the decision that rests beneath this judgement that I need to make in order to move forward?

So, for example, if you were to put that into motion, let's say the example is that—and I had this come up with a client recently where they were having some time management. They didn't have a lot of time management problems, but they had had a bout of not really sitting down and doing things that they had told themselves that they were going to do. It made sense because that person had assigned themselves some tasks quite late in the day after a number of other tasks had already been done. Then wanted to execute on those tasks and had some resistance around that.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

So some of the judgments that were being made in respect to that were, “I’m not good at managing my time. I’m not able to compel myself to do the things that I need to do.” That type of self-judgment. Really the thinking there, the decision that really needed to be made there was more in the nature of how am I going to structure my day going forward so that I’m not putting myself in this position where I’m setting myself up for failure.

If you're setting yourself up to do tasks where at the end of the day after you've already completed a number of really challenging tasks, how can you structure your day differently so that you're not falling into that trap of being placed in an impossible position where you are going to not do it, and then you're going to beat yourself up over it? So a few decisions there. One of the decisions being simply a decision about how to structure their day. Another decision there is a decision about how you're going to speak to yourself and how you're going to treat yourself when that happens.

So rather than sitting and looking at the day and saying, “Well, I should have done all that work. There's something wrong with me because I didn't do all that work.” Maybe the judgement falls away, and what you do focus on is what you have done, right.

Maybe it's, “I had a very busy morning. I managed to accomplish all these different tasks. I was really productive. I wrote the brief that I said I was going to brief. That was a really difficult piece of work to do. I made difficult phone calls. I had meetings.” Whatever it is, and really focus in on the things that you have done and focus on how you are accountable and how you do get things done rather than telling yourself I didn't do all these other things.

So the decisions can be decisions that you're making in terms of how you're going to move going forward, but they could also be decisions about how you're going to talk to yourself. What is the language that you're going to choose for yourself that is way more productive than the language that

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

you have been using that leads to these outcomes that are not always very productive?

Now, why will it work? Once you start noticing, and I'll just recap those five tips. Number one is to notice when you're judging yourself, notice when you're judging others. Number two, separate the facts from the opinions. Number three, think about whether you're using a judger mindset or a learner mindset. Number four, plan for more judgment. Be willing to expose yourself to the judgment. Don't fear it. Accept it. Number five, identify the decision that you need to make that underlies the judgement.

Once you do those things, then this will work. This will help you move forward because you'll start to unravel the judgments. You'll start to break the habit that you have been forming. You'll be less afraid of judgment. As you're less afraid of judging yourself, then you will start to repair your relationship with yourself. When you're not judging yourself, when you're actually finding ways that maybe something that's quite critical that you've been repeating to yourself.

Once you start unraveling that, you might find that you start to really improve your relationship with yourself. You might build more trust with yourself. You may also find that you're starting to see others differently once you realize, "Well, I've been judging myself, but wait a minute. I've also been judging others." You may also transpose this analysis onto some of the thoughts that you have about them, and you might find that your relationships with them improve as well. That your trust builds with them as well.

As you do this, you'll develop new habits. So going back to the neural pathways, it will take a lot of energy at first to deviate from something that is so ingrained. As you move into these new habits, you will start to form more well-traveled neural pathways. This will become your reflex. You will no longer default to believing all the thoughts that show up in your mind.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

You will now be able to challenge them, especially the ones that are not very productive.

What will start to happen is that you'll start to feel good. As you see things differently, you'll start to feel better. You'll start taking action from a place of creativity, from a place of feeling empowered, and you'll start to see results. That will all build. So as you build the confidence, as you start to see the better results, as this becomes more of a habit to you, you will eventually be shifting over. So that your default is no longer that you're going to judge yourself, beat yourself up, and take action from a place of fear and discomfort.

You are actually going to start processing those negative thoughts. You're going to start challenging them. You're going to start seeing yourself in a much more empowered light, and you're going to take action from that perspective. That's going to create such a difference. It will create a difference in the way that you treat yourself. It will create a difference in the way that you treat others, and it will create a difference in the way that others are treating you. That's why this is going to work.

The skills that you'll need to develop to do this, the skills that you'll build as you do this is increased awareness. So this is the whole process of noticing what you're thinking and dealing with those thoughts squarely. You may find that you're becoming more creative and more productive.

When you're not scared of how you're going to talk to yourself and you're not frightened about how you're going to judge yourself, how you're going to judge others, then you'll have that space to explore, to take risks, to take on new challenges. Because you know that at the end of the day, you have your own back. You are going to speak to yourself fairly. You're going to be productive.

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

It will allow you to take more risks. You don't have to worry about that criticism, and I would not be surprised if you started to extend that same grace to the people around you. So you may find that the people around you, they are now in a much more positive frame of reference. They are feeling more productive. They're not worried that you're going to pass judgement on them either.

The results that you're going to create ultimately is that you won't need to motivate yourself with judgement. You won't have to rely on kind of beating yourself into submission to do the things that you want to do. You will now find a new way of motivating yourself to get to the place where you want to be.

Going back to that point of validation. If you're able to find ways of reinforcing what you're doing well and countering those judgements that you're imposing on yourself, you may find that your sense of fulfilment, your sense of confidence, is starting to come much more from within. You're much less reliant and dependent on other people around you, your clients, other lawyers to give you those accolades. Because you'll be able to do that for yourself. You may find that you're more creative. You may find you're more productive.

As you create more results, you may find that your world really does start to expand. That you're willing to take on more projects. You're willing to take on new risks. That process itself, that reaching process, those stretch assignments that you might be taking on. Those become more exciting opportunities, exciting challenges where you are anticipating what will lie on the other side as opposed to these walls that you look at as opportunities for you to fail and to feel miserable.

So those are the thoughts that I have, the ideas that I wanted to share with you today. Bottom line, if you are finding that you are judging yourself, you're judging others, and this is not working for you, I highly encourage

Ep #8: Say Good-Bye to Self-Judgment

you to go through these suggestive exercises to try them on. See how they work for you and find out if this is something that speaks to you.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this podcast, I really do love hearing from you. I love hearing how this podcast has impacted you, and how you're applying the tools and the techniques and the teachings that we're covering in these podcasts. So please, please feel free to reach out.

If you did not catch last week's podcast, it was about goal setting. I created a goal setting framework. It's called GREAT! goals. I would highly encourage you to check that out if you haven't already. There's a download that goes with that episode. Again, it's episode number six. You can use that to create your goals and use that formula to really move forward.

So that's all I have for you today. I am delighted to have you here. I really hope to have you join me again next week. For any of you who are interested in working with me, I do work with lawyers one to one in coaching capacity. By all means, feel free to reach out. I would absolutely love to hear from you. So have a great week everybody. I'll look forward to seeing you next time. Bye for now.

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