

36: The Secret to Having Better Relationships



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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36: The Secret to Having Better Relationships

Welcome to The Wealthy Mom MD Podcast, a podcast for women physicians who want to learn how to live a wealthy life. In this podcast you will learn how to make money work for you, how you can have more of it and learn the tools to empower you to live a life on purpose. Get ready to up-level your money and your life. I'm your host, Dr. Bonnie Koo.

Welcome to episode 36. I hope everyone had an amazing Thanksgiving week/weekend. I know definitely probably didn't look like what it has looked like in the past. We just had a very small dinner with our immediate family. I feel super lucky that we all live within 10 minutes of each other and we've been able to form a family pod, so to speak.

So it was me, my fiancé Matt, Jack, my toddler, my brother and his wife, and my mom and her husband, who's my stepdad. So that's what we did for Thanksgiving. We had the usual. Stuff like turkey, et cetera, and one thing that we do that I think other families probably don't do is we have this infamous Thanksgiving lasagna.

Now, I say infamous because it's not because it's gourmet or particularly awesome. It's just something my brother and I grew up having because my mom always made it. And let's just say that people who are not part of the immediate Koo family think it's kind of gross.

But I think we all have that dish from childhood that maybe if we had it for the first time as an adult, we'd be like, this isn't actually that good. But if you grow up with it, it just reminds you of something from childhood, it's tradition, doesn't make sense, but you love it anyway.

So that's a little bit about how my Thanksgiving went and I hope yours went well as well. So when I first started Wealthy Mom MD, and for those of you who followed me way back when, when you knew my brand or website as Miss Bonnie MD, as you know, it's been primarily focused on money, finance topics, education, where I try to break them down into bite sized pieces.

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So basically it was primarily focused on financial education. And as I've learned more about money and started working with a coach myself, I started to realize that money is awesome for obvious reasons, but in the end, I think we all want to live a meaningful and fulfilling life, and in the end, money is just a tool that can help us achieve that.

But money in itself won't do that. I know we know that, but sometimes I think we need to repeat it and say it out loud. And that's one of the reasons why I chose the word wealthy for the new brand because it's not just about money. It's about living a truly wealthy life. A truly rich life, which involves money, but also involves the richness.

Things like meaningful relationships, purpose, et cetera. And so relationships is something I've been exploring a lot recently. One of the things I joke about is that none of us went to money school and none of us, at least most of us, didn't go to relationship school. Or at least I wasn't in school that day when that happened.

So when I was pregnant with Jack, that was about four years ago at this point, like many new moms, I started reading some baby books, some passed down to me, some I just ordered on Amazon. And one book I came across was a book called Brain Rules for Baby. And the tagline was How to Raise a Smart and Happy Child.

I do not recall how I came upon this book. It may have been recommended by someone, but I just don't remember. The author goes on to say that the key to being happy, which I think a lot of us want for our kids and for ourselves, but the key to being happy is to have high-quality relationships.

And he didn't just pull this out of his butt. He referenced a famous ongoing study at Harvard, sort of called the Harvard happiness study. Some of you may be familiar with this study, but basically, Harvard has been doing this study for decades.

And I don't know the exact details, but I believe they started serving graduates of one of their graduate schools, I don't remember which one,

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and it's been going on for decades. And I guess every year or so often, they send a survey and their goal was to figure out what traits, what qualities, what things contribute to happiness.

And so what they've determined is that the number one determinant of a person's "happiness" is having high-quality and meaningful relationships. So the Brain Rules for Baby author declared that you need to teach your kid how to be successful at relationships to teach them how to be happy.

Now, this might seem off-money topic, but really, it's not for a lot of reasons. Like I said earlier, our relationships not only enrich our lives and make us happy, but the people we spend time with, those relationships, they affect your bank account as well.

Now, you may have heard of things like you become the average of the five people you spend time with or something to that effect. Tony Robbins says proximity is power. And there's another saying that your net worth is the average of the people or the five people you spend the most time with.

And so I think relationships is such an important topic regardless of money or not, but it does definitely tie in with money. Now, for those of you who invest in real estate, as I do, real estate and business is all about relationships.

So such an important topic, such an important skill to develop. Now, from time to time I do some speaking. Recently virtual, obviously. And usually it's about money. But recently, I was asked to give a talk to physicians on connection.

Now, this was a symposium specifically for women physicians, and the theme was about thriving during the pandemic and about creating connection. And so I thought talking about relationships would be perfect. And so I'm basically going to rehash what I spoke about.

Obviously, this is a podcast though and not a video. And I did have some visuals, but I don't think they're necessary to talk about it. And so the talk

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was basically about how to have better relationships. Now, isn't that something we all want? And it's a skill that you can learn.

And so first, what I want to say about relationships is that relationships are so important. It's like in our DNA, meaning that we humans, we're meant to be in groups or tribes. All of us yearn for connection, and when we don't feel connection, we feel isolated and lonely and not happy, right?

And this year, more than ever, so many of us, including me, are feeling more isolated and disconnected. And so here's a question for you. Have you been feeling lonely lately or disconnected lately? And when I say lately, this was being recorded in 2020, the pandemic.

So depending on when you're listening to this, this may or may not apply. But pandemic or not, we all go through times where we feel a little disconnected from other people. Now, the best thing about learning how to have better relationships, at least in my opinion, is that you can improve the quality of your relationships and create connection without the other person doing anything differently.

I'm going to repeat that. You can have better relationships and create connection without the other person doing anything. Meaning that only you have to do something, or rather change your thoughts.

Now, some of you may be thinking, what? How is that possible? I think a lot of us grow up thinking it takes two to tango, right? It takes two people to be in a relationship, meaning one person or rather both people have to kind of give or take, so to speak.

Or maybe you're thinking well, what a bummer, because how many of us think that the relationship can't improve unless they change. So this might either be good or bad news, depending on who you're thinking about, right?

So before I go into this more, I first want to define what a relationship is. More importantly, what do you think is a relationship? How are you defining

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a relationship? Now, I find that when I ask this question, most of us have not really thought about this.

A lot of us kind of think that a relationship is something out there, meaning it's not inside of us, it's something between us and another person. But what exactly is that?

Have you ever considered that our relationships are simply what our thoughts are about another person and that they actually have very little to do with the other person? So let me illustrate that for you.

I want you to think about someone in your life that you have a close relationship with. Someone that you think fondly of. So maybe for you it's your spouse or a significant other or a close friend. Think about that person. How would you describe this person?

So I'm going to use my friend as an example. So I have a friend, Alison, I've known her for a very long time. We met during medical school. She's gorgeous, she's witty, she's fun, and loyal. It's easy to describe the people we love, right? So how is it possible that not everyone has the same exact thoughts about her?

Why isn't everyone who knows her in love with her the way I am? I want you to think about this. Because obviously, someone else, probably lots of people know Alison and have a completely different relationship with her. Why? How? She's still Alison, she hasn't changed. And that's because their relationship with her is dependent on their thoughts about her. Not her.

And honestly, this is the secret to relationships, when you truly understand this concept. Now that we know or at least we're open to the fact that relationships are our thoughts about a person, let's talk about these thoughts and why these thoughts are so important.

So as you know, this is sort of the hallmark of the type of coaching that I do, also called thought work. So just to remind you just in case it's been a

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while, a thought is simply a sentence in your head. It is that voice that is talking inside your head right now. Yes, that voice. That little voice.

Did you know that you have about 50,000 thoughts a day? Of course, most of them are subconscious, you're not really consciously thinking about them. How many of us think our thoughts happen to us and that they aren't necessarily optional?

Most of us also think we are our thoughts. Not only that, we believe our thoughts and we think they're true, like they're facts, meaning not changeable, right? So how does this relate to relationships and creating connection?

Connection is created by our thoughts. Remember the self-coaching model, our thoughts create a feeling, and the feelings create actions, which create our results. So connection is a feeling, just like acceptance and love. How many of us think that feelings just happen to us? Meaning we don't have any control over them, they just sort of pop up inside our bodies.

Well, what if that wasn't true? I mean, it's not a great way to live life, right? Being at the whim of whatever happens out there. So remember, our thoughts create our feelings. So let me bring this to my friend Alison to put this in this context.

So remember, thoughts are triggered by a circumstance and we define a circumstance as something out there, the what happened, the sort of neutral facts of the matter. And so in this instance, when we're talking about relationships, the circumstance is the person, the friend, whoever.

So in this case, the circumstance is Alison. So I'd say C equals Alison. And then you have a thought about the circumstance or the person or the friend or whoever because maybe they're not your friend. And then whatever I think about her creates what I feel about her, right?

Let's go through another example. Let's say your spouse or significant other or close friend of yours says some words. That's the circumstance.

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Literally the exact words they say. Then you have a thought about what they said, which creates an emotion.

But doesn't it often feel like the emotion just pops up into our body? We don't realize that it's not what the person said or even did. It's what we thought about it. So what does this all mean and why am I spending so much time on it?

So what does this all mean? It means love, connection doesn't just happen. It's created by our thoughts about a person. Your love for someone doesn't jump inside someone else's body and cause them to feel love because whether they feel love or not is created by their thoughts, which we can't control.

So now I want to take you through an exercise that could potentially and literally change your relationship with another person without them doing a thing. And so I want you to think about someone that you don't have connection with or feel love for and you want to do something about it. Rather, maybe there's someone that you don't have fond thoughts about and you're committed to or at least you're open to changing that.

At least play along. What do you have to lose, right? And so what I'm going to do is take you through a series of four questions. Now, these are adapted by someone named Byron Katie. She is - many consider her sort of the mother of modern thought work.

And so these are questions that I found, they're on her website, and I just modified them slightly for this exercise. And so for the purposes of this exercise, I want you to think of someone that you complain about, that you basically don't have great feelings about. And it's okay, I won't tell anyone, we all have people like that in our lives.

And so just think about that person and notice how you're feeling about that person. It's almost immediate, and you might not be fully aware of why you're feeling whatever you're feeling, and that's okay. If you do know what

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you're thinking about this person, go ahead and write that down. But if you're having trouble with that, I'm going to give you a prompt.

This is from Byron Katie. I want you to think about that person. So let me think about my person too. I'm just going to use the word Amy. I complain about Amy because... I complain about name of person because... fill it in with what he or she did or doesn't do rather.

So if you're listening to this and you're not driving or doing something important like that, you might want to pause the podcast right now and give yourself a few minutes to write this out. And if you're like most human beings, you probably don't just have one complaint about this person. You might have a lot.

So go ahead and fill it all out. Remember, I won't tell anyone. Okay, by now you should have at least one, if not five or 10 complaints about this person. Awesome. Just means you have a human brain, by the way.

Okay, so let's go through the four questions. I'm going to go through all of them and I'm going to go through them one by one in more detail. So the first question is, is it true? The second question is can you absolutely know that this is true? Number three, how do you react when you believe this thought? Number four, who would you be without this thought and which do you prefer and why?

Okay, let's go through them one by one. So remember, these are the four questions that you're going to ask yourself and I recommend journaling about based on this person you're thinking about, based on this person that you don't have great thoughts and feelings about.

The first question, is it true? Is this true? So whatever you're thinking, let me just give you an example. I complain about Amy because she betrayed me. So with that first question, is this true? And this is a yes or no question. And for some of you, you might think well yeah, she did betray me, of course she did.

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Okay, so depending on yes or no, so if it's no, you're going to move on to question three. But if it's yes, meaning that no, it's actually true, when you go to question two and question two is can you absolutely know that it's true?

And many of you might be thinking yes, it's true. And this is where we want to question this a little bit. Because what exactly does being true mean? Now, I use the phrase she betrayed me. So this is an opportunity for me to really unpack that sentence, like what does that even mean?

And usually, there's a story about what happened. And so you might have to spend some time writing out your story of how this person betrayed you. This is just an example that I'm using, but you get the point.

Now, question three is how do you react or what happens when you believe that thought? Now, you can imagine that if I'm thinking that this person betrayed me, I'm going to feel pretty terrible. I'm going to feel almost self-righteous like she did something bad to me, right? It doesn't feel good, I'll tell you that.

Number four, who would you be without this thought and which do you prefer and why? I'm going to repeat that. Who would you be without this thought and which do you prefer and why?

If I truly believe that Amy betrayed me, I am obviously going to withdraw, I'm going to probably think not so great thoughts about this person and maybe tell other people that. It doesn't feel good. Even if I think I'm right, it still doesn't feel good.

And so when I ask myself who would I be without this thought, I probably have a lot more acceptance. I'd probably forgive and move on. And then when I ask myself which do I prefer and why, and sometimes, this is an interesting question because who wouldn't want to feel not terrible about someone?

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But what I find often is our brains want to be right. We want to be certain. And even though we feel terrible when we think about this person, we think we're right about what they did to us and how we feel about them is right. But that doesn't feel good. It feels tight, at least it does in my body, it makes me feel disconnected in the moment with that person.

So here are some other prompts to help you with this question. What emotions or feelings arise when you believe that thought about this person? And when you're thinking about this, what sort of comes up for you in terms of like, images that flash in your mind about this person in the past?

And I love that question, which do you prefer and why? Because this is where I want you to think about how do you treat yourself and others when you believe this thought about this person? I recommend, and I should have said this earlier, that when you first do this exercise, I recommend you do it with someone where the feelings aren't so charged, where the thoughts aren't so charged about this person.

Because if you're thinking about someone that you have a sordid history with, like maybe your mom or someone close in your life, this may be a little difficult to do. And so I do want you to try this exercise for the first time with someone where maybe it's somebody at work. Maybe it's a patient. Maybe it's an acquaintance, where it's not taking up a lot of space in your life but you also know you don't have great thoughts or feelings about that person, or you don't think you have a great relationship.

But it's not like taking up a lot of space in your life. Start with that. And then you can move on to some more charged relationships. At least that's my recommendation anyway.

Okay, now as we go into the holidays, usually this is a time of the year that we're thinking a lot about the relationships in our lives, whether it's family members or other people, it's just what happens during the holidays, right? And so I hope these four questions will really help you examine what you're

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thinking about another person and you get to decide whether you want to keep those thoughts about them or not. You really do.

And so I hope this exercise was well worth it. I hope you get to see that you really can change the quality of your relationships just by changing what you think about that person. And I plan to do some more episodes about relationships because this is just one aspect of relationships and there are so many other tools that I can teach you about relationships and I'm looking forward to doing that in the future. If you've enjoyed this episode so far, I would love it if you wrote a review.

Hey if you're a woman physician who is ready to practice medicine on your terms, then you've got to check out my program, Money for Women Physicians. It's part course and part coaching, and 100% guaranteed to put more money in your pocket. Go to wealthymommd.com/money to learn more.