

Episode 004



Choosing vs. Accepting Your Self-Concept

January 24, 2021

Well, hello friends.

It's a chilly drizzly gray day in Dallas, which is kind of unusual. And I'm going to be honest, I kind of love it.

One of the reasons is that my house has a fireplace and most days of the year it's too warm to use it. But today – because the overcast weather is giving me permission - after recording this podcast, I'm just going to enjoy an afternoon of sipping a bit of coffee, curling up in front of the fire and reading a book. One of my **favorite** things and for some reason, I so rarely spend my time that way. On a day like this, it's like the universe truly has given me permission to be indulgent.

Don't know why I wait for the weather to give me permission to indulge. I'll have to explore that a bit.

But honestly, I can't wait. One of my favorite things.

Anyhow, today we're going to talk about another one of my favorite things and that is about how we see ourselves.

Specifically, the importance of **choosing vs. accepting your self-image**. And how to do that.

Have you ever really spent time thinking about how you think about yourself?
Your self-concept?

So many of us don't. And yet it's SO important.

And I think that's why we're all on this never-ending quest for what's next. Why so few of us relish where we are and appreciate WHO we are in the moment – no matter the job we have, the partner we have, the things we have.

And why no matter what we achieve or get, for too many of us, it's never enough.
Or never quite right.

If you can relate to this even a little, this episode is for you.

Because we're going to explore why most of us accept the self-concept that is either assigned by others or shaped automatically by our brain as a response to what happens to us.

AND, we're going to talk about self-concept as something that you can choose and how and why you should do that. I call it the Self Blueprint.

So, let's dive in.

Most of us think about ourselves in the context of where we are in the moment. In our life. In our career.

So, if things are going well, we tend to feel good – or at least more positive - about ourselves and our prospects.

But if circumstances are more challenging, most times we feel less positive or optimistic about who we are and what is possible for us.

And this is the challenge when our self-concept is shaped by factors outside of vs. one that we choose and believe because we know who we are NO. MATTER. WHAT.

One of the concepts I work on with my clients is something I call the Self Blueprint.

A great way to explain this concept is by looking at an architect creates a house.

They don't just show up at the job site and start picking up lumber and hammering nails until they see what they get. And they don't take random advice of passersby on what the house should be.

This wouldn't make sense. It would end up a thrown together mashup of building materials. It would not be a purposeful structure in terms of design – so probably not too pleasant to look at.

And it probably wouldn't be very sturdy either since it was so random. The structure would probably not be as solid and in more troubling times – like a storm or a tornado or a hurricane - it might not be able to withstand it.

It's the same with us. If we have a self-concept that is just a thrown together mashup of things bosses, friends, teachers have said we are it's probably not likely that we'll get where we want to go.

Why?

Because it wasn't intentional. Because it comes from outside yourself. Because much of it might not serve you. Because it's not cohesive.

So when adversity comes – and our careers are full of that – a shaky mashup of a self-concept won't be built to withstand it.

A layoff. Passed over for promotion. A challenging meeting. A bad review.

Before you know it, you feel like your very foundation has been ripped out from under you and you question fundamental things about yourself.

Am I good enough?

Why can't I get it together?

This path must not be meant for me.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

Let's go back to the architect example. The architect starts with an idea – a concept. Like what kind of house to build. A one story, two story, multi-level townhome?

And from there, they make an endless series of very intentional choices.

What style of house? Contemporary. Traditional. Mid Century Modern. Farmhouse.

And from there, they choose materials, finishes and colors.

Along the way, they build the infrastructure of the house so that it lasts. It can withstand volatile shifts in weather and the passage of time. It's built to last.

No matter what happens on the outside, structurally it's solid. It has more than just an attractive exterior or façade, it has been built to stay solid for the life of the structure.

The same is true for you.

When you're ready to think about – not who you think you are right now but who you CHOOSE to be no matter what – it's helpful to use a concept I call the Self Blueprint.

There's a lot more to this than what I can cover in this podcast. We go deep into this in my Next Level membership, but in general, here's how it works.

The Self Blueprint is about doing an 'internal audit' of your qualities. From the least positive and perhaps more common to the most positive and /or unique.

You start with the audit because it forces you to think about your self-concept – how you see yourself – in a non-emotional, more pragmatic way.

Back to the house example, the Self Blueprint lets you evaluate YOUR houses' features and attributes. To think of them as purely optional.

What do you have that you like and that differentiates you?

What amazing new features would you like to install?

What do you have that you'd rather remodel?

What do you have that you'd like to rip out or "demo"? (I've been watching a lot of HGTV lately).

So, to do that, we need to ask ourselves four questions.

The first is what are some good and solid (meaning maybe not unique, but still positive) qualities about you that are true no matter what? Meaning you have them today and they're just part of how you show up in the world?

For example, maybe you're punctual. Or reliable. Or loyal. Or positive. Or collaborative. I think it's helpful to just keep writing and capturing all of it, no matter how small or insignificant. What are all the good things about you that you like? When you get stuck, just keep asking yourself, what else? And write down everything that comes up until you're done.

Second, ask yourself what some of your more challenging qualities are that perhaps you'd like to discard or bring to neutral. Think of these are qualities that might be getting in your way.

So, for me, this is impatience. It's something I have continually worked on and I've gotten better, but it's doubtful anyone will ever say, "wow, Carla is just SOOOOOO patient." Hahaha.

We all have those things that are in there that we'd like to erase. And they can hold us back if we're not aware of them. The first part of minimizing them is to take note of them. So, start writing.

The third thing to ask yourself are what are some good qualities you have that maybe you don't use a lot. That you'd like to strengthen. You occasionally see glimpses of them but you're inconsistent.

And finally, what are some new and unique qualities that you'd like to choose to cultivate. These would be highly distinctive. Your x-factor. And yes, you don't have to be born with it. You can choose something(s) that you want to be known for and work at it. Study it. Learn it.

Do this exercise. Spend time with it.

Think about yourself as a house that you have an opportunity to remodel. Choose the style, the materials, the finishes.

Take your time. Capture all the things. Examine them. Consider them.

Choose the things you want to discard and keep.

And carefully select the amazing new features you want to install.

This is a new year, my friends.

I think we all hope it's not quite as challenging as 2020. But I can promise you, it WILL bring challenges. Storms, if you will.

Layoffs.

Challenging meetings.

Politics.

Disappointments.

Setbacks.

Criticism.

And so much more.

But if you take the time – NOW – to get clear on who you KNOW you are and are choosing to BECOME vs. who others have told you, you are you'll be able to withstand it. To stay strong in the middle of the storm because you KNOW who you are.

Even when you fall.

Even when you're not perfect.

And even when you are.

Remember, you get to decide not only what you're going after this year and in the years to come, but even more importantly, WHO YOU WILL BE WHILE YOU DO IT.

Choose how you want to see yourself.

Let it sink in.

Own it.

And then live it.

Until next time, make it a great week my friends.