

Episode 007



Negative Motivation (Inner Critic #2 of 4)

February 14, 2021

Well hello friends. I hope you had an AMAZING week.

Mine was productive, though a bit challenging.

It started off with my Chiefs losing the Super Bowl – that said, I’m still SOOOOO proud of them for making it to back-to-back Super Bowls.

We lost. It wasn’t great.

And all I’m going to say is two things.

1. It wasn’t our night.
2. Fall is coming.

So enough about that.

The other thing that’s made is a challenging week I that it’s been SUPER cold in Dallas. 16 degrees – yes...I said sixTEEN.

With a minus 3-degree wind chill.

MINUS

THREE.

Holy. Moly.

And I know, I know.

A few episodes ago, I was bragging about how tough I was.

A Midwest girl used to a long frigid winter and so these rare cold days are SUCH a treat.

Well...I’d just like the weather GODs to know that I take it ALL back.

You hear that? I take it back!

This Midwest girl has gone soft. There are no words for how cold I am at this moment.

And I'd do just about ANYTHING to get my 60 degrees back.

HAHAHA

Anyway, the one bright spot is we did get a light dusting of snow. It's on the ground, but you can still see the grass poking through.

And, I DID get to have my fireplace on ALL DAY, which I love.

But I'd like it to be known that I'm officially ready for Spring.

Who's with me?

HAHAHAHA

In last week's episode, we talked about **Soothing Your Inner Critic** and I promised that all month, we'd explore the various ways our inner critic shows up and tries to stop us from stepping into the fullest version of ourselves.

So today, we're going to talk about our Inner Critic from the perspective of motivation.

Specifically, we're going to explore one of the inner critic's favorite approaches, called Negative Motivation.

So, let's dive in.

The word MOTIVATION is typically seen as a good thing.

But, like everything in life, there's both a light and dark side of motivation.

There's positive motivation which is all about moving TOWARDS PLEASURE.

Surprisingly, the anticipation of pleasure or reward is not as strong a motivator as the other side, which is NEGATIVE MOTIVATION.

This is all about the desire to AVOID PAIN.

And for most of us, this type of motivation is very compelling.

Few of us like to fail or experience pain or the negative consequences of NOT doing something we were supposed to do, so we will literally do almost anything to avoid that.

This is called negative motivation. The desire to avoid experiencing pain or failure.

We all experience this regularly in our job. For example, if our boss sets a deadline for that report. Or you have a monthly sales quota or whatever.

Most of us will pull out all the stops to do that thing.

And there's nothing with that. This type of negative motivation spurs us on. It keeps us on task.

There's nothing berating or nasty about it. We simply apply ourselves and get the job done so we can avoid the pain of NOT doing the thing.

But there's a second version of negative motivation – one that is typically delivered by our inner critic.

This is negative motivation with a twist.

It has all the components of negative emotion – a compelling thing we must do, a sense of urgency, and a sense of consequences if we DON'T do it.

But when the inner critic gets involved, the negative emotion comes with a twist.

And this is when negative motivation moves from a simple and natural desire to accomplish something, so we avoid pain, to an internal tyrant that sucks the life force from us.

When I say it comes with a twist, here's how it works.

The inner critic might say things like:

“You better get busy, or else.”

“If you make another mistake, it'll be your last.”

“You shouldn't have waited so long.”

“If you don't hurry, it'll be too late.”

Part of the inner critic's negative motivation is helpful. It's trying to get you to do something.

To move. To act.

The problem is that it adds a threat or an accusation to the sentence.

It's the brain's way of trying to get your attention.

To let you know that there's a lot at stake and to make it happen, it's going to take everything you've got. And that part is fine.

It's the threat part that's the issue.

Typically, because the voice is coming from “inside us” it knows our greatest fears and vulnerabilities, so it goes for the jugular to motivate us.

So, the threat strikes a chord.

It causes you to feel fearful or uncertain.

This means that every action you take to try to get that goal, comes from a feeling of fear. Anxiety.

And that is NEVER a good thing.

In addition, this type of negative motivation from our inner critic tends to happen over the LONG-TERM.

Which means that the nasty voice threatening and demeaning us is living in our head kind of permanently.

And so instead of it just being about spurring us on and trying to get us to accomplish something so we can avoid the pain, it actually does the opposite.

It makes us afraid.

It causes us to second guess ourselves and our abilities.

And we start to believe that we can't do it.

That we can only be motivated by threats.

Because we're lazy. Or unmotivated. Or not good enough. Or whatever.

And that's where the real danger happens.

We develop neural pathways in our brain that are around who we think we are when it comes to achieving something.

And that we can only be trusted to do something when it comes with a veiled threat.

I see this all the time with my coaching clients.

We'll talk about that thing they want to go do and they'll say all these things.

“I better put the pedal to the medal.”

“If I’m not careful, it’ll be too late.”

“I can never do xyz.”

So much more.

And as we start to unwind it a bit, it becomes obvious that when it comes to the THINGS they do and the RESULTS they get, they are equally critical.

Even if they DO get that thing they wanted, they’ll tear themselves apart because they didn’t do it FAST enough or PERFECT enough or whatever.

And what’s the REAL problem with the Inner Critic’s negative motivation.

We believe that if that nasty, accusing voice isn’t always there, that we can’t be trusted to do the things we want to do.

It erodes our self-confidence.

And convinces us that nothing is EVER enough.

So therefore, neither are we.

And like last week, I want to say that the answer to how to deal with this form of your inner critic is to see it.

Become the ‘watcher’ or the ‘observer’ of the thoughts in your head.

And when you see those motivational thoughts that comes with a nasty, accusing twist, know that this is from the inner critic.

These thoughts are not true.

It I simply your brain trying to motivate you to accomplish something.

And because it’s coming from inside you, it KNOWS ALL your vulnerabilities and so it goes right for the jugular.

You don't have to listen to it.

You can simply observe it.

Have compassion for that voice because you know it's just a concerned friend, trying to ensure you do that thing you want to accomplish.

And then, choose a different thought you want to think instead.

Maybe something like "I've got this."

Or "Don't worry, we'll get this done."

Remember, your inner critic is not trying to cause you long-term harm, after all, it's part of you.

But if you let it run unchecked and ever worse, if you start to BELIEVE its misguided attempts to keep you safe...it can seriously erode your self-esteem.

Don't let that happen.

Stay aware of the thought your brain is serving up.

And when they come with a nasty little threat, simply ignore them and choose a thought that DOES serve you.

And know that you CAN do everything you dream of without having to have it come from a place of fear or anxiety.

That's what you deserve.

Until next week

Make it a great week my friends.