Mel Robbins Keypoints — Confidence, Self-Doubt & Mindset

Mel Robbins Keypoints

Episodes in this pack: 40

Give Me 60 Minutes and I'll Eliminate Your Self-Doubt Forever | Benny Blanco and Mel Robbins

Guest: Benny Blanco
Date: 2026-09-03 · Duration: 1:00:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzUxCN-ZFfU

KEYPOINTS

• Start now and move the idea 3.5 inches

Benny Blanco grew up in Virginia with no famous parents or money and says he isn't especially talented. His point is that most goals are reachable if you start. People stall on setup, like whether to use a typewriter, a phone or longhand, and three weeks go by. Pick the idea you're too embarrassed to tell anyone and move it "three and a half inches forward" today. What you start may not be where you end up. At 11 he wanted to be the world's biggest rapper.

• Fear of embarrassment drives the what-ifs

People hold back because they picture friends mocking a post, a video getting zero views, or being cut from a team or told they can't act. Blanco says fear of embarrassment is learned and doesn't match reality: "I fail every single day."

• Have "amnesia to failure"

A successful friend noticed Blanco wakes up after a flop and carries on as if nothing happened. His logic is that if you forget the failure, everyone else will too. He demonstrated with a whiteboard covered in the word "failure" that he wiped clean. Nobody keeps a scorecard on your life except you, "and if they are, they're an a-hole."

• Show up, then find the room

His first two rules are to show up every day and get into the room, physical or digital. If you're there when someone else isn't, you become the next best option, and being in the room means you either learn something or get a chance.

• You'll never feel ready, so go all in with conviction

Mel reads from his book: wait to feel prepared and "I will come back to check on you in 5 years and you will still be standing exactly where you are." He describes the pre-launch nerves as "it's about to happen" fear, not fear of doing it. If you can sell the dream to yourself and the people around you, things start moving your way.

• Rejection usually hurts less than you remember

Ask yourself honestly how bad the last rejection was. It's like being turned down for a date as a kid: embarrassing for a few hours, then forgotten. It will be harder than you expect and you'll want to quit, but quitting "just open[s] the door" for the next person trying the same thing.

• Success means giving everything, then learning

Blanco is competitive until the result is in. If he gave it everything, he counts it as a success whether or not it charted. His way of letting go is to ask, "What else could you have done?" He's only upset with himself if he held back. A failure stays a failure only if you didn't learn from it.

• Doing it and not doing it are both hard, so pick the hard that leads somewhere

Mel says sitting in self-doubt and watching others go after things is painful too. Blanco agrees that kids, relationships and jobs all get hard. If it's all hard, choose what could bring relief instead of "a hole of misery."

• The real skill is showing up for decades without feeling like it

Blanco still has impostor syndrome; he felt it walking into the studio full of crew that day. Mel's summary is that it doesn't get easier. You keep questioning yourself and show up anyway. On a bad day he says, "Today, I couldn't do it," and works harder tomorrow.

• Life is a three-legged stool

Name your three legs: Mel chose family and relationships, purpose and impact, and health. Wealth with children who hate you means the stool falls. Blanco says he got all three working only in the last five years and feels more stable than ever. When one leg wobbles, step back and fix it first.

EXAMPLES

• Cold-calling as "Jay-Z's people"

At 10 or 11, with no connections, his mom drove him to recording studios, where he waited outside and asked people who came out if they made music. Using the school library computer at lunch, he found out who represented Snoop Dogg or Tupac and called Interscope asking for Jimmy Iovine, claiming to call for Jay-Z. When he got through he'd admit who he was and get hung up on. But he befriended interns and receptionists, some of whom now run companies. He met his manager at 16 and has worked with him for more than 20 years.

• The East Side saga

After watching The Defiant Ones backstage at Gillette Stadium, Ed Sheeran asked, "What are we doing with our lives?" and then walked out to play for 75,000 people. Blanco decided to become an artist himself. Sheeran turned down a feature and Justin Bieber didn't reply. Halsey recorded her verse in about 20 minutes. Khalid signed on, then wanted to redo his vocals a day before mastering. A deal dispute held the song back about 10 months until one last phone call settled it. After a slow start it made what Blanco calls the longest climb to number one in radio history.

• Mel's rock bottom

At 41, with three kids under 10, Mel and her husband were $800,000 in debt with liens on the house and no job. After months of drinking, blaming and envy, she decided on a Tuesday morning in February 2008: "If I actually want to change my life, prove it."

• A fear of flying, worked around and faced

After rough flights in 2009 and a seatback TV that flew loose on a flight back from London, Blanco mostly stopped flying. He took trains, cross-country drives and tour buses, flying only a handful of times. To finish Ed Sheeran's Divide album in Suffolk, they took a 7.5-day boat trip from New York to London, watched Titanic on board and made much of the album there. He flew

again recently for his book tour, scared, and then "ate tacos."

- **The partner list**

With his therapist, Blanco wrote broad must-haves. First was "age appropriate," then kind and compassionate, then someone who generally wakes up happy or actively works on it through therapy, medication or yoga. If someone didn't meet the first five or six, he didn't pursue it. He knew Selena Gomez for about 15 years, working together twice, before she asked him out. He didn't realise the first date was a date.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Today's action plan**

List what you want to do, whether that's 1 thing or 20. Pick one. List the first steps it needs. Then move it at least a centimetre today and keep the momentum, accepting days when it stalls or slips back. "You can't fail if you don't quit."

- **Ask "what if it all works out?"**

Mel's counter to spiralling what-ifs: what if one more call or one more ask closes the deal? Blanco's mother never chased modelling or painting because she was taught to follow the script and "not make a mess." He wrote his book to push back on that.

- **Remember that their day starts when you walk in**

Blanco gets home exhausted at 8, and Selena's evening with him is just starting. Listening and connecting is another kind of success. Mel admits her husband of 32 years often gets the worst of her.

- **Write your own partner criteria**

Focus on how someone treats themselves and you, whether they make you laugh, and whether you'd happily skip going out to stay home with them. Mel adds that writing the list is itself a way of saying you're worth it, which helps if you tend to settle.

If You Only Watch One Video This Week, Make It This One

Guest: Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce
Date: 2026-08-03 · Duration: 1:24:43
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylswUDZVgWM

KEYPOINTS

• Excellence starts with a decision to leave average behind

Shelly-Ann grew up in Waterhouse, Kingston, sharing one room with her mother (who had her at 17) and two brothers. There, she says, 'dreaming is a luxury.' Her first instruction is to decide who you want to be and where you want to be in 5–10 years. Then, every morning, put one foot in front of the other. A champion mindset isn't just winning; it's 'trusting the promise you've already made to yourself.'

• Your own voice must be the loudest voice in the room

Stop asking permission to be great from people who don't know your gifts or what you're chasing. Outside voices, including 'too old,' 'too young' or 'you've had enough,' are white noise. Mel's version: maybe the problem is listening to the announcers calling the play. Shelly-Ann's line: those people 'are at the ceiling of their imagination, not yours.'

• A lot can change in a year, if you're consistent at small things

She went from relay reserve at the 2007 World Championships in Osaka to Olympic 100m champion in 2008. What changed was consistency: being at 5 a.m. practice at 5, not 5:30, and changing how she ate. 'For the person chasing mediocrity, one year is small. For the person chasing greatness, one year is a lot.'

• Owning your own outcome changes how you compete

In Osaka she cried when told she would run, terrified of failing three relay teammates. She ran the heats but not the final. She went home wanting to stand on the line where 'anything I lose, it's mine to lose; anything I win, it's mine to win.' In Beijing her dream was only to make the final, yet she had already told a teammate how she would scream if she won.

• Visualization is free preparation, and elite sprinters train it weekly

Fridays are mental training, not running. She rehearses races months ahead, down to the smell of the stadium and the starter's 'on your marks,' so on race day her body knows it's 'go time.' She claims the mind can't fully tell imagined from real, which is a loose summary of the research, so treat it as her experience. It wanders at first (she drifted to KFC and the beach), so she uses a cue to return: 'Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world.' Rehearse a presentation or hard conversation the same way.

• Watching your competitors helps them win

'When you focus on them, you're helping them win,' and they are probably focused on you. At the line she ignores every lane: 'I've never seen anybody win going backwards.' To learn from people you envy or resent, use the Jamaican saying 'eat the meat, leave the bone': take what's useful and drop the rest.

• Motivation changes; standards are who you are

Usain Bolt has said her longevity makes him feel like an underachiever. She credits standards, not feelings: motivation tied to a person or grudge disappears when they do. Some days she doesn't want to train; she goes anyway. 'Show up in spite of.'

• Build standards in small, personal steps, not New Year's resolutions

For someone who feels knocked down, start with one thing, like getting up, making your bed, having coffee and visualizing for 20 minutes. Write it down, add something a week later, and let it become routine. Undoing years of habits takes time. Your standards must be yours. Resolutions made because everyone else makes them are forgotten 'by the second of January.'

• Failure shows you how; losing only becomes final when you quit

She calls herself 'an expert at losing.' Wins can make you think you've got it all figured out, while failure shows you what needs work. Her coach told her that crossing the line, even in a loss, gives you something to evaluate, like switching routes after 20 minutes in traffic. Champions say 'back to the drawing board,' never 'I quit.'

• Pressure is a privilege, and it grows when you live in the past and future at once

'Nobody stones green mangoes': pressure means someone, including you, sees more in you. It swells when you replay old mistakes while fearing what's next. 'Compete where your feet are': breathe, return to your why and prepare for what's coming.

• Stop negotiating your mornings

Don't bargain with yourself ('maybe next week'). Decide and commit, because 'everything changes downstream when upstream is done right.' The only dream that hasn't been met is the one you haven't started.

EXAMPLES

• 2008 Beijing gold

She became the first Caribbean woman to win Olympic 100m gold. She dedicated it to her community's girls, her mother and her grandmother, whose one word when she chose to stay in Jamaica for university (UTech) instead of going overseas was 'Go.'

• The broken toe bone before Rio 2016

After titles in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013 and 2015, she fractured a sesamoid under her big toe, the bone behind push-off power. She couldn't get her foot into a spike, so she cushioned it, trained in the gym and pool, did rehab and won bronze, missing a third straight Olympic title.

• Doha 2019, two years after her son

Critics said a baby at almost 30 would end her career. Instead, she said, her son needed to see her chase her dreams so he knows he has permission to chase his. She won the world 100m, about 10.7, and celebrated with her 2-year-old on the track. A planned January 2018 toe surgery was dropped when she found out she was pregnant. The rest helped heal it about 80%, and she believes that 'saved my career.'

• Eugene 2022 at 35

In a sport where 28 is 'old,' she became the oldest world champion at 35, after a season with repeated 10.6-second runs. At the line she thinks only of her work, cues ('low at the block, drive powerful, get to 30') and past wins: 'You can't let the moment be

bigger than you.'

- **Mel's 2008 financial crisis**
  With three kids, liens on the house and a lost job, Mel says she screamed at her husband, Chris, for a year while replaying past mistakes. Change came only when she decided her purpose was to save the house and pay the debt. Then pressure felt like a push from behind rather than something crushing her.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make a Friday-style visualization habit**
  Pick one upcoming moment, such as a pitch, a breakup or an interview. Close your eyes and run it with every sense, seeing yourself do it 'not perfectly but powerfully,' and choose a phrase to pull your attention back.
- **Rest is training**
  'Nobody shows up and wins on an empty tank.' Recovery is as important as the work.
- **When the moment feels huge, go back to your wins**
  On hard days, recall specific past successes as evidence of what you can do, and tune out the 'lights' you can't control.
- **You can be more than one thing**
  She rejects the idea that being a mother and an elite athlete means doing both badly. You decide what it means, and you leave a blueprint for the next woman.

8 Simple Reminders You Need to Hear Right Now

Date: 2026-07-09 · Duration: 1:00:51
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlZCeOmKPP0

KEYPOINTS

• The word in listeners' messages is 'exhaustion'

Mel opens this solo episode by saying the word she keeps seeing in emails and comments is exhaustion: carrying too much, worrying too much, taking care of everyone while holding yourself to an invisible standard of having it all handled. Her lesson, which she says she has to keep relearning, is that you don't have to earn rest. The eight reminders are meant to steady you when your mind starts spinning and to make 'I can do today' feel true.

• Reminder 1: 'Twenty years from now, you'd give anything to be back in this moment'

The quote, from writer Rich Webster, continues: you'd give anything to be 'this exact age, this healthy, and back in this exact moment. Take a second and enjoy it.' Mel points out that your past self once dreamed of the job, partner or kids now stressing you out, and your 95-year-old self would give anything to return to today, with the people who won't be around then.

• Enjoy the now by noticing, not fixing

The skill is seeing the good in the middle of the chaos. You can be exhausted and annoyed that nobody else fed the dog, and still look at the dog and appreciate having one, the dog your 16-year-old self dreamed of. If you can't drop into the present, Mel says, small irritations will steal your days.

• Reminder 2: pausing to ask 'Is this worth my energy?' is an underrated life skill

Big crises demand energy. What drains you are the constant tiny moments when you hand it away without noticing: the urge to react, fix, explain, prove, defend or spiral. Her new skill is to pause instead of projecting or reacting, then decide whether this deserves your energy given everything that matters to you.

• Reminder 3: learning to take nothing personally will change your life

Most of what people do has nothing to do with you. 'Let their mood be theirs. Your life is yours.' The person in front of you is carrying their childhood, whatever just happened at work, whether they've eaten and how well they handle stress. That's why you pick up on a tone and feel you have to manage their mood. Giving away your peace of mind is one of the quickest ways to lose your power.

• Reminder 4: if you wait until you feel better to live, you'll wait forever

From the account Awaken One: if you're sad, do it sad. Anxious, do it anxious. Uncertain, do it uncertain. Healing, happiness and change come from doing things, not before them. Mel adds that every long stretch of feeling lost, broke or alone in her life was followed by a period of growth.

• Reminder 5: you are responsible for your own happiness

Reading from page 297 of The Let Them Theory: you can have the life, love story, money or career you want. 'The question is, will you let yourself do it because no one else can stop you.' You're responsible for your energy, for defining what matters, for telling the truth when it's hard and for paying for your life. 'Nobody owes you anything but you. You owe yourself everything.'

• Stop playing victim to your own life

The moment you stop expecting others to make you happy or pay for your life, you stop living disappointed and start living on purpose. Bad things do happen, but staying stuck is a choice: 'I may not be responsible for where I am right now, but I sure as hell am responsible for what happens next.'

• Reminder 6: you can't change what happened, but you can change what happens next

Mel says she hates 'everything happens for a reason,' because terrible, undeserved things happen and life can be cruel. Her version: everything doesn't happen for a reason, but you can find a reason to move forward. Look for the lessons and the strength the experience built.

• Reminder 7: maturing means realizing that what others do isn't about you

Mel says people misread Let Them as allowing disrespect. It's the opposite: a boundary. You recognize what someone is doing, accept that you can't control them, and take your power back by deciding how much time and energy they get. Even when you choose to spend time with difficult family, you walk in seeing it coming instead of gaslighting yourself.

EXAMPLES

• The 9:17 p.m. Slack

Your boss messages at 9:17 p.m.: 'Can you meet first thing tomorrow?' Mel's brain pops up 'like a gopher,' assuming the evening is ruined. That's the moment to pause and ask whether it's worth your energy tonight. The same goes for the family member whose mood makes your body tense up in the kitchen.

• Carla Harris: 'No one is in your way'

After recording her episode, Wall Street leader Carla Harris told Mel's team it's time to put your foot on the gas. Half the world is distracted and the other half is paralyzed and exhausted, so 'no one is in your way.'

• Five hours in traffic, one painterly sky

Mel calls an ordinary day spent in the car for about five hours a great day because she noticed a bluebird sky with puffy 'painterly' clouds, white and grey with pink underneath. That one good thing made it a good day.

• Your life is made of Tuesdays

Mel borrows MIT's Dr. Joseph Coughlin's line: life isn't the vacations, promotions or someday moments. It's average Tuesdays, so a good life is built from small choices on ordinary days.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Reminder 8: 'Today is going to be a good day because I'm going to make something good happen'

Say it each morning as a decision about attitude, energy and boundaries, not a promise of perfection. Mel says this puts you ahead of '99% of people.' She adds that on genuinely terrible days, being sad or grieving is healthy.

- **Make one good thing happen**
  Text someone you love, go outside for 5 minutes, clean the kitchen counter, say no to something draining, say yes to something that matters, or do one thing you're avoiding. A good day is created, not stumbled into.
- **Boundaries are for you, not them**
  Your nos, time limits and 'I can't make it' remind you of what you will and won't do. Set them and hold them without apologizing and folding when someone gets upset. Not every conversation deserves access to you, a response or an explanation.
- **Pick your reminder**
  Choose the one reminder that hit hardest today. Write it down, say it out loud, share it, and come back to the episode when you start spinning. Mel's pick is reminder one.

Create a Happier Version of Yourself: Redirect Your Energy for Positive Thinking

Guest: Oakley Robbins
Date: 2026-07-02 · Duration: 1:01:00
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNEgsvoPQjQ

KEYPOINTS

• A four-question checklist tells you whether it's you or the situation that needs to change

Mel's 21-year-old son Oakley was 'the lowest I have ever seen' him for about 18 months of college, then came home bubbly. When the team pressed him on what had changed, four themes emerged: Are you comparing? Is your energy shrinking or expansive? Are you 100% in? Have you actually changed anything? Only if you can honestly tick all four and things still feel wrong is it time to change the situation.

• You can't open a new door while you're gripping the old one

Oakley had hated school until high school, where he blossomed. He knew most of the roughly 900 students, captained two teams, mentored freshmen and volunteered at a soup kitchen. He went to college mainly because 'everybody says you should,' and he started dreading it from move-in day. Every walk to class became 'this would be so much better if my hometown friends were here.' Mel says you cannot be content where your feet are if you keep comparing it to where you've been.

• Comparison breeds judgment, isolation and a fantasy version of the past

If you keep looking for reasons something doesn't measure up, that's all you'll see. Oakley noticed he had become 'very unlike me,' judgmental of new friends he'd given 'an unfair start.' Comparison also tells you the best days are behind you. Mel says past happy chapters do hold clues, though. The lesson isn't to recreate them but to apply what made them work, like saying yes and joining in, to the present.

• Check your energy: are you shrinking or expanding?

Crossed arms, leaning back, staying in on weekends and 'quietly quitting' a place, job or relationship are all forms of shrinking. Oakley says he was 'stubborn' and dreaded weekends, which felt 'like someone holding a mirror up to my face.' What's needed is the opposite: expand past your comfort zone and your stubbornness.

• Being right that the situation is wrong can feel safer than trying

Oakley admits it annoyed him that everyone seemed to know he just had to 'get off the floor.' When he did try (one club, one night out), he left early to prove it didn't work. Mel says one attempt isn't data: give it a year and try properly several times.

• It's unfair to judge a situation you're only 40% in

Having one foot elsewhere is like 'straddling two Clydesdales running in different directions.' Oakley's high-school girlfriend kept him commuting home, locking himself in his dorm for 7 p.m. calls and skipping weekends with friends. Mel kept driving back to Boston to see old friends instead of making new ones. Being elsewhere can also be mental, like a spouse who wonders aloud, after some wine, about a college ex.

• Close the exits

Mel borrows the phrase from Harville Hendrix's relationship work. Oakley and his girlfriend had broken up freshman year but kept talking, and got back together within two months 'because the exit was still right there.' Before his second semester, they ended it with no contact. He calls it awful at first, then 'a million times easier.' He admits he hadn't been a good partner while he was miserable anyway.

• If you change nothing, nothing changes

Ending the relationship made it feel like 'a disservice' to keep sitting in his dorm. Mel argues that every chapter is for the experience, whether that means learning you can make friends, finding inner strength or facing your own stubbornness. Your only power is in the changes you make. Whether that changes the situation or shows you it's wrong, both are breakthroughs.

• Letting go of the old chapter involves real grief

Oakley went back in January feeling both fear (no outlets) and excitement. The first weeks were hard. Mel describes saying goodbye to what was as 'almost like grief.' Sometimes we can't see a new chapter's opportunity because we aren't ready to say goodbye to the old one.

• Notice how long you're willing to tolerate unhappiness

Oakley's most unsettling insight is that he could live in sadness and loneliness for 18 months, became 'complacent and right about it,' and could have gone on longer. Mel says that's important self-knowledge. Life will bring more of these chapters, like friends scattering after college, breakups and new cities, so navigating change is a skill.

EXAMPLES

• Saying yes in January

Oakley rejoined the ultimate frisbee team he'd dismissed as unlike his high-school team. He went to every weekend invite, ate lunch with new people, and texted the 'mutuals' everyone says 'we should get lunch' to but never follows up with. The first one or two hangouts were awkward, and then they became natural.

• Four hours in the car in the rain

His turning point was an ordinary day: class, lunch with now-close friends, practice, then food with a friend. They sat in his parked car on campus in pouring rain for four hours talking about their lives. 'Oh my god, I did it.' He'd wanted a close guy friend for 18 months.

• Mel's miserable move to Vermont

After 26 years outside Boston, Mel moved to a town with 'more cows than people' and was sure it was a mistake, while Oakley was on cloud nine. She cried, bonded with two friends, Amy and Jesse, over hating it, and watched old friends on social media as if they were on a 'party barge in Boston Harbor.' She knew making friends would help but stayed in and complained.

• When it really is the situation

Mel's oldest daughter spent three years at a hybrid, international cybersecurity firm with an older workforce. She gave it 150%, starting a young-professionals group and getting a budget for it, and still didn't like it. She left with no regrets.

- **Tina Seelig's science of luck**
  Mel recalls the Stanford professor's point that 'lucky' people put themselves in the current of what they want through small actions, like walking into each room assuming your favourite person might be there.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **At a new job, audit your own outreach**
  Before deciding you're on the outside, count how many coffees, lunchtime walks, one-on-ones (even on Zoom) and non-job volunteer roles you've offered. Ask colleagues about their lives.
- **Tell the stuck person 'it's on you'**
  Oakley says what would have moved him sooner was hearing that no event or person would fix the chapter. He had to take the first step.
- **Run the checklist before you quit**
  Not comparing? Expansive? 100% in, with exits closed? Changed what you can for about a year? If you can tick all four and it's still wrong, change the situation and feel good about it. Mel closes with C.S. Lewis: 'There are far better things ahead than any we leave behind.'

How to Eliminate Self-Doubt Forever & Build Unshakeable Confidence

Guest: Dr. Shadé Zahrai
Date: 2026-05-11 · Duration: 1:16:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jd80_EKVb1A

KEYPOINTS

• You don't eliminate self-doubt; you strengthen the parts of you that move through it
Dr. Shadé Zahrai, a behavioural researcher with a PhD in organisational behaviour and author of Big Trust, says the doubt never fully goes away. What changes is your ability to act anyway. She has advised about 150 Fortune 500 CEOs and found that senior, high-achieving people often have more self-doubt, because they feel they have further to fall.

• Self-doubt is largely a story you project onto other people
Her anchor is a Dartmouth experiment by psychologist Robert Kleck (see examples). People who believed they had a visible scar read normal conversations as cold and judgmental. Her point: the 'scar' you think everyone sees (your weight, acne, a firing) shapes how you interpret every interaction.

• Confidence rests on four A's: acceptance, agency, autonomy, adaptability
Acceptance: you're a work in progress and worthy without others' validation. Agency: trusting you can do the thing, or learn how. Autonomy: believing you have some control over your life. Adaptability: in the context of doubt, being able to handle the emotions that come when something doesn't work out.

• If you don't like yourself, start by acknowledging nothing changes until you accept yourself
For people who simply don't believe they're worthy, she suggests building acceptance indirectly with tools (care-less list, decline scripts, hobbies) rather than forcing affirmations. Writing fears down gives them 'a physical outlet'; she says evidence suggests making them real gives you something to work with.

• People low in self-acceptance tend to fuse their identity with their job or role
So a bad work day feels like a verdict on you. Mel admits she cried the previous morning although things were 'objectively going amazing'. A hobby, or for full-time carers, something outside parenting, reminds you you're more than your title.

• Imposter feelings are common and a sign you're growing
The original 1970s–80s term was 'imposter phenomenon', not syndrome; a phenomenon comes and goes, while 'syndrome feels like a life sentence' (Mel's phrasing). She cites studies finding up to 82% of people have felt it. Step one: when you think 'I don't belong', shift to 'what an incredible opportunity to learn'. Step two: talk about it openly.

• Low autonomy shows up as complaining, blame, resentment and clinging to a wound
Complaining replays the situation vividly and, she says, deepens the neural pathway so it becomes your default and you notice more to complain about. Blamers point at traffic, partners or the team; resenters think everyone else has it easier; some people retell the same hard story a 20th or 30th time because holding the wound feels safer.

• 'Should' shrinks your thinking; 'could' reopens it
She says research shows 'should' language cuts off divergent thinking and makes you feel controlled. Swap to 'What could I do right now?', which commits you to nothing, then pick one to three items for an 'I will' list and actually do them. That brings your locus of control back inward.

• You avoid action when you doubt you can handle the feelings if it fails
Before you ask someone out or say yes, your brain runs a checklist of how it could go wrong and whether you could cope with the disappointment or 'I'm a failure' feeling. Getting better at handling emotions is what makes taking the step easier.

• Healthy teams and people need both humanness and courage
On a two-axis 'four square', humanness covers warmth, empathy, humour and collaboration; courage covers ownership, decisions, clarity, feedback and goals. High humanness with low courage produces the classic people pleaser. She uses this scale with Fortune 100 teams.

EXAMPLES

• Robert Kleck's scar experiment
In the late 1970s–early 80s, researchers painted a noticeable scar between the ear and mouth on one group and let them see it in a mirror. Just before the conversations, they 'set it with moisturiser', actually wiping it off. With no scar, those participants still reported tense, judgmental partners.

• Ping-pong ball versus golf ball
Both represent the same doubt (for Mel, noticing her jowls). The ping-pong ball floats on the water: you have the thought but it doesn't sink in. The golf ball sinks, sits at the bottom 'like an emotional weighted vest' and spills water, showing how you lose part of yourself carrying the doubt.

• The Citigroup logo on a napkin
When Citicorp merged with Travelers, designer Paula Scher sketched the logo on a napkin in seconds. She said it took 'a second and 34 years'; the client reportedly paid $1.5 million. Zahrai uses it to show your experience is the value.

• Hobby research
She cites a study of more than 93,000 people across 16 countries finding people with hobbies have more self-acceptance and higher self-esteem, and a study finding Nobel Prize-winning scientists were 3 times more likely than other scientists to have a hobby and 22 times more likely to have a creative one.

• Mel's pen-in-the-teeth reading
Mel read a passage from page 219 of Big Trust with a pen held between her teeth like a dog's bone, articulating every sound, then read it again without the pen. The exercise makes your normal speech clearer and more confident.

• Elizabeth Gilbert lowered her standards
Writing Eat, Pray, Love, Gilbert was stuck on a running 'this sucks' mantra, writing and deleting. She realised she had

promised to write, not to write brilliantly, and made 'write' the goal.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Care-less list**
  Split a page into two columns. On the left, write everything you want to care less about (your looks, strangers' opinions, family comments about your acne or weight) and notice how it feels to see it written.
- **Decline without apologising**
  Give a reason rooted in your own needs: 'Thank you for thinking of me. This weekend I'm focusing on rest and recovery, but I'd love to see it when you're all set up.'
- **Scheduled worry time**
  Keep a worry list during the day. Around 4–5pm (not near bed), set a 10–15 minute alarm and worry on purpose. Called stimulus control, she says research finds it effective because later review 'shrinks the fear to size'.
- **Opposite action and 'lift the chin, let's begin'**
  From dialectical behaviour therapy: when there's no physical threat, do the opposite of what your body wants. Sit forward, look at the person, shoulders back. She cites a recent study suggesting chin-to-chest distance drives the confidence effect of posture, so lengthen it.
- **One small step today**
  Her single action: pick one thing self-doubt is holding you back from, break it into the smallest possible step and do it.

#1 Celebrity Stylist: Do This Every Morning to Feel More Confident, Focused, & Put Together

Guest: Erin Walsh
Date: 2026-04-02 · Duration: 1:32:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CymU8nGrrjA

KEYPOINTS

• Before you open the closet, pause and ask: 'How do I want to feel today?'
Celebrity stylist Erin Walsh (Women's Wear Daily Stylist of the Year, author of The Art of Intentional Dressing, and Mel's Golden Globes stylist) builds her method on this one question. Mel admits she used to throw open the closet, think 'What am I going to wear?', paw through things that didn't fit, and end up discouraged. Just pausing to choose a feeling, before choosing clothes, changes what you reach for.

• Clothes are tools; style is the icing
Walsh calls herself something like a 'fashion therapist.' The clothes are the choices, and color, texture, silhouette, proportion and how each piece makes you feel tell the story. Trends and 'being a fashion person' aren't the point. The aim is to use what you wear to embody your best self, the 'supernova' version, the same way you'd use a morning routine or a mindset.

• Pick about three feeling words, and let them change with the day
Walsh finds three words useful. Her usual pattern is effortless, easy and elegant, but on some New York days she needs to feel like 'a boss' and reaches for bold energy. Bold doesn't have to mean bright color: it can be a strong silhouette, a big-shouldered jacket, suiting or structured pieces. Asking the question repeatedly reveals your own patterns.

• You likely already own the pieces; the question helps you see them
After learning the method, Mel saw clothes she never reached for that delivered exactly the feeling she wanted. No shopping required. Walsh's baseline exercise is to identify at least three pieces in your closet you feel great in. For her, one is an excellent pair of jeans.

• The method works on exhausted days too
Walsh stresses that she isn't 'fixed': she has three kids under 10, rarely gets a decent night's sleep and has a body that's 'not perfect.' On a 6:30 a.m. Tuesday with your energy on the floor, the question still works because it gives the day an intention.

• Start with the foundation: what goes on first
Mel, 57, confesses she has only worn matching bras and underwear for about a year, and asks why she clung to stained, stretched-out pairs instead of spending $10 on herself. Walsh says underwear is literally foundational, a small action that sets the baseline for everything else, at any age.

• Look better without losing weight: tailoring, proportion, structure
Asked how to look your best when you're not at your best, Walsh's first answer is tailoring, because most people wear clothes that don't fit their proportions. Even a bold-shoulder piece should honor the lines of your body. Structure means supporting your body's shape, not hiding cellulite, and you don't need a Hollywood tailor to do it.

• Stop hiding in clothes that don't fit, and let them go kindly
Mel had held on to a pair of pants for six years that her 'menopause body' no longer fit. Walsh's verdict: time to say goodbye, and that's exciting because you're becoming someone new. To ease the guilt about money spent, sell them, swap them at a closet party with friends, or donate them to a charity like Dress for Success.

• You need 'greatest hits', not a huge wardrobe
Look at the math of your week and month: how many work outfits do you actually need, and what's the story of your life right now? Build around the pieces you love most.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's Wonder Twins boots
During a production week of nine episodes in four days, while sick with a sinus bug and feeling 'ugly and puffy,' Mel skipped her uniform of the same black shirt and pants she'd worn for about 10 years. Instead she pulled on the knee-high boots from a Golden Globes event (worn often 'to get the price per wear down'). She felt 'invincible' and says that intentional choice carried her through the week.

• Leggings at the desk vs. pulling yourself together
Mel admits her exercise clothes are old and mismatched, and she'll sit at her desk in leggings all day, 'and then you wonder why you don't feel worthy.' On days she showers and pulls herself together, she feels different. The six-word question makes that effort feel like it matters.

• Jessie, nearly a year postpartum
A team member and new mom had been living in oversized, comfortable clothes that work for chasing a crawling baby, but she never felt she looked good, and she described the toll as unexpected. The weight 'isn't going to fall off tomorrow,' so she sees clothes and confidence as her starting point for the next year.

• The producer who 'dressed like an 11-year-old boy'
The episode's producer, empty-nester with 17 menopause pounds she isn't happy about, didn't want the assignment ('I'm not a clothes person') and owned 11-year-old underwear. She describes her old approach as a 'really low bar': whatever was clean. Trying the question changed how she got dressed.

• Cindy's pearls
Cindy, a grandmother, breast cancer survivor and recent knee-replacement patient who works flexibly on Mel's team, usually stays in pajamas until 9. After filming in her closet, she realized she reserved the pearls her kids gave her for her 65th birthday for nights out. She decided to wear them during the day: 'Why not?'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Morning routine in three steps**
  Pause at the closet door. Ask 'How do I want to feel today?' and pick about three words. Then choose pieces, colors and silhouettes that deliver those feelings, starting from the underwear up.
- **Closet cleanout options**
  Try things on honestly. Sell, swap at a party with friends, or donate (e.g. Dress for Success) anything that doesn't fit your current body or life.
- **Quick fit fixes**
  Tailor key pieces to your proportions, choose structured garments that support your shape, and keep at least three 'feel great' items, such as excellent jeans, ready for low-energy days.

This Simple Mindset Shift Will Change the Way You See Your Life

Guest: Dr. Maya Shankar
Date: 2026-03-26 · Duration: 0:52:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6POJ8FWyNw

KEYPOINTS

• Ask how the future version of you will handle a change

Dr. Maya Shankar is a cognitive scientist with an Oxford PhD, a former senior adviser in the Obama White House, and author of The Other Side of Change. Her core reframe: when you dread a change, don't ask 'How am I going to get through this?' Ask 'How will the new version of me navigate this?' The person you are now won't be the one facing that future moment.

• Change is scary partly because of the 'illusion of control'

Our brains dislike uncertainty, and most people 'wildly overestimate' how much they control how life turns out. When a divorce, a diagnosis, a layoff or a death proves otherwise, it can make us question who we are. Shankar says the pain is real and there are no instant fixes. Small shifts in perspective still help.

• We're bad at predicting how change will affect us

We treat who we are today as the 'final, fully enlightened version' of ourselves. But as change happens to us, it also creates lasting change within us. So our forecasts about how unbearable something will be leave out the growth the change itself produces.

• Big changes slam doors on our 'possible selves' and open ones we fear

Psychologists describe three kinds of possible self: hoped-for (dreams), feared (anxieties) and expected (what's most likely). Shankar's example: she'd love to be the next Taylor Swift, but in five years she's likely still a cognitive scientist. When change hits, hoped-for and expected doors close and feared ones open. She argues our imagination for new possibilities is often too narrow, shaped by stereotypes and social norms.

• Identity foreclosure: locking in an identity too early

This means anchoring your identity to one thing before exploring other options. For her it was 'I'm going to be a concert violinist.' It's why losing a role, like star athlete, top student or a job title, can feel like losing everything. 'We don't know how much something has come to define who we are until we lose it.'

• Look for the essence underneath what you lost

Asking what drew her to the violin, Shankar realized it was a love of human connection, which she could express in other ways, including through conversations like this one. The grit, fearlessness, skills and knowledge from a lost pursuit carry over to what comes next.

• Cognitive reappraisal: change the story, change the feeling

Reframing a situation changes how you feel without denying the facts or the unfairness. Mel's example is grief expert David Kessler's swap from 'what if' to 'even if.' She used it that morning with her mom after a friend died suddenly, and notes it works for breakups too.

• Distraction isn't always avoidance

Shankar pushes back on the idea that distraction makes buried feelings come back worse. Research is more complex. If Netflix, a friend or a run brings you joy and you're not actively suppressing anything, it's likely a healthy tool. Reading also lets us try on other identities through characters.

• Discomfort is how the brain stays sharp

Every time you put yourself in an uncomfortable learning situation, she says, you're using neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to rewire itself. That's a reason to choose some changes even when they feel uncertain.

• Motivation dips in the middle of a goal

We get a burst at the start (New Year's Day, hunting for gym shoes) and another near the finish, like the final stretch of a marathon, with a lull in between. A year-long goal has a roughly three-month slump. Break it into week-long goals and the middle shrinks to a couple of days.

EXAMPLES

• Walking into Juilliard at nine

Shankar started violin at six on her grandmother's dusty instrument from India. At nine, her mother marched her into Juilliard uninvited ('what's the worst that could happen?'). Thirty minutes later she was auditioning for a teacher, who offered a summer boot camp. She got in that fall and later studied with Itzhak Perlman.

• One note at 15

Playing a hard technical piece at Perlman's summer program, she overstretched her pinky, heard a pop and damaged tendons. Doctors called it career-ending. In denial, she kept practicing through pain on heavy anti-inflammatories before accepting it.

• The gratitude list she didn't want to make

After six or seven years of trying to start a family, she and her husband Jimmy lost identical twin girls carried by their surrogate. Jimmy suggested a gratitude exercise and she told him to take his 'Instagram BS' and toxic positivity to the corner. When she finally did it, she realized tunnel vision had made her forget how rich her life was. Psychologists call this a self-affirmation exercise: write down every meaningful identity that the change hasn't threatened.

• Her dad's summer assignment

Facing college with no music major, her dad said she'd been 'wearing blinders for 10 years' and told her to spend the summer on documentaries, books, TV and other people's stories, with no end goal, so she wouldn't close doors early.

• Taylor Swift only at the gym

Her favorite tool is 'temptation bundling,' developed by her friend Katie Milkman. Pair a hard task with an immediate treat and allow the treat only then. She saves Taylor Swift's new albums for workouts.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **5 hours, 5 days, 5 years**
  Mental time travel: when something upsets you, ask how you'll feel about it 5 hours, 5 days and 5 years from now. If it still feels big, recall past moments when you were just as sure you'd never get over something.
- **Visual self-distancing**
  Take a bird's-eye view and coach yourself like a friend instead of narrating 'I'm a loser, I'm too old.' Shankar says she saves 'roughly 2%' of her compassion for herself, so this tool matters to her.
- **One minute a day**
  Want to write a Substack? Write for one minute a day. The gap between zero and one minute is 'seismic' because it makes you a writer, and the identity becomes self-reinforcing.
- **Hack the peak-end rule**
  We remember experiences by their most intense moment and their ending, and only the ending is in our control. So end on something pleasant. She eats a coffee chew after each 30-minute writing session. You could end a workout with a relaxing stretch.

7 Things You Need to Hear Right Now

Date: 2026-01-05 · Duration: 1:04:30
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UYbtU-wRvU

KEYPOINTS

- **Being kind doesn't mean being a doormat. You can have a good heart and still tell people off. That's a boundary.**
  Mel says she used to confuse kindness with saying yes to everything and keeping everyone else happy while she was miserable. Covering every shift, hosting the potluck for the third weekend in a row, and always being the one who steps in isn't kindness. In her words, it's how you become 'a tired, resentful shell of a person.' The root problem, she says, is fear that people won't like you if you say no.
- **Resentment and snapping are signs your boundaries are missing.**
  Her warning signs: you're so 'nice' you end up snapping at the dog or crying in the front seat of your car from overwhelm. A boundary protects your energy so the kindness you do give is real, not forced.
- **'You're not lazy. You only have a certain amount of energy right now and you're using it all to survive.'**
  Mel calls this the best thing a therapist ever told her. When caregiving, deadlines, money stress or frightening news eat your capacity, low output isn't a character flaw. It's your energy going to survival. Calling yourself lazy on top of that is both unfair and inaccurate.
- **Giving all of a small amount still counts as giving 100%.**
  She borrows a line from brain coach Jim Kwik: if you only have 40% to give today and you give all 40%, you gave 100% of what you had. On a 20% day, showing up at all deserves 'a gold medal.' After a hard day she wants you to make room for compassion, not criticism.
- **Beating yourself up doesn't motivate you.**
  Mel's audit questions: Does criticizing myself help me feel better? Help me focus? Help me feel motivated to get through my to-do list? The answer is no every time. She frames self-criticism while you're already maxed out as 'torture,' not a strategy.
- **Everyone is going through something, so be kind, and being kind proves to you that you're still you.**
  Remembering that everyone is struggling, including rude people, withdrawn people and the ones smiling, makes you feel less alone and makes other people's behavior feel less personal. Small kindnesses in the middle of your own struggle signal to yourself that life 'has not taken my heart,' your values or you.
- **'I'm not everything I want to be, but I'm a lot of things I wanted to be two years ago.'**
  This reminder moves you from 'I'm not enough yet' to 'I'm improving, and that matters.' Once you're living in your new reality you stop giving yourself credit for getting there. Being unfinished is normal when you're building something new.
- **Take nothing personally. Don't let someone else's nervous system run your day.**
  Drawn from the second agreement in Don Miguel Ruiz's The Four Agreements, this one is aimed at sensitive people who read into a text's tone, slow replies, cancellations or facial expressions. Mel calls sensitivity a gift that can 'ricochet back and hit you in the forehead.' Other people's moods are theirs. Let them be, and you get your power back.
- **Becoming your best self comes with a lot of goodbyes, and most of them happen in the mirror.**
  You can't drag your old life along 'like a busted suitcase with a wheel that's stuck.' That means saying goodbye to draining habits, people who treat you badly, situations and jobs you've outgrown, and versions of yourself that kept you small. Mel stresses that most people get this wrong: it isn't mainly about cutting people off. The biggest goodbyes are to your own mindsets and habits.
- **'Keep in mind there's a clock ticking that you can't see. So love whoever loves you and enjoy your life.'**
  'Later' isn't a real day on the calendar. Calling your mom, apologizing, taking the trip, writing the book and saying 'I love you' all get pushed back. This reminder is meant to make life feel urgent 'in a beautiful way,' so you stop wasting time being annoyed about things that don't matter.

EXAMPLES

- **The over-giver**
  Mel describes a woman who cancels long-awaited weekend plans with friends she hasn't seen in six months because her brother forgot, again, to take their parents to the doctor. 'Someone has to' turns into chronic resentment.
- **Mel's two-year look-back**
  Two years earlier the podcast had just moved out of her house and off the road into its first Boston office, prompted by her sister-in-law. Now there are 55 employees and world-renowned experts coming through the studio, and she admits she gives herself no credit for it. She also says a newer business venture still isn't where she wants it, and calls that normal for something new.
- **Your own two-year inventory**
  She suggests scrolling back through your photos or social media to two years ago. Maybe since then you've lost weight, put yourself out there, written, meditated, learned some AI or updated your resume.
- **Small kindnesses**
  Holding the door for someone carrying groceries, complimenting a cashier's nails, telling a stranger 'I love your socks.' Mel calls these signals to yourself that you still have something to give.
- **Regrets at the end of life**
  Cornell professor Dr. Karl Pillemer, through the Cornell Legacy Project, interviewed thousands of people in their 80s, 90s and 100s. They don't regret not buying a bigger house. They regret not asking for forgiveness, not saying 'I love you' more, and letting relationships fall apart.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Put the reminders where you'll see them**
  Mel suggests using a phrase as a screensaver, a tattoo or a T-shirt so it interrupts the old pattern when you need it.
- **Temporal discounting**
  The tendency to assume you'll have more time, energy and motivation later, so you put off what matters. Naming it helps you act now.
- **Holiday reframe**
  You can spend the next 10 holidays trying to fix your family, or let them be who they are, and who they're not, and put your energy into loving whoever loves you. Mel admits that's not easy, but says it's a choice.
- **The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz**
  Published in 1997, over 15 million copies sold, 52 languages. Its second agreement is 'don't take anything personally.'

#1 Mindset Expert: Simple Mindset Shifts That Transform Your Body, Energy, & Life

Guest: Dr. Alia Crum
Date: 2025-12-20 · Duration: 1:20:37
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJAV0rtSrFc

KEYPOINTS

• Mindsets are 'settings of the mind': core beliefs about what something is and why it matters.
Stanford Mind and Body Lab director Alia Crum gives examples: is the world dangerous or safe, just or unjust, abundant or scarce? Is stress going to kill you or make you stronger? Are healthy foods disgusting or delicious? Is cancer a catastrophe or manageable? She says these aren't true or false. They're oversimplified judgments, but they shape our realities.

• Mindsets work by design, not magic, through four channels.
A setting changes what you pay attention to, how you feel, what you're motivated to do, and your physiology. All four then drive your behavior. A belief meant to protect you can end up creating the very outcome you fear.

• It's 'mind and matter,' not 'mind over matter.'
The total effect of anything you take or eat is what's actually in it plus what you believe about it. Crum is explicit that belief doesn't cure cancer: get the best treatment available, since many cancers that were incurable 10 to 20 years ago are curable now, and also pay attention to your mindset.

• Placebo effects are real biology, not just people saying they feel better.
Believing you've taken a painkiller can release the body's own opioids. Placebo Parkinson's medications activate dopamine systems. Immune responses can be conditioned. She explains placebo as three things combined: the body's natural healing, beliefs that you're in good hands (which prime those systems), and the social context, such as the doctor's words, bedside manner, white coat and how the drug is branded.

• With a scary diagnosis, the helpful mindset is 'this is manageable' and 'my body is capable,' not forced positivity.
After nearly 10 years of work with cancer researchers, Crum says 'just think positive' or 'I'll be fine' can actually be denial. What her team has seen help, including in trials that encouraged these mindsets, is viewing cancer as manageable rather than a catastrophe and seeing your body as capable rather than as having turned on you. It improves quality of life. Trials on whether it affects disease outcomes are still underway.

• Eating with a mindset of indulgence, not restriction, can lower craving and hunger.
Focusing on 'I shouldn't eat this, I should eat that' puts you in a mindset of restraint and deprivation. Crum says that when you let yourself enjoy what you eat, regardless of what it is, the setting itself reduces craving. She credits this shift with ending her own struggle with food.

• Healthy food is labeled as 'depriving' partly because junk food has better marketing.
Food companies spend billions linking burgers and branded products to taste, happiness, attractiveness and freedom. Vegetables get no such marketing. You can flip this yourself by describing and serving healthy food as indulgent and delicious.

• Trying not to think about food makes you think about it more.
Like the classic 'don't think of a white polar bear' effect, a goal to avoid something makes the brain keep checking on it, while hunger hormones are 'like, eat the cake, Mel.' Relabeling is more effective than suppressing.

• 'I blew it' mindsets drive the slide into inconsistency.
When Mel admitted falling off her resistance-training and protein streaks during busy stretches, Crum showed how 'I'm not doing enough, I'm failing, I'm going downhill' shapes attention, mood and motivation, until you skip the gym and your body follows. Her replacement: 'I'm doing enough, and I'm capable.' Repeating it makes being active more likely.

EXAMPLES

• The milkshake study (done at Yale)
People drank the same 350-calorie vanilla shake on two visits while connected to an IV. Once it was labeled 'Indulgence,' 620 calories, 'decadence you deserve.' Once it was labeled 'Sensi-Shake,' 140 calories, low fat. When they thought it was indulgent, their levels of ghrelin, a hunger hormone, dropped about three times as much, as if they'd eaten more food.

• It started at the Cheesecake Factory
At the end of a meal with her mother, Crum, who had been obsessively counting calories and had recovered from bulimia, refused dessert because she was well over her 2,000-calorie limit. She wondered whether simply believing the cheesecake was good for her would change how her body responded.

• A listener named Melissa got over a 10-year fear of flying
Melissa feared a medical emergency mid-flight after an incident 10 years earlier. After watching Crum's TED talk, she reminded herself that her symptoms felt real because she was working herself up, and she flew. Crum reframed the underlying setting as distrust of her own body, which led her to scan for symptoms, which in turn made her more anxious.

• The 30-pound dumbbell
Mel couldn't lift a 30-pound weight one-handed and immediately thought 'I'm weak.' After shifting to 'I'm capable,' she lifted it with one hand and said she felt stronger. Crum noted that some research suggests weights feel different depending on your mindset.

• V8 in a wine glass
Mel's mom served her vegetable juice in a wine glass with a lemon after sports, and it felt like a treat. Crum held it up as a model for how parents can present healthy food.

• The same cake, two descriptions
A cake in the studio stopped seeming appealing once Crum described it as store-bought, three days old, dry and made with Crisco, showing how the setting in your mind shapes desire.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Find the setting first**
  Ask what core belief sits under the fear or habit. For example, is it 'flying is dangerous' or 'my body can't be trusted'? Then trace how that belief steers your attention, emotions, motivation and body.
- **Indulgent framing for healthy food**
  Describe vegetables in terms of taste and pleasure, serve them nicely, and let yourself enjoy food instead of policing it.
- **Two phrases for health setbacks**
  'I'm doing enough' and 'I'm capable' for exercise lapses; 'this is manageable' and 'my body is capable' for a diagnosis, alongside full medical treatment.

How to Create a Successful Mindset: The Science of Passion and Perseverance

Guest: Dr. Angela Duckworth
Date: 2025-10-13 · Duration: 1:31:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmW3Afu9npY

KEYPOINTS

• Grit is passion plus perseverance for long-term goals, and you can build it.
Dr. Angela Duckworth, a University of Pennsylvania psychologist, MacArthur fellow and author of Grit, says it matters more than talent, intelligence or motivation alone. She describes four psychological assets that grow it: interest, practice, purpose and hope (a sense of agency).

• A growth mindset is just a theory about ability, and everyone holds one.
If you believe ability can change with effort and experience, a setback becomes 'What can I learn here?' and you move on. A fixed mindset treats ability as unchangeable, so failure feels like a verdict. Duckworth notes you don't need to be a philosopher to hold a theory; we all do.

• Talent is the rate at which you improve.
Rather than a mysterious gift, Duckworth defines talent as how quickly someone gets better at a particular thing. You may be slow at some skills and 'very agile' at others. Mel found that freeing, because she had always read 'talent' as something she lacked.

• Consistency is the heart of grit: do it more days than not.
Duckworth expected gritty people to be '11 out of 10' on effort all the time. Instead, like Michael Phelps's coach Bob Bowman, she found they were consistent. They do fall off the horse, cry and doubt themselves, but they get back on. Consistency doesn't have to mean an unbroken daily streak; it means more days than not, or at least starting again the next day. Phelps reportedly trained 365 days a year for about 10 years, which she calls unusual; trainers would say rest days are good.

• Interest comes first, and others often notice it before you do.
You can't grow passion without the seed of interest, she says. Watch where your mind goes when nothing is required of it, because 'that is where your mind lives.' Often a loved one or passerby has to point it out, and good parenting is largely noticing what your kid keeps thinking about.

• The 10,000-hour rule is widely misunderstood.
Anders Ericsson, whom she calls 'the world expert on world experts', studied chess grandmasters, prima ballerinas, World Cup soccer players and top Sudoku players. At a German music academy, the best violinists had about 10,000 hours of practice, the next group about 7,500 and the next about 5,000. Until he died about five years ago, Ericsson insisted it was the quality of practice that mattered, not just the hours.

• Deliberate practice has three parts.
Have a specific goal, give it complete effort and concentration, and get immediate feedback before the next attempt. Duckworth says it's psychologically costly ('it's painful') but free: 'There's no patent.' Her research with Ericsson found that people who are passionate and persevering about a long-term goal log more of these high-quality hours.

• Purpose turns a job into a calling.
She tells the parable of three bricklayers: 'I'm laying bricks' (a job), 'I'm building a church' (a career), 'I'm building the house of God' (a calling), and says there is modern science on calling. A doorway into purpose is to write about what irritates, angers or outrages you and what you think ought to be different. That's the first step to deciding you might make the difference.

• Agency grows most from small wins.
Duckworth draws on Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura's four drivers of self-efficacy ('I can do this if I try'): your physical state, encouragement from someone who believes in you, seeing a model who shows what's possible, and, most powerful of all, a mastery experience or small win. Olympic coaches know that an athlete on a losing streak needs a win, however small.

• Keep what you want within arm's reach and what you don't out of it.
About half the things we don't do, she says, are simply forgotten. Psychologists measure personal space at roughly 3 feet in every direction, so put reminders inside it and push temptations like your phone outside it. Her national survey of over 20,000 (approaching 30,000) teachers is finding that the stricter a school's phone policy, the happier the educators and the more on-task the students.

EXAMPLES

• Eight out of 10, every day
Coach Bob Bowman says Michael Phelps and Léon Marchand don't give him 10s at practice. They give him 8s, but they never miss one. Duckworth's version for the rest of us: even 1s, 2s and 3s out of 10 add up, as long as it's never zero.

• Lucy and the baking tabs
Her daughter Lucy hated homework and viola practice and was easily discouraged, but the iPad was full of baking videos like unicorn cookies, and by Monday she was planning Saturday's bake and reading cookbooks. When Duckworth said, 'I think you're interested in cooking,' Lucy looked at her like she was from Mars.

• Why jogging didn't make her Usain Bolt
Duckworth told Ericsson she'd logged enough running hours to be elite. He asked: Do you have a goal? ('Never.') Full concentration? ('I listen to podcasts.') Immediate feedback? ('Who would give me that?') That's low-quality practice.

• Banish 'should'
A friend challenged her to explain why she was taking on a task without using the word 'should.' Duckworth, ever the academic, defended 'should' emotions like shame, but she now works at it constantly.

• Bandura's watching children
In his studies, kids watched an adult play with a toy through a glass divider. Let into the room, they did exactly what they had seen, which shows how powerfully a model sets what we think is possible.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pick one homework**
  Elite performers practice one thing at a time. Choose one: a curiosity conversation, a 24-hour ban on 'should', moving your phone out of arm's reach, or joining a team or running club you can quit if it isn't your thing.
- **Purpose prompt**
  Write about it: what outrages me, and what do I think ought to be different?
- **Book**
  Grit by Dr. Angela Duckworth.

8 Things To Tell Yourself Every Morning

Date: 2025-09-11 · Duration: 1:03:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLnqVG7Ashc

KEYPOINTS

• If you don't program your brain on purpose, it still gets programmed

Mel's premise is that headlines, your past, your to-do list and a critical inner voice, often a parent's, have been on repeat since you could talk. Your brain runs whatever programming it gets, so: garbage in, garbage out. Eight short sentences said first thing in the morning are her way of putting something better in.

• Sentence 1: "Today is going to be a great day"

Mel says psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Amen, who has scanned nearly 300,000 brains, says this every morning and then asks himself why today will be great. He calls it directing your mind: it seeks what you tell it to seek. Mel stresses this isn't denial. On the day of a funeral, it could mean hugging people tighter, sharing happy memories of the person, or taking a hike afterwards.

• Sentence 2: "Something cool is going to happen for me today"

Instead of bracing for bad news, this builds anticipation and turns the day into a "mental scavenger hunt" for good things. Mel argues you notice and enjoy cool moments more when you've primed yourself to look for them.

• A good attitude for no reason is a learnable skill

Most people slip into a bad mood without cause, and others give them a pass. Mel calls being in a good mood for no reason her single best skill, and says she trained it deliberately. She cites Stanford- and Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. Paul Conti on how repeated negative self-talk ("I'm an idiot," "I always screw things up") sets your default, and Stanford neuroscientist Dr. James Doty on simple sentences changing the brain.

• Sentence 3: "No matter what happens today, I can handle it"

Mel defines anxiety as a moment of uncertainty where you doubt your capacity to handle something, so this sentence targets that doubt directly. Her example: an email from your boss saying "I need to talk to you today," with no details. Your brain jumps to getting fired. Since you have no evidence yet, why not assume you can handle it?

• Morning anxiety has physical drivers

Mel struggled with morning dread for decades. She points to the cortisol awakening response, a sharp rise in cortisol within 30–45 minutes of waking that normally boosts alertness but can feel like panic in a worrier. She also lists circadian rhythm, stress, poor sleep, diet, past trauma and hangovers, saying she learned only at about 50 that processing alcohol overnight can trigger next-day anxiety. Waking up in a suggestible state is also why she says not to check texts or email first.

• Your brain's filter lets in what you mark as important

Mel describes the reticular activating system as a filter, like a hairnet, that keeps you from information overload. In her telling, it lets through your name, threats, signs someone is interested in you, and anything you've told it matters. Repeating these sentences tells it that reasons for a great day matter.

• Sentence 4: "An exciting new chapter in my life is starting today"

Why wait for something to end before starting fresh? Saying this can prompt small changes: finally signing up for the class, updating your résumé, calling a friend, taking a different route home, skipping the after-work drink.

• Sentences 5 and 6: give yourself credit, and allow yourself to be unfinished

"I need to give myself more credit for how hard I'm trying": you can get 115 things right at work and dwell on one comment nobody responded to. Effort counts even when results are slow, and if others don't acknowledge it, let them; give yourself the credit. "I'm allowed to be a work in progress" works against perfectionism and waiting until you feel ready.

• Sentences 7 and 8: keep showing up, and you matter

"If I keep showing up, life will reward me": doing the boring daily reps builds stamina, and the people you admire simply didn't quit. Mel loosely paraphrases a Jay-Z line about not quitting being the genius move. "I have an important contribution to make to the world": you are one of eight billion, and Mel thinks her biggest contribution is the warmth and positivity she brings to people day to day.

EXAMPLES

• Ben's croissant text

Picking up the team's coffee before taping, producer Ben confirmed Mel's ham and cheese croissant order and signed off, "And it's going to be a great day." Reading it changed her mood.

• The 30-year-old bridesmaid joke

Mel's college roommate, whose daughter is getting married, found the silk-flower garter necklace she made her bridesmaids wear 30 years ago and texted a photo to all of them. A hilarious thread followed, including Mel making one out of notebook paper. It was the kind of unexpected cool thing the second sentence trains you to notice.

• The green pickup truck

To explain the brain's filter, Mel used the example of noticing green pickup trucks everywhere once you want one. It turned out producer Ben had visited a dealership the day before to look at exactly that. The trucks were always there; his brain just hadn't marked them as important.

• Errors in The Let Them Theory

That morning Mel read an email about mistakes readers keep finding in her book, including some of the editions in its 63 languages printing the wrong URL for the free downloads. The old Mel would have spiralled. Now she says it's a work in progress and focuses on the roughly six million copies sold and the people it has helped.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Say them out loud, or write them

Speaking engages more of your brain. If you're shy, think them. Writing them by hand is even stronger, because involving

more senses tells your brain you mean business.

- **Commit to 30 to 60 days**

  If 30 to 60 days sounds too long, Mel calls that reaction proof of your negative programming. You learned to worry and doubt yourself over a lifetime. Repeat the sentences until they become automatic; her family now tells each other to have a great day.

- **Make your good mood your contribution**

  Start with your energy: a kind word to the barista may be the only nice thing they hear all day. Bring your trained good attitude to work, to family dinner, even to hard days.

How to Become the Person You've Always Wanted to Be

Guest: Chelsea Handler
Date: 2025-08-04 · Duration: 1:18:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcEehRZvoiw

KEYPOINTS

• Let yourself want what you want, without apologizing

Mel's main lesson from Chelsea Handler's book I'll Have What She's Having is that most of us see something we'd love, like a first-class seat, a beautiful house or being a good dancer, and immediately decide 'people like me don't get that.' Handler adds a second step: don't just decide you deserve it, also stop apologizing for wanting more. She notes that men rarely apologize for ambition, while women struggle to claim what they want and to talk about what they got.

• Seeing what you don't want can be just as clarifying

Handler, the youngest of six, grew up with money problems: phones were cut off and there was no extra. In a Wall Street Journal op-ed she wrote that the two people in charge of her family were the two she had the least confidence in. Mel points out that most people look around and say 'I want that.' Handler looked at her home and said 'I don't want that.' By six or seven she had pictured a fierce, independent woman who would lead rather than follow.

• You are never too far gone

Whether you're in a marriage, job or city you don't want, or even sick, Handler says you can still take control of your life and stop tying your happiness to other people. 'No one is unrecoverable. You're never cooked.' She adds that you aren't responsible for other people's happiness. She chooses to spread joy on stage, but nobody can require it of her.

• Mel's definition: confidence is the willingness to try

Mel says Handler models confidence as simply being willing to try: wanting something and going after it, having a problem and moving. Proof that you're capable comes from the trying. Handler separates this from banging your head against the same wall. Be willing 'to make a fool out of yourself one time,' because it might work out. She says real confidence took her more than 25 years of stand-up to build.

• Your worst mistake can open a door

Handler's DUI at 21 led to 48 hours in jail and a DUI class where everyone had to tell their story. Terrified of public speaking, she hid at the back for about 12 weeks until the last session, when she told her story and the room laughed. Classmates told her to try stand-up. The next week she waited about 24 hours in line at the Laugh Factory for a three-minute set. She is clear she is not proud of the DUI.

• One failure doesn't decide your future

After bombing her big showcase at the Montreal Comedy Festival, Handler sat in her hotel room wondering if she would have to work in an office. Within about 72 hours she had crushed a set at Luna Park for an NBC executive who hadn't been in Montreal, and she got her first development deal. Her lesson is that you only need one person to say yes, and that 'lightness and darkness follow each other around like partners.'

• Anger is usually hurt in disguise

Handler's brother died when she was nine, and her father 'fell apart at the seams.' Her nine-year-old brain heard her brother's 'I'll be right back' as a lie. She covered the grief with anger, drugs, alcohol and bombast, and she didn't cry about him until she was 40. In therapy she learned that anger is a shield against vulnerability, that resentment usually means you're hurt and never said what you needed, and that annoyance and judgment say more about you than about the other person.

• Growth can feel like losing yourself for a while

Therapy with Dr. Dan Siegel, whom she met when he was a guest on her Netflix talk show, lasted about two years. One lesson was 'you don't have to be everyone's entertainment.' She went quiet at dinner parties, and friends said they wanted the old Chelsea back. For about two years she felt ungrounded and questioned everything: whether she was unlovable or a narcissist, and why she didn't want a husband. She stopped gossiping, lost some friends and gained better ones, and took about six years off stand-up after burning out in her 30s.

EXAMPLES

• The 10-year-old's hard lemonade stand

On Martha's Vineyard, a regular lemonade stand made her about $17 to $20. She fired her sister Shauna for refusing to sell spiked lemonade to adults, knocked on doors asking for 'other 10-year-olds,' and hired a neighbor kid named Nelson as her barback. By week three she had hundreds of dollars and paid Nelson a 1% commission. She then posed as a 15-year-old to run a babysitting business through Edgartown hotels for three years.

• Seat 2C at age 13

Ever since walking through first class at 10 ('This seems like my group'), she had saved her money. At 13, on a family trip to California, she bought her own first-class ticket from a travel agent on her street without telling anyone. She sat in 2C in kitten heels while her older brothers Glenn and Roy sat in coach. When one came up to protest that she should have given the seat to them or their mom, she told him to go back to his section.

• Leaving home with four new tires

Her dad, a used-car dealer, was thrilled to put four new tires on an old Audi Quattro so she could drive to California. Her mom handed over her sister's birth certificate so she could get into bars. She landed with an aunt and uncle in Los Angeles: nine kids, four dogs and a parrot in a two-bedroom house.

• Dinner with Jane Fonda

Fonda emailed asking Handler to come talk about 'a couple things,' that same night. Over dinner she told Handler she had been awful, obnoxious and under a dark cloud at a party at Fonda's house. Having just started therapy, Handler didn't defend herself, thanked her and called it real sisterhood. Fonda told her: 'Go find out what your problem is because your gifts are plentiful... make your environment be a product of you.' Handler borrowed a line from Maria Shriver: make the first time the last time.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Tell a friend the truth when it's inconvenient**
  Instead of writing someone off or venting about them, offer a clearer picture of who they could be, as Fonda did. Handler now does this for others, more carefully after therapy, knowing not everyone wants her directness.
- **When resentment shows up, ask what you never said**
  After a weekend with people she loves left her resentful, Handler sat with it for three days and realized she had never told them what she needed. Mel takes the same question for herself: did I actually ask?
- **Catch judgment and turn it back on yourself**
  Each time Handler notices herself judging, she asks what she isn't feeling good about in herself. Her goal is to be someone who is judgment-free and just gets a kick out of people.

How to Stop Doubting Yourself & Get Anything You Want in Life

Guest: Will Packer
Date: 2025-07-17 · Duration: 1:22:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_9UHSj0qE4

KEYPOINTS

• Ask yourself 'Who better than me?'

Will Packer, producer of 10 number-one films including Ride Along, Girls Trip, Stomp the Yard and Straight Outta Compton, uses this four-word question daily. Mel notes the question assumes its own answer. Will calls it a challenge: you aren't asking someone else whether you deserve it, you're daring yourself to name anyone who deserves it more. In his experience, the most successful people don't have rare talent. They believe they deserve success and that it's coming, even when it hasn't come yet.

• It's never too late, because the third act decides the movie

Hollywood wisdom says audiences judge a film by how they feel at the end. Will compares it to life: act one gets attention, act two builds investment, act three brings it home. Many people in their second or third act still judge themselves on act one. Mel adds that if you don't like how your story feels, you're not at the end yet.

• Healthy arrogance means knowing you belong in any room

Will separates it from toxic arrogance ('I'm better than everyone'). Healthy arrogance is quiet, inner confidence in what's unique about you, plus the belief that the room is better because you're in it. Mel notes it rests on your presence, not your skill, which makes it useful for people with impostor syndrome.

• Confidence is a muscle, not a personality trait

Will says nothing in his upbringing suggested success was in the cards. He built belief deliberately and lets 'what if I succeed?' outshout 'what if I fail?' He acknowledges fear, depression and anxiety are real for everyone. Every morning he holds a 'Will Packer pep rally' in the mirror, partly because it may be the only encouragement he hears all day, and partly because his own voice is the one that matters most.

• Create momentum on purpose

If the goal is to climb a mountain, step one is buying climbing shoes and step two is driving by the mountain. Count each small win: slow progress is still progress. Will says this tricks your brain into seeing a cycle of positivity.

• Keep the main thing the main thing, and sometimes that's you

In 30 years of producing, Will says he has never gotten a call that everything on set was fine. He handles only the fire burning brightest. Sometimes the brightest fire is you, because if you're not okay you can't help anyone. On some days your dream is the main thing, even while the kids, job and house call out 'what about me?'

• Bring people into your dream by listening to theirs

Will says people's favorite subject is themselves. When you listen for what matters to them, you often find overlap with your goal. 'Don't take a me versus them mentality. Take a we and an us.' He says this takes being flexible, not rigid, about how your idea gets made. Rejections become information too: every no tells you what the other side actually needs.

• Disasters aren't failures, so ask what you can control

Quoting Rudyard Kipling's poem 'If', Will treats triumph and disaster as impostors and keeps an even keel, because panic makes you useless. When the unexpected happens, ask what you can control and focus on the biggest fire.

• Be a doer, not a talker, and beware 'preparation paralysis'

Will was told 'be a doer, not a talker' as an intern, when handing producer Warrington Hudlin a VHS of his student film made Hudlin take him seriously. He says an idea is like perfect shoes at the start of a marathon: nothing counts until you run the 26.2 miles. You'll never be fully prepared, so get as ready as you can and go. He also says to define success for yourself.

EXAMPLES

• The $75,000 first movie and the family motto

Will couldn't raise his $750,000 budget, so he set a deadline instead: whatever he raised by the end of June would be the budget. It came to $75,000. He made the film anyway, which proved to others, and to himself, that he was a filmmaker. He and his team drove it city to city handing out flyers at nightclubs and churches. That fits his family's motto (he, his wife and four kids are 'the six-pack'): if you want what others won't have, do what others don't.

• Chocolate City and the empty front row

For his student film at Florida A&M in Tallahassee, Will required black tie and invited studio heads, and Oprah at his mom's urging, with a plus one. No one from Hollywood replied. The reserved front row sat empty in a standing-room-only auditorium of students in rented tuxes and gowns. His lesson was to stop stepping over the people already in your corner. Mel's take was that acting as if helped lay the groundwork: Will now has multiple shows on Oprah's network.

• Stomp the Yard pitched as a sequel

Every studio rejected his college stepping movie, most of them twice. One studio, Sony, had a dance hit the year before. Will pitched his film as its sequel, with one of their stars teaching his dance style in a new world. It ended up as its own film and became his first number-one movie.

• Beyoncé said no five times

For the thriller Obsessed, with Idris Elba already cast, Beyoncé passed but explained why. Will revised the script, schedule and other elements and came back. She told him not to make changes for her, and he said he was doing it for himself. She said yes on the sixth look. Will says it was a better movie than if she'd agreed the first time. His framing was always that it was fine to say no, but please look once more.

• Kevin Hart, Carmelo Anthony and a police escort

Mid-shoot on Ride Along, the biggest budget either man had had, Kevin revealed a filmed Madison Square Garden special and talked Will into flying to New York with him. After the show came an afterparty with Carmelo Anthony. Will had to beg his way out and get a police escort to Teterboro, and they made the Saturday shoot. The movie opened at number one.

• The 2022 Oscars slap

Will and Shayla Cowan were the first all-Black team to produce the Oscars, after a year of planning. When Chris Rock went off script and Will Smith walked on stage, Packer first assumed it was a bit. Once it was clearly real, he switched to 'finish the show': cue the next presenter, go to break, and ask Amy Schumer for some levity. He later took pride in the show's milestones, like the first deaf actor to win an Oscar.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the 'one more look' approach when you get a no

Ask why, revise if the feedback makes the work better, and come back with real passion while making it clear no is acceptable. Mel compares it to a realtor showing a house a 15th time because they truly believe in it. Mel's gut check: if this really mattered to me, how would I show up differently?

• Choose your cast wisely

Will sees people as either adding to your energy or draining it, with nothing in between. He credits his wife and family as his rock and says to protect your circle where you can.

• Start where you are

Will moved to Atlanta about 30 years ago, long before it became, in his words, the busiest on-location production hub in the US. Mel sees not being where everyone else is as an opportunity.

6 Powerful Mindset Shifts That Will Change Your Life

Guest: Sawyer Robbins
Date: 2025-06-16 · Duration: 1:05:01
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bysKZ2IU9Ts

KEYPOINTS

• A tour is a different animal from a speech

Mel spent a decade as a keynote speaker, once in front of 27,000 people, so she assumed her first live tour would be easy and told the production team as much. But a corporate speech is someone else's event: you get a clicker and an hour. On tour, she was responsible for everything. The first leg covered Boston, New York, Toronto, Chicago and London, and she calls it one of the highlights of her life precisely because it stretched her so far.

• Lesson 1: What if you did it bigger?

The team behind stadium tours for major musicians included Marcus, who told her she could walk out and give a great speech, or bring her stories to life as theater and leave people "gobsmacked." She chose theater without understanding what it meant. Her point is that you can't know what you're saying yes to when you've never done it bigger. Most of us are waiting for someone to give us permission to swing harder, so she dares you to.

• Expect the stretch to hurt, and get to your "Saturday night"

After a messy opening night, Mel called her husband Chris on Friday morning saying she hated it and wanted to cancel. By Saturday night she loved it so much she wanted to quit everything else and just tour. If you stop where you think your edges are, she says, you never reach your Saturday night. Do the new thing at least three times before deciding how it feels.

• How it feels to you won't match how it looks to others

Her 143 Studios team called the first show unbelievable and hilarious and told her not to cut anything. Mel thought it was too long and wondered whether anyone had laughed. Discomfort is your inner experience of growing, not a verdict on how you're doing.

• Lesson 2: Bring the fun

On night one she was "stiff as Frankenstein," focused on hitting marks and remembering lines. Reminding herself she wasn't performing heart surgery helped her loosen up, and by night two she discovered she loved physical comedy, crawling across tables. Fun is contagious. The stadium crew said it was their favorite tour ever. Her view is that people under less tension don't slack off; they show up with more care.

• Lesson 3: Start with the end

Before beginning, picture what you want to have happened once it's over. Her answers weren't sell-outs, money or viral clips. She wanted to create a surprising, moving experience, have the show get better every night, and have fun with the crew, venues and audience. These became guardrails rather than promises about how it would feel. After the Friday panic, she called a meeting, asked for feedback, cut lines and got coaching on being more physical.

• Lesson 4: Things will go wrong, and you'll be fine

Live theater went wrong in ways keynotes never had, almost every night. The fix is usually simple: acknowledge it, laugh, adjust, or try again. Her twist is that when something bold feels wrong, like a new outfit, you're probably doing it right, because that's what stretching feels like. The nerves are part of the ride and don't go away.

• Lesson 5: Fear means it matters

Co-author Sawyer Robbins was petrified throughout. Her sister Kendall, an experienced singer-songwriter who joined to sing one song, rolled into rehearsal in sweats unbothered because, as she said, it wasn't her tour. Yet Kendall is nervous about a festival side stage with a smaller crowd, because that one matters to her. Nervous about a presentation? You care about work. Afraid to ask someone out? You probably like them.

• Lesson 6: Do it because you think you can't

Sawyer's on-stage line is that completing something you told yourself you'd do, however small, feels "better than love." Mel argues you become someone who handles scary things by handling them, and that "can't" is often code for "I've never tried." You won't feel ready beforehand. You do the thing first, then you believe you can.

EXAMPLES

• Rehearsal day at Boston's Wang Theatre

Mel showed up Wednesday afternoon expecting a quick run-through with her clicker. Instead she found 30 crew members, hundreds of equipment cases, an LED screen covering the stage, haze machines, a bed platform, three cinema cameras and a director calling cues, and she didn't know her own lines. She had stress diarrhea for three days. On opening night the show ran more than half an hour long, the slides stuck, and she disconnected her own mic.

• The 10-minute coughing fit

On the third night, in front of 3,500 people, Mel inhaled what felt like a cotton ball and coughed for about ten minutes. Sawyer riffed with the crowd while crew members threw lozenges and made tea. Mel says that once the wheels came off, the show got even better, because after surviving that you swing for the fences.

• Sawyer's five minutes became 50

Sawyer, who ran the tour's logistics for three months, agreed to a five-minute co-author cameo. Her last time on stage was playing the crow in a fifth-grade Wizard of Oz, and college speeches to 15 people left her drenched in sweat. Mel kept adding scenes until Sawyer was on stage for about 50 minutes. Before every show she was hyperventilating and reapplying lip gloss 15 times.

• Sawyer's 75 Hard

After college, at her unhealthiest, Sawyer completed 75 Hard, a 75-day challenge of five daily tasks where missing a day sends you back to the start. Mel has never finished it. Sawyer says her pride came from finishing something she didn't think she could, not from the physical results.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Make it right in the moment**

  If you drop a barbell at a new gym, laugh and shrug. If you fart in yoga, joke about dinner (Chris, a yoga instructor, says it happens a dozen times a class). If your slides won't load, close the laptop and give ten minutes of bullet points before taking questions. If you bomb at an open mic, sign up again.

- **Add fun on purpose**

  Build a new running playlist instead of the one you've used for three years. Bring a friend to dance class so you can look silly together. Pick a walk-on song before a competition. High-five people and crack jokes during a high-stress project.

- **Pick a deeper measure of success**

  Before an interview, decide what you want people saying after you leave, and let that shape your energy and preparation. For a 30-day posting goal, measure whether you posted, not followers or views.

- **Use "I can't" as your to-do list**

  If you think you can't get the job, apply. Ask someone out in person instead of hiding on the apps. Or walk up to a gym's front desk and ask someone to show you a simple 30-minute routine. Doing the opposite of what self-doubt tells you is the fastest way to quiet it.

Finally Feel Good in Your Body: 4 Expert Steps to Feeling More Confident Today

Guest: Dr. Judith Joseph, Dr. Ashwini Nadkarni, Jake Shane
Date: 2025-06-09 · Duration: 1:06:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krnRy54f2rk

KEYPOINTS

• Body shame often hides behind the wish for connection: a deeper need to feel worthy.
The episode grew out of Mel's conversation with comedian Jake Shane, who said what he wants most is a relationship. When she asked how it would feel, he couldn't say beyond wanting it to make him confident. Mel's takeaway is that it's hard to ask for what you want when you don't believe you deserve it. Avoiding mirrors, hiding at the back of photos and laughing off compliments are self-protection, not just insecurity.

• Step 1: you weren't built to look at yourself this much.
Mel shares the 'mirror fallacy,' a concept popularized by a viral video: humans were never meant to see their own faces constantly. Our ancestors rarely saw themselves. Now we have Zoom, FaceTime, selfies, TikTok and reflective glass buildings. Mel says this pushes people into curating and judging themselves, and that it's exhausting.

• Your brain's judging system is meant for other faces, and now it's aimed at you.
Psychiatrist Dr. Judith Joseph explains that we evolved to read other people's expressions, like a frown or a sad look, either to connect or to get away. Staring at your own image turns that system on yourself. Mel notes Stanford researchers have studied 'Zoom fatigue.' Joseph's point is that it's not just tiredness: watching yourself makes you lose perspective and start judging.

• Step 2: look back before you move forward. Self-criticism was taught to you.
Both psychiatrists stress that nobody is born picking themselves apart in a mirror. Mel says it may have come from a classmate mocking your nose, a family member's comment about your weight that 'stuck like glue,' or someone always fussing over how you looked. Tracing where your critic's voice started helps you see it as learned, so it can be unlearned.

• Negative self-talk grows from a few core beliefs.
Dr. Ashwini Nadkarni, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist with nearly 20 years of practice, says that whatever patients bring in, whether anxiety, depression, trauma or panic, core beliefs sit underneath. She describes them as the trunk of a tree that negative thoughts branch out from. The three most common are 'I am unlovable,' 'I am unworthy' and 'I am helpless.'

• Turn the critic on the critic.
Using cognitive restructuring from cognitive behavioral therapy, Nadkarni has patients question the thought: What's the evidence? Am I thinking from facts or feelings? What could I think instead? She describes it as two negatives making a positive. Everyone needs at least one alternative belief; hers is 'Keep going.'

• Step 3: use a meaningful mantra you actually believe.
Nadkarni's rules: it has to be something you believe right now ('We're not gaslighting, we are reprogramming'), and it has to bring a feeling of relief. 'I love my body' fails because your brain answers, 'We've criticized ourselves for 20 years; I don't believe that.' Repeat it daily. You've practiced the criticism for years, so give the new pattern more than a week.

• Step 4: exposure. Live as you are now instead of waiting.
Nadkarni compares it to a fear of spiders: you can't convince yourself spiders are okay until you're around one. She says self-criticism is rooted in the older, fear-driven part of the brain, so you have to act, not just think. Exposure gradually desensitizes you to the underlying beliefs.

• Self-acceptance, not appearance, is what predicts happiness.
Mel says research shows the top predictor of happiness and fulfillment is self-acceptance, not weight, skin or success. If you can't be kind to yourself now, with acne or at your current height, you won't magically be kind later.

• Stop delaying happiness until you're 'fixed.'
Dr. Joseph says her research shows that people who wait to be happy until they're taller, clear-skinned or 5 to 10 pounds lighter still aren't happy when they get there. Her alternative is small daily shifts: notice and use small moments of joy now.

EXAMPLES

• Jake Shane's mirror ritual
Shane told Mel he pulls back the skin at the sides of his face in the mirror, dislikes his chin, thinks he has a bump on his nose, and hates being short. 'When I go to bed, I don't feel happy in my body.' His followers were shocked; Mel says it's 'all of us.'

• Nearly 30% considered cosmetic fixes after video calls
Nadkarni cites a COVID-lockdown study of nearly 7,000 people. After constantly seeing themselves in video meetings, almost 30% were so anxious about returning to in-person meetings that they were considering corrective steps like plastic surgery.

• The beach exposure exercise
For someone ashamed of their body, Nadkarni would bring them to the beach and have them count how many people are actually judging them. Usually they find people aren't, and then she asks them about the evidence.

• Mantras Nadkarni uses
'I'm getting better every day.' 'Today is going to be a good day.' 'I'm proud that I'm trying to be kinder to myself.' 'I can do things that feel difficult.' 'I can stop criticizing myself.' 'I deserve to feel good about myself.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Cut down self-viewing
In practice, Mel's step one means noticing how often you look at yourself. On video calls, consider hiding your self-view so your judging brain has less to work on.

• Three-question thought check
When a harsh thought hits, ask: What's the evidence? Is this fact or feeling? What could I think instead? Then switch to your

mantra.

- **Pick one exposure this week**

  Get in the photo, wear the swimsuit, go to the event without hiding, and notice how little anyone actually reacts. These are general tools; persistent distress about your appearance is worth raising with a professional.

A Powerful Mindset Makes You Unstoppable: How to Train Your Mind & Unlock Your Full Potential

Guest: Steve Magness
Date: 2025-06-02 · Duration: 1:13:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlOEJC9rqK4

KEYPOINTS

• Winning the inside game means security, not achievement

Performance coach Steve Magness, author of Win the Inside Game, cites a meta-analysis of about 70,000 people. It found that prioritizing external markers over internal ones is 'universally detrimental' to well-being. The inside game means being clear about who you are, defining success for yourself, and finding real belonging. That security is what lets people take risks, rather than achievement giving them confidence.

• Real effort is relaxed; you can't pressure your way into flow

A mentor who coached Carl Lewis told Magness that most people misunderstand effort. Watch Lewis or Usain Bolt at full speed and their cheeks are bouncing and they're almost smiling. 'Real effort is quiet.' Trying too hard creates tension, and too much pressure blocks flow and can feed procrastination.

• Mental toughness is handling the spiral, not gritting through it

Magness compares adult stress to his almost-2-year-old's tantrums: overwhelming feelings, then a meltdown, then shutting down. Adults add a negative inner voice. The brain then looks for the fastest way out, such as slowing down in a race or putting off a dissertation. The old 'ignore your feelings and push' approach works on easy things but backfires on hard ones, because what you resist persists. Toughness means noticing your feelings, changing your self-talk and focus, and stopping the spiral early.

• A three-step reset after failure or rejection

First, admit it hurts. 'It just sucks,' and faking otherwise doesn't help. Second, get out of 'stress and protect' mode by spending time with people. Magness points to research that socializing releases oxytocin, which may counter stress hormones, so he tells athletes who lose to go get pizza with friends. Third, rebuild evidence with an 'evidence journal.' Write down that you trained five days a week or slept well before the interview, and list past hard things you got through, to counter the brain's negativity bias.

• The winner and loser effects

Research going back to the 1960s found that animals who won contests kept winning and losers kept losing, regardless of skill. Magness explains that winning tends to raise testosterone in men and women and encourages a 'challenge response.' Losing, especially stewing in the loss, raises cortisol, so the brain pre-loads stress to steer you away next time. Mel connects this to dating after a breakup or interviewing after a layoff.

• Adjust both sides of the equation: expectations and capability

The brain weighs demands against what it thinks you can do. You can lower expectations ('it's a first date, I'm not trying to set the world on fire'; 'showing up is the win'). You can also build capability through practice in a safe setting, like role-playing date conversations with a friend or doing mock interviews, so your brain registers 'I've been here before.'

• Don't put your whole identity on one goal

Magness cites Michigan State research on Nobel Prize-winning scientists. Compared with peers, they were 22 times more likely to perform as amateurs (dance, sing, act), 12 times more likely to write creatively, and about 7 times more likely to do crafts. Entrepreneurs who keep their day jobs early and athletes with broader interests show similar patterns. Having several things that matter makes you more stable, like a tricycle compared with a unicycle.

• Consistency beats intensity

As a college coach, Magness tracked attendance and found a strong link between showing up and improving. The runner who missed the fewest practices went from about 99th of 101 as a freshman to qualifying for the first round of nationals as a senior. Mentally tough people stack solid days, including partial workouts on bad days.

• Ask 'Who do I want to be?'

Magness says performance is performance. He learned that interviewing Taylor Swift's drummer Matt Billingslea, who barely drums before a concert. Instead he loosens his body and mentally rehearses song openings, the same way Magness prepared for races. Prime your environment and decide who you're showing up as. Aaron Judge describes being '99' on the field and Aaron at home.

EXAMPLES

• Sara Hall let go of the record to break it

The American marathoner had her breakthrough in her late 30s and early 40s. A month or two before the race where she set the American women's half-marathon record, she dropped her fixation on the record because it was 'stealing my peace.' She focused instead on the feeling of racing among women who bring out the best in each other.

• Four minutes and one second

In high school, when only about five U.S. high schoolers had ever run a sub-four-minute mile, Magness had the goal written on his bedroom wall. He watched the clock lap by lap, then saw 4:01 on the results board. The failure drove his search for the mental side of performance. His lesson was that if every race felt like life or death, he couldn't reach his potential.

• Blowing the whistle at Nike

At 26, Magness became assistant coach of the Nike Oregon Project, the best-funded pro team in the sport. Within months he saw documents mentioning testosterone medication. It took him months to quit and months more to email U.S. Anti-Doping, against advice from friends, lawyers and a judge. Reporters followed him, and FBI agents knocked on his car window in his driveway. The case took about 10 years. The head coach and head doctor were banned, and Magness says support from loved ones is what got him through.

• Kobe Bryant on the sideline parent

At his daughter's youth practice, Bryant told a parent who was shouting instructions that the child was learning to be alone in

their head and negotiate with themselves. That, he said, is where toughness is built.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Coach yourself with an action and a narrow focus**
  Telling someone to relax doesn't work. Instead, give yourself an action ('shake out your arms') and one target, like a kicker staring at a spot. Talk to yourself in the third person: 'Mel, just focus on the phone call you need to make.'
- **Start with minimum viable progress**
  To get finances under control, cut a daily latte to two days a week. For running, walk and then jog the last block home. Small wins build motivation.
- **Train discomfort with your phone, and spend time alone with your thoughts**
  Magness says about 90% of people experience phantom vibrations. Leave your phone in another room for an hour and let the anxious alarm fade. This week, pick something to do with no phone, alone with your thoughts.

How to Stop Negative Thoughts & Reset Your Mind for Positive Thinking

Guest: Dr. Ethan Kross
Date: 2025-05-08 · Duration: 1:21:07
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqArVJXZXaE

KEYPOINTS

• Negative spirals are normal, not a sign something's wrong with you

Psychologist and neuroscientist Dr. Ethan Kross, who directs the Emotion and Self-Control Lab at the University of Michigan and wrote Chatter and Shift, opens with this: worry, rumination and an active inner critic are part of the human condition. We evolved negative emotions for a reason, and in the right proportions they're useful. He flags one line: if the volume is very high and it lasts more than about two weeks, that moves toward clinical territory.

• Your inner voice is a multi-purpose tool

Kross describes self-talk as silently using language to reflect on your life, and lists four functions: verbal working memory (repeating a phone number or grocery list), simulating and planning (rehearsing a talk, mentally packing for a trip), self-control and motivation, and making meaning — building the story of who you are after rejection or conflict. He cites one study estimating we talk to ourselves at the equivalent of 4,000 words a minute.

• "Chatter" is the inner voice turned against you

Kross defines chatter as negative thought looping, and names three common forms: rumination (replaying the past without progress), worry ("what if" loops about the future) and self-berating ("you idiot, you're worthless"). It hurts thinking and performance because it soaks up the limited attention resources of the prefrontal cortex, strains relationships and undermines health.

• We're wired to weigh the bad more heavily

Kross points to the "negativity bias" — a favorite paper title of his is "Bad Is Stronger Than Good" — and to Nobel Prize–winning work showing people are more sensitive to losses than gains. That makes evolutionary sense, but nobody teaches us how to right the ship once the oversensitivity takes over.

• There's no single fix; build a personal toolkit

In large studies tracking daily COVID anxiety against about 18 coping tools, no single tool moved the needle on its own; combinations did. Kross compares it to a gym: you learn the machines, then find the routine that fits you. If a tool backfires for you, drop it and use another.

• Distanced self-talk: coach yourself by name

Using your own name and "you" — "Come on, Ethan, you've got this" — shifts you into advice-giving mode. Kross ties it to "Solomon's Paradox," studied in his lab: like the wise biblical king who made poor personal choices, we're better at advising others than ourselves. "You" is the verbal equivalent of pointing at someone else, which puts guardrails on your self-talk and moves you from threat to challenge.

• Mental time travel shrinks the moment

Ask how you'll feel about this next week, next year or in ten years; most emotions follow a time course and fade, and remembering that gives hope. Kross's other version goes backward: he pictures his grandmother surviving the Nazis' murder of their family in World War II. When Mel asks what happens if that comparison feeds self-shaming, Kross says to keep the spotlight on what the other person endured and use it as motivation — or switch tools.

• Order around you compensates for chaos inside

Rituals and tidying create "compensatory control": when chatter makes you feel out of control, you exert control over your surroundings. Rituals are rigid sequences done the same way every time, like grieving rituals or athletes' pre-game habits. Kross, messy when happy, cleans dishes and his kids' rooms when stressed. His caveat: rituals become harmful if you over-rely on them.

• Your environment can lower the volume

In Kross's research, looking at a photo of a loved one after recalling a painful experience sped recovery, so he filled his offices with family photos. Walks in safe green space capture attention gently, letting it rest and restore. Nature can also trigger awe, which "shrinks the self" and your problems with it.

• Journaling worked alone, but people rarely do it

Journaling was the one tool in the COVID study that reduced anxiety by itself, yet it was the least used, probably because it takes effort and feels vulnerable. Kross's prompt: write your deepest thoughts and feelings about what's bothering you for 15–20 minutes, ignoring grammar. A story's beginning-middle-end structure helps organize the jumble.

EXAMPLES

• Kross's own rabbit hole

When his youngest daughter applied to the same school as her older sister, he spiraled on "what if she doesn't get in," amazed at how good we are at brainstorming endless worst-case scenarios. She got in.

• Mr. Rogers' journal entry

Returning after time off, Fred Rogers wrote that he'd never live up to expectations, then partway through switched to distanced self-talk — you've got this, you'll do a great job — and the whole tone of the entry shifted.

• Mel's junk drawer

Two and a half hours late, unpacked and berating herself, Mel started organizing the kitchen junk drawer until her husband said she didn't need to do that now. Kross explains it as compensatory control; she also used to rearrange furniture during a hard stretch in her marriage.

• Mel's 5:15 a.m. walk

After difficult news and a sleepless night, Mel walked in the dark in her pajamas instead of opening social media. After about 13 minutes, spotting an owl and the sunrise, the beat-down lifted. Kross notes 13 minutes is probably faster than Tylenol works

on a headache.

- **"Don't Stop Believin'" in the car**
  His daughter's bad mood flipped when the Journey song came on. Kross says senses — music, scent — are underused tools for shifting your own and others' emotions.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Use WOOP to follow through**
  Wish (goal), Outcome (what life looks like if you get it), Obstacle (your personal barrier), Plan as an if-then: "If I start berating myself, then I'll coach myself by name."
- **Audit your "chatter advisors"**
  List the people you vent to. Circle those who first listen and empathize, then help broaden perspective; cross out those who only co-ruminate or jump straight to fixes. It's often not your closest people.
- **Ask before advising**
  Kross listens to his wife until she seems done, then asks whether she wants to keep going or hear a thought.
- **Give invisible support**
  Unsolicited advice can signal "you can't handle this." Instead, quietly take over chores, run a team best-practices session, share a helpful resource in the group chat, or offer a hug or pat on the back.

Trust Your Gut: How to Make a Hard Decision

Date: 2025-04-28 · Duration: 0:49:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGPYyo_Mplg

KEYPOINTS

- **Your life is largely the sum of your decisions, including small ones.**
  Mel cites estimates that we make up to 35,000 decisions a day: whether to get up an hour early for the gym, eat the cookie at work, or reach for the vape again. She argues that where you are now mostly reflects past decisions, and who you become, in money, relationships, friendships and health, depends on the ones you make today. On autopilot, past decisions just repeat. To become a healthy or financially responsible person, start making the decisions that kind of person makes.
- **Being decisive is a skill you can learn.**
  Mel calls herself one of the most decisive people you'll meet, but says she wasn't always and had to build her own framework to stop being 'so damn indecisive'. She was even weighing a business opportunity while recording, and planned to use the framework on it herself.
- **Intuition is your inner compass.**
  Mel describes intuition as an internal GPS built from your DNA, your life experience, and signals from your gut, brain and heart. Her metaphor is a compass reading the energy around you, which is why you sometimes walk into a room and immediately want to avoid someone. Her core claim is that you usually already know what's right. The problem is finding the courage to act on it.
- **Feeling stuck is a signal pointing you somewhere else.**
  Feeling stuck, frustrated, sad, disconnected or on autopilot is, in Mel's framing, a directional signal: your compass telling you your life is out of alignment. It doesn't mean you're condemned to stay there; it means it's time to turn toward something new.
- **Use your gut to decide what to do, and your brain to decide when and how.**
  This is the central idea of the episode. Your gut tells you what the right decision is. Your thinking brain plans the timing, the wording, who needs to hear it and how to do it responsibly. For example, you might know three to six months before you quit a job that you're leaving, and use that time to save money so you aren't left in a precarious position.
- **Settle your emotions before you read your gut.**
  Mel points to research showing that the brain factors in your emotional state when judging a decision. When you're stressed or afraid, you tend to take the path of least resistance and do what you've always done. Her approach is to treat emotions as the storm, not the map: notice them, then set them aside while you check what feels true.
- **The right decision often feels wrong.**
  This is the title of chapter 8 of her book The Let Them Theory. What makes decisions agonising usually isn't uncertainty about the truth but dread of the aftermath: other people's disappointment, expectations and emotions. When someone asks for advice on a big decision, Mel believes they usually want courage and reassurance, not an answer. She calls agonising over a hard choice a mentally healthy response.
- **Not deciding is still a decision.**
  Avoiding a choice means choosing to stay where you are, accept less and ignore your intuition. Mel applies this to staying in a marriage or job too long, putting off moving a parent into care, or continuing to pay for an adult child you resent supporting.
- **There are no bad decisions if you trust yourself to handle the fallout.**
  Mel's final point is that every decision leads somewhere and gives you information. Even choices you regret, like staying too long in a relationship, may have brought you to the clarity you have now. If you make the choice that feels right at the time and trust yourself to handle whatever follows, she argues, it can't really be a wrong decision.

EXAMPLES

- **'Make it two'**
  In 1994, Mel was at a New York City bar ordering a bourbon on the rocks to go in a plastic cup so she could slip out. A voice behind her said, 'That sounds great. Make it two.' She turned around, saw Chris Robbins and 'just knew'.
- **Oakley and Hirschsprung's disease**
  When their son Oakley came home from the hospital, he wouldn't eat. Mel went back to their pediatrician, Mark, whom she had known for 11 years, every day insisting something was wrong. About five days later Oakley was airlifted to Mass General, and doctors weren't sure he would survive. It turned out to be Hirschsprung's disease, a rare intestinal condition, and he had been close to a rupture that could have caused fatal septic shock. She gives this as an example of intuition knowing before the mind can explain.
- **The law firm she knew was wrong on day one**
  In 1998, newly moved from New York to Boston, Mel took the first job offer she got, at a corporate law firm in a downtown high-rise. She knew on the first day it wasn't for her, but she needed to pay her bills and couldn't yet see how to change careers. She stayed about another year before making the switch. She doesn't count it as a bad decision: it paid the bills and pointed her toward the change.
- **The groom who dreaded his wedding**
  A listener wrote that his wedding was weeks away, he and his fiancée were fighting more, invitations had gone out, both sets of parents had paid deposits, and he couldn't shake a feeling of dread. Mel says that from the outside the answer is obvious: if you're dreading it, call it off. His real struggle is the guilt of hurting people. Worrying about them shows he's a good person, but it's no reason to marry someone he doesn't want to marry.
- **The year she didn't move**
  When her son wanted to move to southern Vermont, Chris and Oakley moved there for a year while Mel stayed behind. She knew she would eventually follow, but working out when and how took almost a year, and she says that was okay.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run the one-year test**

  Get quiet, drop out of your head into your body, and picture yourself a year from now having done nothing. If your chest tightens, you feel dread or your energy drains, that's a no. Then picture the other path: out of the relationship, in nursing school, channel launched. If you feel some expansion or energy, even with fear, Mel calls that your true north.

- **Plan the 'when, how and to whom' separately**

  Once your gut has decided, use your brain to plan the timing, the conversation, who needs to know and the money. That separation takes the pressure off without letting you off the hook.

- **Let them react**

  Mel says the Let Them Theory stopped her from avoiding conversations, over-explaining or delaying decisions for fear of upsetting people. Expect people to be upset or confused, and let them. Telling someone when you no longer want to be with them is, in her view, the most courageous and kind thing you can do.

- **Change how you talk about intuition**

  Swap 'I don't know how to trust my gut' for 'I know what my gut is telling me; I'm just afraid to act on it.' Then work on how quickly you act on that truth.

How to Control Your Mind & Redirect Your Energy to Self Transformation

Date: 2025-02-17 · Duration: 1:04:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cp6Kd-JAMRo

KEYPOINTS

• An idle supercomputer turns on its owner

Mel's central idea: your brain is a problem-solving, pattern-spotting supercomputer. Aim it at a project and you get flow; leave it idle and it makes you the problem — trashing your appearance, telling you nothing is enough. She notes you rarely beat yourself up while lost in gardening, gaming, sport, an instrument or a hike.

• Your brain is a Labrador that needs a ball

Retrievers are hardwired to chase whatever you throw; without a job they chew slippers and gnaw cabinets. Mel says your brain behaves the same: give it a goal, a 'ball in play', and it locks on; give it nothing and it turns destructive.

• Skill 1: give yourself a project, ideally creative and hands-on

Mel plays a clip of Martha Beck on the Today Show: we've long known anxiety shuts down creativity, so Beck wondered whether creativity shuts down anxiety — and says it does. Simply planning tomorrow's dinner (steak on the grill, and what goes with it) shifts your thinking. Her advice to people who say they're not creative: make something anyway — cook, garden, draw, knit.

• Research Mel cites on why projects help

She points to University of Exeter research that small steps on a project turn down negative self-talk and rumination; a University of Michigan and Oxford study in the journal Neuron indicating dopamine is released as you work toward a goal rather than when you finish; and University of Pennsylvania work suggesting goals build resilience against stress. With listeners reporting record stress, she sees a project as a way to stop a tired brain making you a bigger problem.

• Skill 2: look for hearts to prove your brain's filter works

Tell your brain to find a naturally occurring heart shape today — a leaf, a sidewalk stain, coffee foam, a spot on a dog. Recording, Mel spotted two: magnets clustered on a whiteboard and a stain on the carpet. It sounds silly, she says, but it trains the reticular activating system, the 'bouncer' deciding what reaches your conscious mind. It won't fix your problems; it proves you can direct your attention.

• You only consciously notice a sliver of what hits you

Mel relays Stanford neurosurgeon Dr. Jim Doty's figures: 6–10 million bits of information hit you every second, but the conscious brain handles only about 50–100, most of it about running your body. Your filter decides what matters based on what you tell it matters — like a social feed that fills with bird-feeder ads after you mention them. If you're not looking for opportunities or deals, you'll walk past them like an unnoticed heart-shaped rock.

• Skill 3: manifesting as intentional encoding, per Dr. Doty

Doty defines manifestation as embedding an intention in your subconscious so it has the greatest likelihood to occur. His process: write it in pencil, read it silently, read it aloud, visualize it — repeatedly. He explains that the default mode network holds self-stories like 'I'm never good enough'; repetition makes a new intention salient, engaging the task-positive network's salience, attention and executive control parts — his 'bloodhound' that tracks down possibilities. He stresses there's no magic, and urges starting small, like quitting soda before aiming to lose 100 pounds.

• Mel reprogrammed her own anxious defaults

A former chronic worrier, Mel says she deliberately installed two default thoughts: 'What if this all works out?' and 'This moment is leading me somewhere I'm meant to go.' Examples she suggests writing: I'm capable of success, I'm worthy of love, this moment is temporary, I'm stronger than I think.

• Skill 5: let thoughts rise and fall

Instead of TV, doom-scrolling or a drink to switch off, Mel suggests observing thoughts without attaching — 'oh, interesting, I'm still thinking about work'. She cites a study in the journal Mindfulness from Lawrence University and Goucher College finding such practices help people avoid negative loops, noting that rumination can worsen depression. 'Let them' (the thoughts come) and 'let me' remind myself I'm not my thoughts.

EXAMPLES

• Sawyer's 36-hour research project

When Mel asked her daughter Sawyer — formerly in marketing tech at a cybersecurity firm in 44 countries — to analyze online comments about Let Them, she expected a few pages in two or three weeks. Sawyer delivered a huge, color-coded analysis with linked sources and a two-page synopsis in 36 hours. Mel's heartbreaking realization: without a project for that horsepower, Sawyer aims it at herself.

• The FaceTime that inspired the episode

On a morning call, one daughter said nothing she did felt like enough and nothing looked good on her; the other chimed in that she felt the same. Mel, by contrast, describes her own ADHD brain as 'a box of mice let loose in the kitchen'.

• Mel's weekend closet project

Newly an empty nester, Mel planned to clear out upstairs closets her adult kids use as storage — a concrete project to keep her mind occupied rather than ruminating.

• Dr. Daniel Amen's bookends to the day

Psychiatrist Dr. Amen, who Mel says has scanned some 225,000 brains, starts each day with 'Today is going to be a great day' and asks why. At night he asks 'What went well today?' and goes on a 'treasure hunt' from waking onward. He did it even the night his father died: 'The brain is lazy; it does what you nudge it to do.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Skill 4: the morning and night questions

Ask 'Why is today going to be a great day?' at breakfast (good with kids) and 'What went well today?' at bedtime. Mel says both send the retriever after good things you'd otherwise miss, even on terrible days.

• Float negative thoughts down a river

Picture writing each thought on paper and tossing it into a rushing river. Mel's other image: like dog mess on the sidewalk — notice it, don't step in it, walk past.

• If you can't find a heart, start there

Mel says the exercise is the baby step: if you can't spot a heart on tomorrow's walk, you won't believe your filter can find bigger things. Many readers of her book now post the hearts they find.

3 Questions That Determine Who You Really Are

Date: 2025-01-25 · Duration: 0:37:19
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsAK7h73cdo

KEYPOINTS

• Three questions borrowed from Terry Crews, Jeff Bezos and Viola Davis

Mel built this solo episode from clips she found going down a YouTube rabbit hole: Terry Crews on Shannon Sharpe's Club Shay Shay, a 2001 Jeff Bezos interview for the Academy of Achievement, and Viola Davis on a red carpet. Each person's question targets a different area: how you work, how you decide, and how you treat yourself.

• Question one: if someone paid you a million dollars to do this, how would you do it?

Terry Crews asked himself this while sweeping floors as a janitor in Los Angeles after leaving the NFL, close to tears and fighting depression. He called it a little game to get through the depression; Mel argues it is a way to play life to win. Any difference between how you'd do the task for a million dollars and how you're doing it now reveals untapped capacity you can choose to use at any time.

• Honesty about where you coasted is the fuel

Crews admits he never really liked football, saw it as a way out of Flint, Michigan, and didn't fully apply himself. He describes eating the cake, staying up late, showing up late to the interview and then blaming others. Mel uses this to own her own pattern of not throwing herself into college, law school and job after job, then blaming something else.

• Repeating the question turns excellence into a habit

Crews didn't use it once. He applied it filing papers at the Veterans Administration and working security on movie sets, ironing his clothes and checking his flashlight batteries 'as if someone gave me a million dollars to watch this parking lot.' He says it reversed the bad attitude he had in the league and felt like an imaginary reward, so it didn't matter what others said.

• How you do anything is how you do everything

Mel's point is that how you sweep a floor is how you show up at an interview and how you get back up after rejection. Showing up with excellence at the thing you're aiming for often opens a door you didn't know was meant for you.

• Question two: at 80, will I regret not doing this?

Bezos called it the regret minimization framework: project yourself to age 80, look back, and minimize regrets. He knew he wouldn't regret trying to take part in the internet even if he failed, but not trying would haunt him every day, which made the decision 'incredibly easy.' He put it as a 100% chance of regret if he didn't try and basically 0% if he tried and failed.

• Long-range thinking cuts through short-term confusion

Bezos left his Wall Street firm mid-year, walking away from his annual bonus, which Mel notes is often most of a year's pay there. He said such short-term factors can confuse you; Mel says they can actually drive the decision. In a later interview with his brother, Bezos added that our biggest regrets are usually acts of omission, paths not taken, like loving someone, never telling them, and watching them marry someone else.

• Trying and failing isn't a regret

Mel calls this time traveling: things that are confusing in the middle make sense looking back. Once you commit, obstacles become things to figure out rather than reasons not to act. Her claim is that you're proud of yourself for the risks you take, even the ones that fail.

• Question three: who is going to be the love of my life today?

Asked by BuzzFeed for relationship advice for young people at a 2023 Hunger Games premiere, standing beside her husband Julius, Viola Davis said what she tells her daughter: you are the love of your life. She added that loving yourself, creating boundaries, advocating for yourself and being honest with yourself is the seed for good friendships and relationships.

• It's measured by behavior, not feeling

Mel turns Davis's line into a morning question and a nightly gut check: who was the love of my life today? You know the answer by how you behaved: speaking kindly to yourself, caring for your body and needs, not chasing people who don't choose you, holding boundaries. She hopes nine times out of ten it's you, because how you treat yourself sets the bar for every other relationship.

EXAMPLES

• Never going back to Flint

In 1997, broke with a young family in LA, Crews's wife asked whether they'd return to Flint if it didn't work. He said they would never leave LA, even if it happened when they were 99, because he'd learned from the mistakes he made in football and wouldn't get another chance.

• Sitting on the gym machine reading a magazine

Depressed and having not worked out in a year, Crews paid $25 a month for a gym for the first time. At first he just sat on the machine and read a magazine, but he kept coming back, day 20, day 21, and it became 30 years of consistent training. He calls these changes 'incremental': one little thing at a time.

• The animation dream that closed

Crews had moved to LA to become an illustrator and shopped his portfolio to Disney, DreamWorks and Hanna-Barbera, but hand-drawn animation faded once Toy Story came out and studios returned his portfolio. Then he got a chance to act. Mel had no idea animation was his original goal.

• Mel's own regret tests

Mel quit law in 1999 for the dot-com boom and spent 14 years going job to job without direction, yet says she'd have regretted staying for the rest of her life. She used the same question to move to Vermont to support her son, and to start the podcast even though it meant shutting down successful parts of the business.

• Viola Davis's credentials

Mel notes Davis has the Triple Crown of acting (Oscar, Emmy and Tony), which she says only 24 people, 15 women and nine

men, have achieved, and also an EGOT.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Run the million-dollar test on one task today**
  Pick something mundane, such as a class, the dishwasher or your resume, and do it as if you were being paid a million dollars. Mel says she'd get an A+ in quantum physics for that money; the gap shows what you're capable of.
- **Use the 80-year-old lens for crossroads decisions**
  For stay-or-go choices about a job, a move or a relationship, especially when others depend on you, picture yourself at 80 and ask which choice you'd regret not making. Then treat the obstacles as logistics.
- **Bookend the day with the love-of-my-life question**
  Ask it in the morning to set your behavior and at night as an honest review. When the answer isn't you, adjust how you speak to yourself, which boundaries you hold and whom you're chasing.
- **Show up longer than you think you should**
  Mel tells her daughter, who is pursuing music in LA, that the game isn't how good you are on stage but how long you're willing to keep showing up at your best without quitting.

How to Stop Caring What People Think of You

Guest: Chrissy Teigen
Date: 2025-01-09 · Duration: 0:47:10
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BR-1OeY8BOA

KEYPOINTS

• Fear of what others think is, in Mel's view, the biggest obstacle to the life you want

Mel says it's the most common question across the 35 press interviews she'd done for The Let Them Theory, from Oprah to The Wall Street Journal. She points out how automatic it is: you pause before posting, speaking up at work or making a move to consider how someone else will react. Caring itself isn't the problem — it's a sign you're a good person — the problem is silencing yourself and using others' opinions as proof you're not good enough.

• You can never control or guarantee what another person thinks

Mel's core argument is that no behavior can manipulate someone into a particular opinion of you, so energy spent trying is wasted and becomes a source of stress and anxiety in itself. When Chrissy suggested she could at least influence it 'by being really good', Mel pushed back: she couldn't even control what Mel would tell her daughters about their conversation afterward.

• Let Them, then Let Me

Mel recaps the two parts. 'Let them' is for moments you feel frustrated, worried or annoyed by what others say, do or feel: let them think what they're going to think. 'Let me' reminds you that you control three things — your thoughts, your actions and how you process your feelings. Your power lives in your response, especially in acting in ways that make you proud of yourself.

• Seeking approval is conditioned in childhood

Chrissy describes a parent who wasn't affectionate and who she felt liked to show her off; reciting words in Thai and being good earned praise, so she learned to be good for everybody. Mel notes most of us got positive attention for performing, grades or winning. That attunement is necessary when you're a dependent child, but as an adult, locating your goodness in other people's moods means you'll never feel safe.

• Self-punishment and people-pleasing feed each other

Chrissy calls herself 'a punisher' — through diets, food, drinking and emotionally — after feeling she let people down. She rarely leaves the house because even a grocery-store interaction leaves her working overtime to make sure the other person had a good experience, then dwelling on it at home. Mel's read: her worth, happiness and pride have been handed entirely to other people's reactions, which she calls a prison.

• Children blame themselves — what Dr. Paul Conti calls attribution

Mel brings in psychiatrist Dr. Paul Conti from an earlier episode. Without abstract thought or life experience, he explains, a child whose parent snaps at a request for a drink concludes 'it must be me' rather than 'Mom's in a bad place'. Those self-attributions carry into adulthood. He cites the English physician Winnicott's goal of raising a child who feels solidly 'good enough' to face hard things, and says that can be rebuilt later in life.

• Let Them is attribution in practice

Mel connects Conti's idea to her tool: saying 'let them' assigns someone's bad mood or negative opinion to them rather than to your self-worth, which she calls 'the world's best boundary'. 'Let me' then attributes your power to your own thoughts, feelings and actions. Knowing your intentions, she says, is how you stop twisting yourself into knots to be 'the good daughter' or 'the good mom'.

• Two things can be true at once

Someone can be disappointed in you and still love you; someone can misunderstand you while you remain a good person; someone can have a negative thought about you while you keep positive self-worth. Accepting that everyone, including those closest to you, will think negative things is what Mel calls liberating.

• Adults are not responsible for other adults' emotions

Parents must help children process emotions because kids can't regulate alone, Mel says, but you're never responsible for managing another adult's feelings, no matter what you do. Exhausting yourself to make everyone happy means losing yourself.

EXAMPLES

• Chrissy's 'biggest battle'

Despite her businesses, four kids and her marriage to John Legend, Chrissy said the one thing she'd change is being so misunderstood: 'I wish people knew how good I was.' She called it desperate-sounding; Mel argues it's a universal fear.

• Mel's negative thoughts about the people she loves

To prove that love and negative thoughts coexist, Mel listed hers: her husband farting in the morning, finding him eating cereal instead of making dinner after she worked late, telling her intense daughter Sawyer to 'chill'. Chrissy admitted John's even temper sometimes makes her wish for more passion. With roughly 70,000 thoughts a day, Mel says, people can barely control their own thinking, let alone yours.

• Fear of passing it on

Chrissy said she'd accept her own pain but not her kids'. She worries she pushes them to be extra polite so they won't seem like spoiled celebrity kids, and links her childhood people-pleasing to later believing her body belonged to everyone. She wants them to know their body, mind and actions are their own. Mel's response: they're watching how much strangers affect her, so changing that teaches them too.

• The 'give no f*s girl'**

Chrissy laughed that she's seen as not caring, when she cares enormously. Mel's take: anyone who has to announce they don't care what others think is still processing it — and the key word is 'give', because caring means giving away power.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Your draft posts are 'the graveyard of your dreams'

Notice the moment you agonize over a filter, delete a line of text or add an emoji to soften it — you're thinking about someone else's reaction, not how you feel about it. Mel says social media is for your self-expression, business or art, not your college sorority or your mom's group. If you like the bathing-suit photo or the unfiltered video, post it; let them unfollow or roll their eyes.

• Care more about what you think than about what they think

Mel doesn't tell you to stop caring altogether — that would make you 'a selfish jerk'. Instead, saying 'let them think something negative' protects your time and energy, places your value in your own view of yourself and faces the fear underneath, which is that the opinion will be negative.

• Catch the workday spiral

When an email or your boss's mood suddenly has you obsessing about what you should have done, recognize you're giving your power away. Their bad mood doesn't make you a bad person; return to what you intended and how you want to show up.

3 Truths You Need to Hear: The Best Expert Advice to Unlock Your Potential

Date: 2024-11-11 · Duration: 1:00:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vic1wX8_h34

KEYPOINTS

• What you think becomes what you say, then what you do, then who you become

Mel builds the episode on a line attributed to the Buddha: 'What you think you become, what you feel you attract, what you imagine you create.' Her version is a chain: thoughts shape your self-talk, self-talk drives what you do and don't do, and those actions add up to who you are. If you want to know your life in five years, she says, look at what you're telling yourself today.

• Negative self-statements stick and can harden into a 'truth'

In a clip, Stanford neurosurgeon and neuroscientist Dr. James Doty explains that humans have a negativity bias: negative statements tend to stick and lead to rumination. Once you tell yourself 'it's not possible, I cannot,' that becomes your truth and builds a limiting belief system. Mel uses this to argue that lying to yourself does real damage.

• Lie #1, 'I'm failing at life': you're on your way

Mel says the feeling of failing usually comes from comparing yourself to people who have something now. You're playing with other people, not against them, because success isn't limited. Someone else's love story or income just shows you what you want and that it's possible. From The Let Them Theory chapter 'Life Isn't Fair', she argues that through hard work, effort and patience you can create 95% of what others have, just not on their timeline.

• There are no failures if you learn from them

Mel says that telling yourself you made the wrong call is like walking into a room and hearing the door shut behind you. If you look back, you can explain how everything led you here, so you can also trust that where you are now is leading somewhere. You can always leave a job, a degree, a relationship or an apartment.

• Treat change as a series of small experiments

Steven Bartlett says the world is changing so fast that the right answer keeps moving. The only way to find it is to take a first step, run an experiment and build evidence about yourself. By 16, he realised grades wouldn't get him where he needed to go and looked for another path. Mel's version: experiments aren't permanent decisions, just tests of what works.

• Many social rules are doors nobody has tried

Bartlett describes life as full of social myths: you must go to university by a certain age, pursue one career, and believe quitting is for losers. When he pushed on those doors as a young man, he found 'nothing behind them'. Questioning them became a habit, and he says that's where life's biggest rewards came from.

• Lie #2, 'I'm unmotivated or lazy': you're working against your brain

Harvard-trained psychiatrist Dr. Alok Kanojia ('Dr. K') says we spend our lives swimming upstream instead of understanding our motivational circuitry. In his explanation, you wake up with a limited daily capacity for pleasure and behavioural reinforcement, driven by dopamine in the nucleus accumbens. Mel adds that real laziness is really a decision not to do something.

• Morning phone use may drain your motivation for the day

Dr. K's model: if you work for four hours first thing, the payoff feels strongly rewarding. If you spend those hours on technology first, the same work feels much less satisfying because your dopamine reserves are depleted. His analogy is a full lemon, where a small squeeze early gives lots of juice and tech is a 'hard squeeze'. This is his framework and Mel's paraphrase, not a measured protocol.

• Lie #3, 'I can't change': you're built to change

Mel calls this the most dangerous lie, whether it's 'I'll always be bad with money', 'the emotional eater' or 'it always works out for my sister'. She says that biologically and neurologically you keep growing and changing until you die. The only sure way not to change is to keep telling yourself you can't.

• Transformation happens through small dares, not a giant leap

Pastor and author Sarah Jakes Roberts admits that 'just take the leap' advice makes her cringe when you've spent more time doubting yourself than believing in yourself. Instead, open the cupboard: look at what you're working with and ask who you can believe you'll become from here. Introduce that person to your life gradually.

EXAMPLES

• Steven Bartlett's 'millionaire or jail' moment

Bartlett grew up the youngest of four boys, one of the only Black kids in an all-white area outside London, with poor grades and no money. He sold cigarettes his mother brought back from Nigeria on the school playground. A friend told him he'd be either a millionaire or in jail, and he linked money with belonging. He started businesses at 12.

• Mel the 'stuck lawyer'

Mel says she hated law school almost immediately but stayed because it felt too late to change course. At 29 she was six years in, pregnant, paying a mortgage, and felt sick saying 'I'm a lawyer'. She says the 'I failed, I'm stuck' story kept her there far too long, and she wishes her 23-year-old self had known she could leave.

• Mel's $800,000 hole

Mel says she once owed about $800,000, had liens on her house and struggled to buy groceries, while friends took their families to Disney World and renovated kitchens. Her shift was from 'I'm failing' to 'I want that, I can work for it, maybe not now but later'.

• The 'out of shape' experiment

Mel's example: replace 'I'll never lose this weight' with 'I deserve to feel good in my body,' first as a thought, then in a journal. Eventually you go for a walk, then the gym, a yoga class, a 5K charity walk, and become someone who moves every day.

• Sarah Jakes Roberts on introducing your new self

With a partner, she suggests saying something like: 'The way I've been showing up doesn't feel honest anymore. I think I

want to go back to school, or start a business, or I might be an artist, and I'd love to bring you along.' Transformation, she says, is a process, and one day you look up and realise you've changed.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Keep your phone away for the first hour**

  Following Dr. K, don't use your phone, social media, email or TV for the first hour after waking. Mel has made 'no phone in the bedroom' a firm rule. Aim that fresh morning energy at something that matters.

- **Say the true version out loud**

  Swap the lies for 'I am on my way, I'm on my own timeline, I'm capable of achieving what I want.' Roberts says putting words outside yourself creates space for who you're becoming.

- **Take one baby dare today**

  Mel's examples: skip the glass of wine tonight, tell someone you miss going to the art studio, or roll out your yoga mat tomorrow morning. Then journal Roberts' question: who do I believe I can become from here?

The “Bronze Medal Mindset” (and 4 More Surprising Habits From Olympians)

Date: 2024-08-12 · Duration: 0:58:45
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPn4gdmx-R8

KEYPOINTS

• Real visualization means feeling it, not seeing it

Mel's first Olympic lesson is that mental rehearsal isn't about picturing yourself winning. It's about feeling, step by step, what doing it is like in your body. She learned this from US pommel horse specialist Stephen Nedoroscik. Photos of him with his eyes closed went viral as 'napping', but he said he was running his routine in his head about 100 times, then stood up and moved his hands and shoulders through every element.

• Rehearsing a move fires the same brain region as doing it

Mel cites UCLA research in which brain scans show that imagining and feeling an action activates the same region that controls actually performing it. Repetition builds procedural memory, the automatic, long-term memory behind writing with a pen, pouring water, walking or moving a wheelchair. Mental rehearsal starts building that pattern before you physically repeat it.

• Rehearse the hard middle, not the finish line

If Nedoroscik had only imagined the podium, Mel says, he'd have blown his routine. For a marathon, picture the 5 a.m. alarm, opening the door to rain, and your earbuds dying at mile 8, then feel yourself keep running. The aim is to rehearse doing the work even when you don't feel like it.

• Specialising in what you're great at can beat being a generalist

In high school, Nedoroscik realised he wouldn't be recruited as an all-around gymnast, so he focused on the pommel horse. That led to Penn State and the 2021 world title. Mel's takeaway is that life offers more than the same five career paths everyone chases, and that going deep on something you love and are good at can be the way forward.

• A perceived weakness can become a strength

Nedoroscik has no depth perception, is very sensitive to light, has eyes that act as if they're permanently dilated, and can't get a driver's licence. Mel suggests that not being able to focus on everything outside may help him turn his attention inward. In her view, he's the perfect spokesperson for visualization being about feeling rather than seeing.

• Bronze medalists are often happier than silver medalists

Mel cites research published through the American Psychological Association showing that bronze medalists tend to look and feel happier than silver medalists. Silver medalists 'compare up' to gold and dwell on 'if only I'd been a second faster'. Bronze medalists 'compare down', thrilled just to be on the podium, which brings gratitude and humility.

• Comparing yourself upward makes you miserable

With 8 billion people, someone will always be smarter, richer or more successful. Mel says if you scan for evidence that others are better, you'll find it, and you can't feel grateful while beating yourself up. She adds that even gold medalists often hit a low after the Games because they no longer have something meaningful to pursue.

• Enthusiasm is contagious and, Mel believes, brings luck

Norwegian swimmer Henrik Christiansen, 27, went viral with roughly nine short videos about the Olympic Village chocolate muffins: dry-looking buffet muffins that became the most sought-after food in Paris. Mel defines enthusiasm as expecting the best and working to make good things happen. She says, as her own belief, that it raises your IQ and makes you luckier because you're present and engaged.

• Winners quit when quitting takes courage

Mel separates running away out of fear from bravely making the right call. Her examples include ending a relationship that isn't right, leaving school or a job, calling off an engagement, or telling a demanding boss you can't work the weekend.

• Treat your mindset like a muscle

Mel says Simone Biles talked to her therapist at 7 a.m. on the morning of a gold-medal final in 2024, warming up her mind the way she'd warm up her body. Mel argues that mental strength, like a torn muscle, needs training, repair and rest, and that past trauma affects performance.

• Every Olympian knows what they want

Mel says most people who feel stuck either stop themselves from going after what they want or, more often, have never been honest about what that is. The goal doesn't have to be big. 'I'd like to be a bit better or happier than I am' is enough to give you direction.

EXAMPLES

• The team final that ended a 16-year drought

Pommel horse was the last event of the US men's team final, and Nedoroscik's routine would decide whether the team won its first medal in 16 years. Viral side-by-side footage showed his hand movements in the holding area matching the routine itself. He stuck the landing, and the team won bronze.

• Simone Biles and the twisties

After winning all-around gold in 2016, Biles got the 'twisties' in Tokyo: a disconnect between mind and body that left her able to do only 1.5 of 2.5 twists in warm-ups. She withdrew from the team final and every event except beam, where she won bronze. She calls it her favourite medal because it stood for putting her health first. Mel notes that Larry Nassar had been sentenced in 2018, with 265 known victims including Biles, and that Biles links the Games to PTSD.

• Mel's number two bestseller

Her self-published The 5 Second Rule couldn't make the New York Times list, so when The High 5 Habit debuted at number two, she'd finally reached a five-year goal. Instead she burst into tears and was angry about not being number one, a textbook 'silver medal' reaction.

• The supervisor who learned what a colleague earned

In an Inc. magazine story by editor Jeff Haden, a man worked his way up from the shop floor to supervisor and loved his job.

Then he learned that a lazier, less cooperative supervisor earned 50% more. Nothing had changed except who he was comparing himself to, but he became deeply unhappy and stopped working as hard.

• Femita Ayanbeku's running blade

The Boston Paralympian lost her right leg below the knee in a car accident at 11. At a Challenged Athletes Foundation clinic she won a free running blade, and three-time Paralympian Jerome Singleton asked what she wanted to do with it. She said learn to run and do something meaningful. She went on to become a three-time Paralympian, eight-time national champion and American record holder, and was competing six months after having a baby.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Rehearse your next hard task

Before a tough deadline, Mel pictured herself alone above the garage on another summer Saturday writing The Let Them Theory, taking a break with her family, then climbing the stairs and sitting back down. Rehearse the unglamorous steps, not the result.

• Catch yourself comparing up

When a kitchen renovation, a pay rise or a ranking suddenly feels disappointing, ask who you're comparing yourself to. Compare down, or to your old self, so you can appreciate what you have. You can still push for what's fair, such as a raise, from a calmer and more motivated place.

• Focus on doing, not 'making it'

Mel's advice to someone hoping to 'make it': focus on doing the work, and one day you'll realise you're on the podium.

• Start with one honest goal

Ask yourself Jerome Singleton's question in your own terms: what do you want to do with what you have? A small, honest answer is enough to start working toward.

3 Steps to Eliminate Self Doubt & Get Everything You Want In Life

Date: 2024-07-15 · Duration: 0:41:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHkJa2tL-mw

KEYPOINTS

• Triggers are teachers, and the anger is aimed at yourself

Mel's central idea is that when someone's success sets you off, you aren't really mad at them. You're mad at yourself for not doing the small, boring things that would get you what you want. That's why she says she's happy, not sorry, when you're triggered: the trigger points to something you clearly want and supplies fuel to go after it.

• Trigger #1: an irritating person gets what you want

Mel argues it has to be the irritating, less-qualified person who wakes you up. Famous experts far ahead of you make the gap feel impossible and supply excuses: they have a team, time, money. Someone close to your level with fewer credentials removes those excuses and shows you're capable too. You don't have to fake being happy for them or like their posts. Take the lesson and use the anger.

• About 90% of the time, they're just putting in the reps

Mel acknowledges that roughly 10% of envy-inducing success comes from trust funds, privilege, bias or genetic luck. In the other 90%, people got there by doing tedious work 'in the dark' every day while you weren't watching. Viral success usually has no unicorn strategy, just posting content every day until it builds.

• Inspiration is cheap; anger moves you

Watching people far ahead mostly makes you present to the gap, which is demoralizing. Mel says that's partly why she delayed starting her podcast. Anger is a very different emotion, a 'very painful gift' wrapped in sticky, gross paper, and used well it gets you moving where inspiration doesn't.

• Trigger #2: being called out on your BS

Being exposed, whether for faking competence, drinking again or spending money you said you wouldn't, is among the most triggering experiences. Mel distinguishes this from impostor syndrome; here you really don't know what you're doing and are hiding it. The lesson is that saying 'I don't know,' 'I've never done that' or 'can I take a class or hire help?' is a superpower.

• Admitting you don't know builds trust

Mel says research shows that when someone admits they don't know, others trust them more, because they can rely on that person to be honest. Mel now routinely asks guests to explain big words and has zero fear of asking for help. She credits that with helping her take bigger risks and solve problems faster.

• Trigger #3: someone you respect says you're playing small

This is the impostor-syndrome trigger. Others see more in you, but you underestimate yourself and stay in a box: not posting your music, undercharging, keeping the client who nickel-and-dimes you, not applying for the dream job or school. Listen to people who see something bigger, because deep down you see it too; you're just scared.

• Ignored triggers get louder

Mel finds that the more stubborn she is about avoiding what she knows she should do, the bigger the sledgehammer life brings next. Recognizing the trigger is the hardest step and the first one.

EXAMPLES

• Molly the interior designer

Mel's friend 'Molly' (not her real name) is a trained, accredited designer with employees and years in business. She had talked for five years about doing social media and kept asking Mel for advice. Then a woman from her moms' group with no design training started posting photos of her own house, going live on TikTok and Instagram, and racking up thousands of likes. Molly spiraled on her couch and cried for days. Mel told her to thank the woman. Molly already followed Leanne Ford, Jake Arnold, Studio McGee, Joanna and Chip Gaines and Amber Lewis, but none of them had gotten her moving.

• Mel's six months faking a job

After leaving law in 1999 for an early Boston startup, Mel needed a new job when the company was moved to San Francisco. She had a baby at home and was secretly pregnant. In 2001 she talked her way into a senior vice president of content role at a marketplace for creative freelancers. With no idea how to do it, she spent six months typing emails and looking busy. The two founders finally called her into a glass conference room: 'You're awesome, but you don't have a clue what you're doing, do you?' 'No, I don't.' Her things were packed while she sat there.

• 'You were 10 times better, and we paid the others five times more'

Around 2013–14, deep in debt and afraid that higher fees would cost her bookings, Mel undercharged for 5 Second Rule talks despite friends' warnings. At an executive retreat in Philadelphia for a Fortune 50 bank, she sat shrinking in the back of the room behind speakers like Dan Pink, then closed the event and brought the house down. The chief HR officer told her she was 10 times better than any other speaker and that they'd each been paid five times her fee. Her price was so low they'd doubted she was any good.

• Aaron down the hall

Mel's composite example is the coworker who suddenly quits to run the custom boat business he's been building on weekends while you ran spreadsheets. Because you know him, you can't invent a story about superpowers or trust funds.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Step 1: recognize the trigger

When you feel envy, embarrassment or anger, label it: 'I'm triggered, and that means there's something I need to do.' Simply noticing stops the swirl.

• Step 2: play the 100-day rule

Want a following? Post for 100 days. Want to write a great song? Write 100 crappy songs on 100 days. Writing a book means

writing every day for 100 days. Better at three-pointers means 15 minutes on the court a day for 100 days.

- **Be someone's chief HR officer**

  If you see a person you love playing small, tell them plainly what they're missing out on. It won't be an easy conversation, but Mel calls it one of the most loving things you can do.

- **Make one practical trade-off**

  Mel's suggestions for Molly translate widely: take one fewer client and spend that time on the avoided task, or hire someone to help with it.

How to Build Real Confidence: 7 Truths to Unlock Your Authentic Self

Date: 2024-05-16 · Duration: 0:55:12
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZn2Q4IU53k

KEYPOINTS

- **Truth 1: putting yourself first will disappoint people, so make sure it isn't you.**
  Mel's opening rule is that someone will always be disappointed by your choices, so the only question is who. If you live to keep others happy while you stay miserable, the disappointed person ends up being you. She suggests holding space for other people's disappointment without letting their questions make you question decisions that are right for you.
- **Letting people down builds resilience and a stronger sense of self.**
  For people-pleasers, she says some sentences are necessary as well as reasonable: it's not in my budget, I can't go on the girls' trip, I'm not interested in another date, you're not borrowing that. She reframes the discomfort of saying no as a sign of growth rather than failure, and argues that staying silent to avoid upsetting people slowly wears away who you are.
- **Truth 2: your energy shows you when you're being yourself.**
  Mel describes being authentic as feeling 'plugged into a light socket', while the wrong room or the wrong people pull the plug. Pretending to be someone else is exhausting, and noticing that you're drained is often how you realise you're off track.
- **Dr. Ramani Durvasula: being authentic is hard because it can make you unpopular.**
  Mel plays a clip from psychologist Dr. Ramani Durvasula, who says the hardest thing in the world is being authentic, because it means blazing your own trail while people judge you and give you the side-eye. Mel takes this as the reason authenticity requires bravery: you have to notice which places, spaces and people shrink your energy and which ones expand it.
- **Truth 3: being yourself creates confidence, so don't wait to feel confident first.**
  The more you pretend to like things you don't, the more self-doubt, fear and paralysis you feel. Mel's definition of confidence is the willingness to try. It's an action and a skill you practise, not a feeling or a fixed personality trait. Her line is that you are waiting for confidence while confidence is waiting for you to show up.
- **Truth 4: loving yourself first improves your relationships with other people.**
  Mel cites an eight-year study by relationship researcher Dr. Matthew Johnson of the University of Alberta. It found that people recreated the same dynamics in new partnerships as in past failed ones once the honeymoon phase faded. Johnson's summary is that you are still the same person, so you likely recreate many of the same patterns. Mel's conclusion is that who you are matters more than the match, and that low self-worth can sabotage even a great partner.
- **Truth 5: learn to love what is unique about you instead of trying to fit in.**
  She argues that social media puts constant pressure to conform on your phone all day: the same outfits, trends and brands, even the assumption that every engagement ring should be a diamond. 'Every gem sparkles.'
- **Truth 6: what you think of your life matters more than what others think.**
  Mel applies her Let Them Theory: let them judge, let them be disappointed, let them not invite you, then turn that energy back to 'let me live my life'. She clarifies that this isn't about not caring at all, but about caring more about your own happiness. Two things can be true at once: people can disagree with what you do and still love you, just as you love family members whose choices you don't like.
- **Truth 7: you can have it all, but not all at once.**
  Mel says life tends to support you once you align it with who you are, but trying to push every part of your life forward at once derails you. Her solution is to pick one theme or priority for six months. She has gone through stretches where career came first, others where her social life did, and others where nothing mattered more than the people she loved.

EXAMPLES

- **Her parents' disappointment over who she married**
  Mel grew up in the Midwest and married Chris, whose family is from the Northeast. Her parents liked him but had hoped she would marry someone who would bring her back home. Their disappointment, she says, didn't change the fact that it was her life to build.
- **Quitting the family ski days**
  For years Mel pretended to enjoy skiing because everyone in her family loves it. This winter she told them she loves that they're a ski family but isn't a skier herself and won't really ski anymore. They were disappointed, and she found it liberating.
- **Wearing pants to law firm interviews in the early 1990s**
  As a third-year student at Boston College Law School, Mel bought a navy pantsuit with a wide belt from Ann Taylor for on-campus firm interviews, at a time when women at large firms weren't allowed to wear pants. A friend asked whether she had lost her mind. She estimates that 95% of the places she interviewed with didn't offer her a job, but she ended up somewhere she could be herself, and she still calls it one of her smartest moves.
- **Changing partners instead of herself**
  Mel says she dated great people through high school, college and law school but hated herself, so she kept switching partners as a distraction. Once the newness wore off, the same broken relationship with herself was still there. Her relationships improved only after she started changing herself.
- **The High Five Habit, tested with more than 175,000 people**
  Her method for building self-love: after brushing your teeth, look in the mirror and silently high-five your reflection, five mornings in a row. She describes it as a 'neurobic' exercise that pairs a routine activity with something unexpected and a positive emotion, and says her team has tested it with more than 175,000 people. These are claims from her own book and research team, and she invites listeners to try it for five days rather than take her word for it.
- **Chris's ice cream samples and airport pace**
  Chris always asks to sample several flavours before ordering black raspberry with chocolate chips, and he strolls through airports chatting with TSA staff while Mel is already at the gate with coffee. It used to drive her crazy; now she loves it. She says

her job isn't to speed him up but to admire what makes him who he is.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Do an energy audit**
  Ask where you feel most energized, whose name on your phone lifts you up, and when you lose track of time. If nothing comes to mind, think back to a happier period, such as playing on a team, drawing, building, writing or making people laugh, and add a small version back now: a 5K, a hike, an improv class, meditation or church.
- **Find a 'confidence pusher'**
  Pick a positive roommate, sibling, cousin or work friend who will nudge you out of your comfort zone, whether that means introducing yourself and your new business to people or signing up for the race. If you don't have one, Mel suggests imagining her telling you to 'wear the pants'.
- **Practise saying no without managing the fallout**
  Say the no, acknowledge the other person's feelings, and let them sit with their reaction as an adult.
- **Choose one six-month theme**
  Name the single area of your life that would give you the most growth over the next six months. Make it the priority, and add something every day that makes you feel more like yourself.

Do This To Become More Confident: 5 Truths You Need To Hear with Jamie Kern Lima

Guest: Jamie Kern Lima
Date: 2024-02-22 · Duration: 1:11:37
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGjKNh80Lfw

KEYPOINTS

• Every choice comes down to listening to the 'no' or to your 'knowing'

Jamie Kern Lima says we hear 'no' constantly, from retailers, from not being invited, and most painfully from our own negative self-talk. Underneath that is a knowing: intuition, a still small voice, a gut feeling. Her view is that your gut is never wrong. It leads you either to the next right step or to the next right lesson, so even a gut call that 'blows up' was teaching you something.

• Lie #1 is 'something's wrong with me'; the truth is 'you're not crazy, you're just first'

Jamie was adopted, has five families through divorces and birth relatives, and grew up where nobody had gone to college. Her big ideas got her called 'crazy' as a term of endearment. In her late 20s, the first in her families to see a therapist, she asked whether she was crazy. The therapist told her that being first, whether to break a generational cycle or to show up authentically, often meets confusion and resistance. Jamie argues that the things you think are odd about you are often what's most right with you.

• You can't truly connect while showing up as your 'representative'

Jamie says genuine connection with a friend, partner or customer is impossible unless you're authentic. In her words, authenticity alone doesn't guarantee success, but inauthenticity guarantees failure over time.

• 'Things like that don't happen to people like me' is a story you can rewrite

Answering listener Lisa, Jamie suggests first noticing the lie, then honestly asking whether you want to keep believing it, because some people use lies as excuses. You are the main character of your life, even if you can't control the supporting cast. Each time the thought shows up, intercept it and replace it with 'things like that haven't happened yet.' She cites figures that 80% of women don't believe they're enough and 75% of female executives deal with impostor syndrome.

• Lie #2: past failures predict future success

Answering listener Jesse, who keeps failing, Jamie says long stretches of rejection don't indicate your potential. The people who succeed most also fail most, because they try most. To decide whether to quit, she gets still through prayer or meditation, asks the question, waits for an intuitive answer without projecting the one she wants, then takes one step in that direction. Knowing when to let go of a dream can matter as much as knowing when to chase one.

• Intuition is a muscle, often trained out of women

Jamie points to studies in which boys answer a question immediately while girls look to each other for a consensus answer. To rebuild intuition, recall times you followed a gut feeling and times you overrode it, and notice what happened. Before automatically saying yes, pause and ask how you really feel.

• Mel's test: does the choice expand you or shrink you?

Mel says self-doubt is loudest when she's busiest, so she gets still. Putting off a dreaded call or conversation brings a flash of relief, but she feels part of herself shrinking and constricting. The true knowing feels expansive, even when it terrifies her. She adds that nine times out of ten she is afraid of the thing she knows is right.

• Lie #3: your weight determines your worth

Jamie believed this most of her life, even while running a company that celebrated every kind of beauty. She cites a figure that 89% of girls and women opt out of meaningful activities when they don't like how they look.

• Lie #4: 'if I stand out, I'll get kicked out'

Women often bond over problems and downplay wins. Mel admits she chronically hides successes, having grown up around someone who constantly griped about people who had more. Jamie's reframe: sharing a win isn't arrogance. It shows another woman she can share hers, and people who call it arrogance are reflecting their own sense of unworthiness.

• Lie #5: labels are permanent

Jamie compares labels to Post-it notes with light adhesive that come off once you decide they should. Identify the label, ask whether it's really true, and replace it with a true, empowering one. Being adopted becomes 'chosen' rather than 'unwanted.' Rejections get relabeled as 'divinely orchestrated.' She was voted 'biggest procrastinator' in her high school yearbook. Had that label stuck, the struggling waitress would never have launched a business.

EXAMPLES

• Rosacea on live TV sparked IT Cosmetics

At 31, anchoring the news, Jamie heard her producer say through her earpiece that there was something on her face. Her hereditary rosacea was cracking through her makeup under the HD lights. She spent whole paychecks on products that didn't work, then had the idea that if nothing worked for her, it didn't work for many others either. She also wanted ads with real women of every age, size and skin type, and went ahead despite having no money or industry connections.

• The QVC make-or-break moment

After three years of hundreds of nos, the company was selling only two or three orders a day and nearing bankruptcy. QVC, broadcast to 100 million homes, offered one 10-minute slot with a goal of over 6,000 units, on consignment. Twenty-two banks refused a loan before the 23rd, California Bank and Trust, said yes. Consultants urged flawless young models; Jamie used women of all ages and skin conditions, removed her own makeup on air, sweated through two pairs of Spanx, and sold out. Her husband's reaction: 'We're not going bankrupt.'

• The pool on her daughter's first birthday

At a hotel, Jamie was about to sit out swimming again, covered up on a lounge chair. She flipped her thinking by attaching more pain to regret, to what hiding had already cost her, than to being judged. She took off the cover-up, 'shook my cellulite with joy,' and got in, realizing that hiding was teaching her daughter she wasn't worthy of her own body either.

- **'I don't think women will buy makeup from someone who looks like you'**

  With IT Cosmetics already a big hit on QVC, a major private-equity investor passed at the final meeting, telling Jamie her body and weight were the problem. She felt a lifetime of body doubt flood back but also a gut certainty that he was wrong: 'this dude gave me a no, but God gave me a knowing.' Six years later, the day L'Oréal's $1.2 billion cash acquisition hit the Wall Street Journal homepage, he emailed: 'Congratulations… I was wrong.' She kept it classy.

- **The 'You're Not Crazy, You're Just First' poem**

  Jamie reads an excerpt of the only poem in her book Worthy, which brings Mel to tears. It celebrates being the first to launch the business, beat addiction, end a generational cycle and start healing.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Self-worth is your ceiling**

  Jamie's closing thesis: we don't rise to our goals but fall to what we believe we're worthy of. Without a sense of worth, people stay stuck, sabotage, or achieve everything and still feel empty. With it, a failure may shake your confidence but can't touch your worth, which makes you bolder.

- **Text your wins to a real friend**

  Mel and Jamie text each other victories, big and small. Find someone who is genuinely excited for you, and be that person for others.

- **Audit your labels this week**

  Write down labels like 'not a morning person,' 'bad at math' or 'too old,' check each one against the truth, and write a replacement you can believe.

2 Ways to Believe in Yourself & Achieve Cool Things

Date: 2024-01-29 · Duration: 0:54:35
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBtK4Hw9Tvk

KEYPOINTS

• Niecy Nash-Betts won on her fifth try

The episode is built around the actor's viral Emmy acceptance speech. She was 53, had been nominated for a Primetime Emmy five times and had lost four, and finally won Outstanding Supporting Actress for Dahmer. Mel asks listeners to compare it with their own losing streaks, such as four breakups, four rejected house offers, four medications that didn't work, or four promotions that went to someone else.

• Expect worthwhile work to gut you

Mel's first takeaway comes from Nash-Betts thanking her partner 'who picked me up when I was gutted from this work.' Getting in shape, managing your health, writing a book or going back to school will include days that flatten you. If you expect that going in, a hard day doesn't derail you, because you saw it coming.

• Self-esteem means thanking yourself out loud

Mel defines self-esteem as how you value and perceive yourself. Nash-Betts said, 'I want to thank me for believing in me and doing what they said I could not do,' and then, 'Go on, girl, with your bad self.' Mel notes how rarely anyone credits themselves, and that we're quick to give all the credit away.

• 'Nobody has to believe it but you'

Asked backstage why she thanked herself, Nash-Betts said she's the only one who knows what it cost: crying over roles she couldn't get, going through a divorce on camera, still showing up for her children. She added, 'It's not called them esteem or us esteem, it's called self-esteem.' Mel's point is that only you know the internal battle behind your outward smile.

• Speaking your truth unlocks power

Nash-Betts dedicated the award to Black and brown women who've gone unheard yet over-policed, naming Glenda Cleveland, Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor, and said an artist's job is to speak truth to power. Mel argues everyone has to speak their own truth, and that thanking yourself for the battles you fight is one way to do it.

• Action comes before belief

You can't think your way into self-belief. You act as if you believe: start the walk before you feel motivated, quit drinking before you want to, apply for the job or school before you're sure you'll get in. Every day there will be at least one moment of self-doubt or friction to push through.

• Goggins: self-doubt is cured one day at a time

Listening on the treadmill to David Goggins in an interview with Andrew Huberman, Mel heard him compare self-doubt to alcoholism: there's a cure, but it only works one day at a time, and the cure is your actions. His line: 'There's no hacks, bro. It's you against you.'

• 'You against you' means fighting a past version of yourself

Mel first took it to mean today's mood against today's goals, but she now reads it as battling an old self who still lives inside you. Goggins, in his own words, is fighting the 300-pound 'lazy' man he used to be; his profanity online is aimed at himself. Identify which past version of you is chirping self-doubt, and you know who you're fighting.

• Outwork the old you, every day

Mel's secret is to name that version and outwork it: get up with 5-4-3-2-1, go to the gym when you don't feel like it, keep pushing past insecurity. It's never one and done; the old self will show up again at the next launch or the next risk. Blaming other people's judgment hides the real obstacle.

EXAMPLES

• Oakley's DNF was 'a win for me'

Mel's son Oakley was elected captain of his Vermont high school ski team despite being, by the family's joke, its worst skier, so he races last on a course already carved into ice. After a regional race he texted the family chat that he got a DNF (did not finish), but he had skied hard and looked pretty good on video, so 'that's a win for me.' Mel says he understands he's competing only against himself.

• Mel's own acceptance speech

Mel thanks herself for living with 40 years of toxic habits (lying, cheating, people-pleasing, jealousy, insecurity and self-hatred nobody saw), for getting sick of it, for dragging herself out of bed through unemployment, bills and hating her husband, for getting into therapy that nobody told her to get or paid for, and for moving to Vermont for her family, which 'sucked' for about two years.

• Kendall vs. her sophomore self

Mel's daughter Kendall, a singer-songwriter, spent months on her single 'Pastime' but hesitated to promote it. Asked which version of her was holding her back, she immediately named her college-sophomore self: insecure, chasing the wrong friend group, paralyzed by what others thought. Once she named it, she started posting, and Mel says it's working.

• Mel's fourth-grade self

Mel shares that on a ski trip in fourth grade she woke up with an older kid on top of her. At nine, she believed she had done something wrong and would get in trouble if she told. Mel says she still wakes up most mornings feeling anxious and guilty, worried about upsetting people, and that this is the version of herself she battles with 5-4-3-2-1 and 'let them.'

• Goggins before the SEALs

Mel recounts that Goggins was a 300-pound exterminator in Indiana who had survived childhood abuse, struggled with learning disabilities and was afraid of water. He lost the weight on a tight deadline, passed the written test, and failed BUD/S training twice before passing on his third attempt.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Try your own Lifetime Achievement speech**
  Mel asks you to imagine receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award and thanking yourself for what you got through that nobody knows about, the progress you're making unseen, your healing work, time for hobbies and friends, and choosing to listen instead of zoning out.
- **Ask 'which version of me is holding me back?'**
  Use it before walking back into a gym, applying for a job, or promoting your business online. Mel says listeners who are real estate agents, trainers and coaches often fear what friends will think, and that the fear is the old self talking.
- **Women carry an invisible load**
  Mel notes that many women juggle kids, dogs, aging parents, groceries and work while keeping a smile on, which is one more reason to credit yourself.

The Most Important Wake-Up Call You'll Ever Hear

Date: 2023-09-04 · Duration: 0:37:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytdBRV37YjQ

KEYPOINTS

• Your life is a melting ice cube

Mel's central image: most of us assume there will be a right time, when we feel ready, when things are perfect, when we're a 'legitimate' writer. Meanwhile, the ice cube keeps melting until it's a puddle that evaporates. Her message is that 'today is that someday.' If you keep waiting, you'll spend your life watching time tick by.

• Your excuses are endless, but time isn't

Mel admits she carried 'start a podcast' from one yearly goal list to the next for years. Her excuses were familiar ones: she didn't know how, dinner had to get made, there were college tours that weekend, it might be embarrassing, and big names had already said everything. She uses her own stalling to show how much time and energy goes into talking ourselves out of what we want.

• It comes down to time and energy

Mel boils change down to two resources. You don't have to write the book overnight, just pick up the pen. You don't have to become a doctor overnight, just research schools and apply. Every day, find five, ten or fifteen minutes to move from thinking to doing: write a sentence, send an email, do the research, take a class, all while you're still living your current life.

• Notice where your energy goes, too

Alongside wasted time, Mel points to wasted energy: relationships that drain you and give nothing back, and routines you go through on autopilot. She asks listeners to notice each day where their time and energy actually go. Getting serious about it, she warns, shows you what an active participant you are in your own stuckness.

• Life is a solo road trip

Borrowing from her Audible project 'Reinvent Your Life', Mel describes life as a road trip where each year is a mile marker. You'll drive alongside others, cross paths with them and travel in groups, but you're driving your own car. She says that isn't meant to feel lonely. It's freeing, because everyone else is busy steering their own lives and isn't watching you as closely as you think.

• First acknowledge the dream, then take responsibility

Mel's two steps: name the thing that's on your list and in your heart, then take responsibility for moving toward it in whatever way, big or small, you can manage. She stresses looking ahead through the windshield rather than back at wasted years, and inching forward day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year.

• You're not an imposter, you're a beginner

Mel replays her daughter Kendall's insight from an earlier episode on imposter syndrome: 'I'm not an imposter if I'm a beginner, because that's what I am.' Of course you lack experience in something you've never done. Mel calls that good news, because it means you're just starting and have a lot to learn.

• Fear can disguise itself as comfort

Mel calls it the 'dream thief': fear that looks like comfort and routine. It's why it's hard to get off the couch, start working out, or leave a job you've had for ten years even though you want more. Getting used to what you have can lull you to sleep, and decades go by. She says that's exactly what happened to her with radio and podcasting.

• Working on your dreams is an act of self-love

Mel argues we often wait for someone else to give us permission or love. In her view, love is something you give yourself by taking your dreams seriously enough to work on them. She notes that research shows spending time each day on something that matters to you brings more meaning and joy, and calls that the fuel for the rest of your life.

• Starting brings it to life, even if you never finish

Mel shares a dream of writing a fiction trilogy. She says just signing up for an online fiction-writing class would move it from an idea into the real world. You don't have to finish the book; simply working on it brings something alive in you. Her summary: where you put your time and energy every day defines the life you create.

EXAMPLES

• A book deal on the desk since 2006

Mel's friend Kathy, about to turn 60, sent a teary voice memo halfway through the imposter syndrome episode. She had written a book proposal and received an offer back in 2006, but self-doubt ('I'm not a respected writer', 'it isn't that interesting') meant it stayed at the top of her goal list for almost 20 years.

• 700 messages in a day

Within hours of the imposter episode going live, more than 700 listeners wrote in. Their dreams included becoming a motivational speaker, a fashion editor at 34, a clothing designer at 31, a surgeon, an actor, a film director in LA while working in marketing in Europe, and leaving a corporate job to start something of their own.

• Mel's replies to listeners

To the 34-year-old career changer: scarier than changing careers is reaching 68 and wishing you had. To the would-be director: take screenwriting and producing classes in Europe and make a plan. To the person who feared failure in a job they disliked: you're already failing yourself. To the aspiring surgeon: it only looks complicated from the end result.

• The house in the rearview mirror

After 26 years, Mel sold the home outside Boston where she raised her kids, a place she assumed she'd live in forever. She describes watching it disappear in the rearview mirror for the last time, as a reminder that time passes even when you're too busy to notice.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Your biggest regret**
  Mel argues that the regret that will sting most is not pushing through fear, self-doubt and imposter feelings to start on the life you want to create.
- **Busy lives still have five minutes**
  Single parents, people caring for ageing parents, and people buried in bills may only have five to fifteen minutes a day. Mel says that's enough to start pointing your time toward what you want.
- **Her challenge to listeners**
  Mel asks each listener to take one real action today, not a wish or a fear, and tell her what they did so she can cheer them on.

These 4 Words Will Silence Your Self-Doubt: A Life-Changing Conversation | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Kendall Robbins
Date: 2023-08-17 · Duration: 0:44:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjKu3JMY9pM

KEYPOINTS

• Imposter syndrome is a near-universal fear of being found out

Mel frames it as intellectual self-doubt: you walk into a room, start doubting whether you deserve to be there, and worry people will discover you have no idea what you're talking about. She notes the term was coined in the 1970s by two female researchers and cites Harvard Business Review reporting that executives worldwide name being found incompetent as their number one fear. The point is to normalize the feeling before trying to fix it.

• Being surrounded by people you admire can make the feeling spike

Kendall, 23 and a recent graduate pursuing a career as a touring singer-songwriter, got an artist pass to a music festival through a family friend. Thirty minutes in, alone, in a long skirt in 85-degree heat, she realized the backstage tent was where established artists she had streamed for years were standing in the free-food line. Her instinct was to rip the wristband off and go stand in the audience.

• Isolating yourself is how imposter syndrome does its damage

Kendall spent roughly the first five hours of day one alone, to the point that someone asked if she was okay because she looked so out of place. Mel's diagnosis: when you get up in your head and intellectualize 'I don't belong,' you cut yourself off from both what you could gain from the room and what you could give to it.

• The first turn is choosing gratitude over self-torture

Kendall's shift was not instant. She told herself she could either keep torturing herself in front of her favorite artists or enjoy being within arm's reach of them, with free food and backstage views. Naming what she lacked (no Grammy, no music on Spotify, not performing) and then deciding to be grateful anyway is what loosened the grip.

• Enter every room with a learner's posture and something to give

Kendall recalled advice from her mentor Sean Holt, vice dean at USC's Thornton School of Music: walk into rooms without ego, lean into gratitude for what you'll learn, but know there is a reason you're there and you will give people something they didn't know they needed, just as they'll give you something. Kendall calls it a balance: only focusing on giving makes you self-obsessed; only on learning makes you dumb yourself down.

• You're not an imposter if you're a beginner

The line that stopped Mel mid-conversation was Kendall's reframe: she isn't an imposter, she is a beginner, because that is simply what she is. Accepting where you are, rather than measuring yourself against what admired people have already accomplished, is what she says makes the imposter feeling largely disappear.

• Beat everyone to your inconvenient truths

A second Sean Holt idea: you become one of the most powerful people in the room when you say the awkward fact first. For Kendall that meant answering 'do you have music out?' with no, she just graduated and is figuring out her sound, rather than dodging. Saying it was horrible the first time, her jaw locked, but vulnerability is what created connection.

• What you contribute may have nothing to do with your skill set

Mel points out the first thing Kendall gave wasn't music at all but her sense of humor; inappropriate jokes broke the ice with someone highly regarded who may be part of her career going forward. Kendall's takeaway is that in rooms where you feel like an imposter, your contribution is likely to be your humanity, a relatable experience or your humor.

• Imposter syndrome is a compass pointing at what you want

Mel argues you only feel it in situations you care about; Kendall notes she would never feel it at a financial convention because she has no desire to be in that room. The discomfort is your dreams saying there is work to do. Mel stresses the feeling recurs at new levels rather than vanishing.

• If you can't believe you deserve to be there, trust there's a reason

Mel's alternative to forced confidence: you don't have to declare that you deserve the room. Anchor in faith that there is something for you to learn or discover about yourself there, and don't leave the room.

EXAMPLES

• The festival turnaround

Once Kendall started introducing herself as a beginner, the friends her family connection introduced her to took her under their wing. Working musicians told her that being around someone so fresh reminded them why they started, since doing music to pay the bills gets long and hard. She ended up performing at a late-night show and was asked by several people to collaborate and write together.

• Mel's crying-in-the-hotel-room moment

About nine years earlier, before she'd been paid to speak, Mel was invited onto a panel in California. At the opening reception she saw Christy Turlington and Gretchen Rubin, had one TEDx talk nobody had heard of yet, and fumbled 'what do you do?' She skipped dinner, cried and stayed up all night, but that discomfort clarified that she wanted to create work people recognized. She kept showing up feeling like an imposter for another two or three years before publishing.

• Levels of being a beginner

Mel notes Kendall isn't a total novice: she graduated from USC Thornton's pop music program studying with Grammy-winning artists. Mel herself hosted an award-winning radio show and recorded audiobooks with Audible, yet felt like a beginner launching a podcast, and again when she met Alex Cooper of Call Her Daddy before her own show existed.

• 'You're not a nobody' texts

Kendall texted her USC friends that she was a nobody drinking alone while famous artists walked past. They replied that she was supposed to be there. Her reflection: awards, fans and followings are not who people are; 'so-and-so is not her Grammy.'

• Imposter syndrome about the episode itself

Kendall admitted feeling like an imposter for talking about imposter syndrome to Mel's large audience with no album, tour or following. Mel called it a classic example and argued that being in the middle of it makes her more relatable than someone who already figured it out.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Catch it, then flip to gratitude

When you notice 'I shouldn't be here' in a new job, school, neighborhood or workout class, recognize the thought and switch to being grateful you're there and excited to learn from others. Mel's claim is not that the feeling stops, but that you can stop destroying yourself over it.

• Script your inconvenient truth in advance

Decide how you'll say the thing you're embarrassed about (no product yet, new to the role) plainly and early, ideally with what you're excited about next. Kendall's version: just graduated, working on music, not rushing the process.

• Don't wait to be validated for results you don't have yet

The compliments that mattered to Kendall were about her spirit, ambition and passion, not her original music. Early in a path, those are the things worth being seen for.

• Introduce yourself, even if you're alone

The festival only changed once Kendall started meeting people through the friends she was introduced to. Staying in the corner protects you from awkwardness but guarantees you neither give nor receive anything from the room.

Understanding Yourself: The #1 Thing You Need To Do To Live an Authentic Life | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Ritu Bhasin
Date: 2023-07-24 · Duration: 1:02:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1klDVUw31ro

KEYPOINTS

• Fitting in and belonging feel different in the body, and that feeling is your best signal

Ritu Bhasin defines belonging as the profound feeling of being honored and accepted for who you are. When you belong you feel ease and flow, even if you are nervous about sharing something vulnerable. Fitting in is 'activating': you change how you speak, dress or what you talk about, and your body registers stress before your mind catches up. She urges listeners to use the body as the guidepost for which state they are in.

• People wear a 'performing self' mask out of hurt, not deceit

Bhasin deliberately avoids the word 'inauthentic' because it implies you are trying to mislead people. In her research and her own life, people mask because they fear others will take away love or opportunities, and that fear is usually rooted in it having happened before. Hiding anxiety, depression or a hard upbringing is self-protection.

• Changing who you are may open doors, but it never produces real belonging

As the child of Indian immigrants in Canada, Bhasin faced relentless racist bullying and cultural confusion, so she learned to curate a performing self. As a young lawyer and woman of color she kept code-switching, hiding topics and adopting popular corporate hobbies she hated. Her conclusion: masking can earn acceptance, but acceptance is not the same as belonging.

• 'Core wisdom' means tuning into your mind and body in the moment

The number one thing Bhasin says brought her more authenticity and joy is cultivating core wisdom. In any moment she asks what her mind is saying, such as 'see, you're a loser, don't speak,' and what her body is feeling, such as chest stress, sweat or heat in the face. She then interrupts the inner saboteur with prepared mantras and deep breathing. She calls herself a work in progress who stays 'anchored' while everything swirls.

• Activation is a nervous-system response to perceived disrespect

Bhasin explains that the body is constantly scanning for threats. Today the 'bears' are eye rolls, raised eyebrows at your outfit, constant interruptions, a mispronounced name or a different tone of voice. The body treats these as attacks and generates energy such as trembling, tears or the urge to flee. People then override it to avoid being judged, so the energy gets pushed down.

• Release suppressed emotion later instead of leaving it trapped

If it isn't safe to cry or shake in the moment, Bhasin says to come back to it. She describes grieving her mother, who is dying of Alzheimer's: she tells herself to keep going at work, then in the evening plays calming music, returns to the memory and lets the tears come. She calls this emotional release or discharge, done because she doesn't want that energy trapped in her body.

• Prepare for hard moments with four steps: script, self-coach, settle and visualize

First, script what you will say ahead of time. Writing it down helps retention, but rehearsing in the shower or on a walk is better than nothing. Second, choose your affirmations in advance; hers are 'stand in your power' and 'you've got this.' Third, decide how you will calm your body. Her top tool is deep belly breathing with an emphasis on the exhale, which she says engages the parasympathetic system and is invisible to others. Fourth, picture yourself doing all three.

• Rehearsing a bad outcome is not manifesting it

When Mel asks whether visualizing rejection attracts it, Bhasin calls the process 'decision treeing,' like a choose-your-own-adventure: if they say this, I'll say that. The energy still goes toward the outcome you want. Mel's aha: rehearsing the worst case lets you express what is true, like 'I love you,' freely and without attachment to the response.

• We each move between three selves: authentic, adapted and performing

The authentic self is unedited and uncensored. The performing self feels like you have no choice but to mask in order to avoid bias, and it is exhausting and disempowering. Mel says most of us became performers in middle school and kept going. In between is the adapted self, where you willingly choose to adjust your behavior to meet your needs and other people's. The difference between adapting and performing is how it feels, and too much adapting slides you into the 'performing self vortex.'

• Exploring the adapted self reveals more agency than you expect

Bhasin lists three gains. You realize you have more choice and control over your behavior than you thought. You notice you are already behaving more authentically than you assumed, which is liberating. And adapting gives you a safe place when full authenticity isn't safe or you are simply exhausted.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's Nashville steakhouse moment

At Kane Prime in Nashville, a manager in his 40s told Mel he loves the podcast because she is 'so real.' Mel says the honest answer to how she got comfortable being herself is decades of self-hate and people-pleasing. That pain finally pushed her to accept who she is and who she isn't.

• A YouTube video teaching her own name

After decades of people anglicizing her name, Bhasin decided at 30 that everyone in her life would say it properly. As a speaker she later saw that mispronouncing it made people anxious, so she posted a pronunciation video. She says people don't need to nail it; they just need to signal that they care.

• The coffee-shop test

Mel points to people who don't speak up when a barista gets their order wrong because they don't want to make waves or hold up the line. Bhasin says every micro-behavior, with a barista, airline agent, internet support rep or your boss, is part of a chain reaction toward claiming belonging.

• 'I'm in HR': adapting at a party

Exhausted on a Friday night, Bhasin told strangers she works 'in HR' instead of explaining that she is a belonging and DEI expert, which would have opened a long conversation. Her sister questioned it. Bhasin says it was true and was a willing choice, so it was adapting, not performing.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Locate which self is showing up, then choose

Bhasin's main takeaway: in any situation notice which self is present, push out of performing, adapt where you want or need to, and bring the good side of your authentic self. She also says to adapt on the 'bad and ugly' parts, such as yelling or prejudice, rather than calling them authenticity.

• Script ahead for the high-stakes conversations you're dreading

Use her steps for telling a partner you love them, asking for a raise or facing a critical relative. Write out branches ('if they say X, I'll say Y'), choose your mantra, plan your breathing and visualize it. She acknowledges the 'burden of the oppressed,' the unfairness of having to prepare for mistreatment, but still prefers going in ready.

• Use the same prep to be an upstander

Bhasin applies the four steps to allyship. Plan what you'll say the next time someone makes a disrespectful remark, whether to a stranger or a family member at Sunday dinner. Then you're not a silent bystander, and others at the table who are shut down feel less alone.

• Expect pushback from people who knew the old you

Mel previews that showing up authentically will draw rejection from people used to the people-pleasing or insecure version of you. Bhasin admits she has been rejected many times after saying 'I love you,' but says it didn't matter in the end because she spoke her truth.

4 Simple Ways to Stop Caring What Others Think of You | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-05-22 · Duration: 1:20:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkpQDBfPv7k

KEYPOINTS

• Not caring what others think really means redirecting energy toward what you value

Mel frames the whole episode around spending less energy on things that don't matter so you have more for the things that do. Her team lists the week's "no-shits-given" moments in Los Angeles, and she argues that each one was really a choice about where her attention went. Worrying about appearance, minor norms and imagined judgment drains focus and confidence without giving anything back.

• Twisting yourself to fit hurts when it betrays your values and feels joyful when it serves them

The child-size rocket tent becomes her central image. Squeezing into a space that doesn't fit is painful when you are hiding who you are or contorting to please others. Army-crawling into a tiny tent felt like joy because it served values she holds: bringing fun, surprise and enthusiasm to her students.

• If you look like that in public anyway, you can post it online

Mel points out the double standard of walking into a grocery store sweaty, with your bra showing, but refusing to be seen that way on social media. She posts selfies straight out of hot yoga, with a tomato-red face, grey roots and fogged-up glasses, because hiding that version of herself would mean she was still quietly caring about her appearance.

• Criticism of her looks taught her to detach

As one of five paid legal commentators on CNN, she analysed cases like Trayvon Martin, Ferguson, Freddie Gray and Tamir Rice. Critics almost never attacked her arguments. They went after her neck, her jowls and her appearance instead. Hearing that so often trained her to tune it out.

• Picture the life of the person attacking you

Her method for troll comments is to imagine what life looks like for someone who spends their time abusing strangers online. She guesses at negativity, few friends and a lot of screen time, and concludes their life must be hard. Responding with sympathy means the comment stops being about her.

• Small minds talk about people; big minds talk about ideas

Mel separates gossip from asking for advice about a real situation, which she says is legitimate. If your social circle mostly talks about people who aren't there, you need bigger goals and should look hard at who you spend time with, because people who gossip with you will gossip about you. She admits she was a big gossiper in her twenties, when she was "insecure, desperate, clingy, anxious, competitive."

• Honest feedback works when care drives it

Producer Cameron says what keeps Mel's blunt advice from sounding condescending is that kindness and real investment in the other person come through. Mel says she used to stay quiet when friends were in bad relationships or being walked over at work, and now sees that as being a bad friend. Her line is that you can manage your tone, but you shouldn't censor the truth.

• Most people react with the emotional maturity of an 8- to 12-year-old

This is her rule two. She believes most adults never developed adult emotional regulation. Their disappointment is a child's tantrum, and their anger lasts about as long as an 11-year-old's. Picturing a boss or a deal partner as a smart kid helps her relate to them as a person and worry less about how they react.

• There is a time and place for self-expression, and bias makes the balance unequal

Rule three uses a seesaw: standards and norms on one side, self-expression on the other. At work, she says, you are being paid, so standards matter more. She wouldn't wear the espadrilles to close a big deal at JP Morgan, or at least not without a manicure. She adds an important caveat: for many people, workplace norms carry real discrimination, so how to strike that balance is a deeply personal decision.

• Go first: drop the mask so others feel free to

Rule four says everyone is stuck following some rule they think they're supposed to obey, so someone has to go first. Mel finds that people approach her more when she looks a mess. CEO Christine, who has known her for 18 years, adds that she has never heard Mel criticise anyone's appearance. Christine thinks that once you stop judging yourself, you stop noticing those things in other people.

EXAMPLES

• The LA cafe and the Audible meeting

At a poolside cafe, Mel took off her t-shirt to sun herself in a nude bodysuit, tucking the shirt in like a bib over her chest. Later she wore open-toed Valentino wedge espadrilles with bell-bottoms to a first meeting with a senior dealmaker at Audible. Christine had packed closed-toe ballet flats especially for it. Mel then switched from seltzer to about three gin and tonics. The Audible contact later texted their literary agent that he was "both afraid and extraordinarily excited."

• The child-size spacesuit in front of 5,000 students

At the first live training of her six-month coaching course, Launch, the team brought out a child-size astronaut suit, a helmet and a rocket-shaped pop-up tent, meant only as desk decorations. Mel squeezed into all of them, took her glasses off to fit the helmet on, overheated, and started the session on the floor pulling elastic cuffs over her shoes. Viewers "went bananas."

• Telling Dr. Amy Shah to use her title

When Dr. Amy Shah, a double board-certified physician and nutrition expert with Ivy League degrees, said to call her just "Amy," Mel pushed back on air. She said there is so much noise from self-styled wellness experts that Shah's medical authority matters, and asked her to claim "Dr. Amy." Shah thanked her for it.

• Research on Black women's natural hair at work

Mel cites a Michigan State study finding that 80% of Black women feel they need to change their hairstyle to fit more conservative work standards. She also cites Duke research showing that Black women with natural hairstyles were less likely to get job interviews than white women or Black women with straightened hair. She uses both to show that her open-toed shoes are a privileged example.

• Kendall's national anthem at USC

Mel's daughter Kendall sang the anthem a cappella at USC's 140th commencement. Afterwards she said 99% of her friends had never heard her sing in four years, even though she was a popular music major. Her Instagram had just one singing post. Mel calls it a cage built from insecurity, and says the door is open.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Rule one: try caring about everything and see if it works

Deliberately worry about your shoes, your friends, your weight and next week, then ask whether any of it makes you happier, more secure or less busy. If worrying worked, you'd feel better. Seeing that it doesn't makes it easier to let go.

• Audit where your seesaw is out of balance

Look for places where you've stopped being yourself, such as falling back into childhood patterns at your parents' house or following norms that no longer fit your values. Rebalance where you can without breaking legitimate workplace standards.

• Check whether your circle is a cage

Mel adapts a Nipsey Hussle line: if you can't be yourself with the people around you, you are in a cage, not a circle. She warns that your own insecurities usually build that cage.

• Give feedback you'd risk someone's disappointment for

Cameron's mother compared hard conversations to a time-release grenade: people may get defensive at first, and the point lands later. Expect that not everyone will react as graciously as Dr. Shah did.

Should You Trust Your Gut Instinct? | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Oakley Robbins
Date: 2023-05-08 · Duration: 1:08:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTt-IGK-dm8

KEYPOINTS

• The issue isn't trusting your gut; it's having the courage to follow it

Mel argues your instincts are almost always right. What stops you is fear of acting on them, because nine times out of ten the right decision will disappoint someone, force a change, make you learn something new, or pull you away from the pack. So she wants listeners to stop saying 'trust your gut' and start saying 'I need the courage to make decisions that are right for me'.

• Asking 'what do you think?' is where you give away your power

Partway through a campus tour, Mel's son Oakley turned and asked his parents what they thought. Mel says this is everyone's reflex with big decisions, from jobs to breakups: instead of asking 'can I see myself here?', we check other people's reactions. Her reply to Oakley was 'it doesn't matter what I think, it matters what you think', because you're the one who lives with the decision.

• A 'no' and a 'yes' feel different in the body

Oakley, then a high-school junior, described a no as 'uninterested, unenthused, closed off… I feel out of place'. It starts in his mind and then 'my whole body starts to agree'. A yes is 'super open… lots of possibilities… you feel like you're in the right place', and you can easily picture yourself there. Mel sums them up as expansive versus constricted and draining.

• Reading your gut gets faster with practice

The first school was a no within about 30 minutes, and a later one within about five. By the end of the week Oakley was deciding almost instantly. Mel credits a week of paying attention to his body during each decision. It's a skill you build by tuning in, not a fixed trait.

• Imagine everyone else on a separate tour

One school split parents and students into separate tours. Oakley explained why that matters: on a tour, parents act as guides, and kids look to them for praise or disapproval and like or dislike a school accordingly. Mel turns it into a visualization for any decision: picture friends, family and partners on another tour, so you're alone with your own reactions.

• Research cited: decisions start in the body

Mel cites neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's widely cited work as showing that we decide with our bodies and the brain interprets those signals. Her everyday example is ordering from a menu: even if you wait to hear everyone else's order, you end up asking 'what do I feel like eating?' She adds that higher-self choices, like going to a party you're too tired for, sometimes mean pushing past present feelings for the sake of your future self.

• Let your future self be your tour guide

Fast-forward and ask whether you can picture yourself in this life a year from now. You'll often hear the no louder than the yes, and Mel says that's enough to act on. You don't need to know where you're headed. 'Anything but this' gives you a problem to solve, and she says people are great problem solvers once they have one.

• Leaving the pack connects you with new people

Mel and her colleague Amy note that when you break from a group that holds you back and go with your future self, you 'catch up to a tour' of people on the same path. Amy says those people became some of her best friends. What's meant for you won't pass you by, Mel says, but ignoring your gut can cost you years or decades.

EXAMPLES

• Mel turned into the over-involved alum

Mel was relaxed during her daughters' college searches, but when Oakley wanted to see Dartmouth, her alma mater, she says she 'became a sociopath'. She imagined reliving it through him, nudged him toward the tour guide who played ultimate frisbee, asked about the old swim-test requirement, and talked about his application until he asked how she even knew he'd apply. Chris eventually pulled her back by the shoulders.

• Mel's own college decision

In 1985, from a western Michigan high school with 73 graduates where no one went out of state, Mel fell for Dartmouth on sight. When she said she'd apply early decision, her math teacher told her 'you better not get your hopes up'. She got in anyway and says one discouraging voice could easily have changed her path.

• Following the crowd into law

After graduation Mel followed her boyfriend to DC and temped at a Georgetown law firm, Bates-stamping documents for months in a windowless room for the free $30 dinner. She applied to law school only because everyone around her did, had panic attacks, ghosted a Michigan Attorney General research project, and ended up back in a firm. Only after a breakdown on maternity leave with Sawyer could she say 'I can't do this anymore'. She networked into a $55,000 job in four weeks.

• Amy's month-for-a-year challenge

Amy, who ran a copywriting agency, told her mastermind group she'd earn last year's income in one month. The group fell silent and then questioned her. One member, Richelli Wright, told everyone to back off. Two weeks in, a client called while Amy was on Route 684 offering 10 e-books in a month at a price she could name. She later subcontracted work to Richelli.

• Jesse leaves pharmacy

Jesse, the team's video producer, chose pharmacy because she'd worked in one. After failing Organic Chemistry II and being asked by a professor whether she really wanted it, she switched to broadcast journalism. That meant an extra semester and a path no one she knew had taken. She felt it 'in my heart', found an internship with the football program on her own, and now has a 14-year broadcasting career.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Notice when you're the loud voice**

  Sometimes the voices are your own. Cameron on Mel's team knew Indiana University was too big and too far away, but stayed because she thought people would judge her for transferring, even after her dad said she could. If you're the parent or friend, check whether your enthusiasm is crowding out someone else's clarity, as Mel's did at Dartmouth.

- **A quick check before a big decision**

  Find quiet and drop into your body. Ask whether the option opens possibility and makes you feel like you're growing, even if it's scary, or whether it makes part of you shrink, as in 'I'm a doctor because everyone in my family is'. Listen to the no first, then find the courage to follow the opening.

- **Find or be a Richelli**

  A listener in Mel's Vermont walking group went back to nursing school after her divorce because a neighbor said 'just go back to school'. When someone says 'just do it', they're inviting you to imagine the life for a moment. If no one does that for you, Mel says, you have to say 'watch me' to yourself.

How to Get Confident, Beat Your Insecurities, and Overcome Fear | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Michelle Poler
Date: 2023-04-24 · Duration: 0:59:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=512w8shwJTE

KEYPOINTS

• Fear of speaking up is about vulnerability, and it's not just about stages

Mel calls public speaking the number one fear. She broadens it to speaking in a work meeting, pushing back with a doctor, having a hard family conversation or being called on in class: any moment when all eyes are on you and you fear judgment. She quotes Seinfeld's joke that at a funeral, the person in the coffin is less scared than the person giving the eulogy.

• Mel started out terrified

As a kid Mel turned bright red when called on. In law school she had coughing fits or left the room, and as a young lawyer she wore scarves to hide neck rashes in court. She says she went from that to being the most-booked female speaker on the corporate circuit, at more than 111 speeches a year for companies like Microsoft, Starbucks, JPMorgan and AT&T.

• Preparation is one of the best tools for nerves

Mel says rehearsal doesn't remove the stakes, but it works through your resistance and builds muscle memory so other tools can work. She quotes a story about Charlie 'Bird' Parker (unsure if it's true): first you learn your instrument through decades of practice, then you forget all that and just play. Preparation is what lets you improvise and express yourself fully.

• Mistakes can make you more likable

Mel cites the pratfall effect: imperfections can make experts seem more likable and trustworthy, unlike a 'snooty know-it-all.' The point, she says, is not getting it perfect but being willing to try.

• 'Alive but not living' was the start of Michelle Poler's 100 fears

Speaker and author Michelle Poler (Hello Fears) moved to New York, her dream city, but was stuck in her comfort zone. Hearing OneRepublic's 'I Lived,' she cried, realizing she was 'alive but not living,' and asked herself whether she was happy or merely comfortable. With her husband Adam's support she faced 100 fears in 100 days while working in advertising and doing a branding master's, editing and posting a video every night on three or four hours of sleep.

• The 'don't do it' feeling can point to growth, not danger

Poler used to treat the tight feeling before something scary as intuition and backed away, missing opportunities. After 100 fears, she reads it as her ego guarding against rejection or embarrassment, and often a sign of growth, so she chooses growth when she feels it.

• Ask 'What's the best that can happen?' instead of 'What's the worst?'

Poler says the worst-case question builds a brick wall of fears and focuses you on hurt feelings. Asking about the best case shows you the rewards; if they don't excite you, the fear may not be worth facing. Before a new talk that day, a follower asked her that question, and she pictured a room laughing, clapping and crying.

• Own your story instead of reciting what anyone can Google

When Facebook asked Poler to speak on imposter syndrome, she caught herself repeating search results. She replaced them with her own experience of following a polished speaker at ESPN in 2016, feeling she had to sound more perfect, and then hearing at happy hour that her realness was a highlight for people.

• Nervousness and excitement feel the same in the body, so rename it

Mel says both put your body on alert: blood shifts to the heart and brain and away from digestion, producing butterflies, the urge to pee, sweating and dry mouth. Those signals mean you're about to do something that matters, not that you're about to fail. Citing Harvard research on people facing interviews, speeches, debates, singing and track meets, she says telling yourself 'I'm excited' improved performance. She adds that, per UCLA's Dr. Judith Willis, staying steady keeps stress from blocking access to what you prepared.

EXAMPLES

• 'Did you get your check yet?'

In 2013, with Chris bottomed out and getting sober and Mel working two jobs, her accidentally viral 2011 TEDx talk led to seven free talks. At the Pennsylvania Conference for Women, where she spoke to a 1,000-seat breakout room, another speaker asked whether she'd been paid, and Mel was stunned for two weeks.

• 'What's your budget?' and the $10,000 call

Mel promised herself that next time she'd pause, ask 'What's your budget?', and plan to double it. The first caller, Darren from Dallas, whose wife Lori had seen the TEDx video, offered $10,000 for J.Hilburn's sales conference. Mel says yes immediately. She spent half on a graphic designer for her slides, over-prepared and 'destroyed it.' Darren called her top three of all time and has managed her speaking business since.

• The see-through dress on the Jumbotron

At that first paid talk Mel wore a dress she wore on CNN. Afterward a woman told her that with the stage lights and Jumbotron, the audience could see her Spanx and a thong. The dress went into the hotel trash.

• Poler's scariest fears

Stand-up comedy at a New York club scared Poler more than skydiving. Posing nude for a drawing class taught her to stop hiding imperfections and start creating interesting shapes for the artists: 'No one's judging us the way we judge ourselves.' Her next fear is a second baby.

• Dancing to Daddy Yankee on stage

Poler calms down by dancing reggaeton, so she walks on dancing to 'Dura,' even when corporate crowds stay seated. Mel's explanation: it isn't calming; she's channeling nervous energy into excitement.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Before you speak, remind yourself why it matters**

  Whether it's a raise, a town meeting or a sales pitch, name your purpose, such as 'I want to be valued for my contributions.' Mel tells herself that out of 3,000 seats she's speaking to one person who needs to hear something that day.

- **Use the reframe in the final minutes**

  The waiting time after rehearsal is when nerves are worst. Mel's ritual is to keep saying 'I'm not nervous, I'm excited.' She doesn't meditate or try to calm down.

- **Look for a 'trust fall'**

  Mel points out that Poler DMed her, then came to the hotel with two hours to catch a flight. Mel herself plans to skydive with her son for his 18th birthday despite it being her biggest fear.

How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-04-20 · Duration: 0:43:50
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAcjVWJc2x8

KEYPOINTS

• You can't switch off a critical inner voice; you replace the playlist

In two unedited coaching sessions, Mel describes default thinking as a playlist that runs in the background. Silencing it is nearly impossible, but layering a new soundtrack on top is doable. Simply recognizing that your default thinking no longer serves you is, she says, an enormous first step.

• Find out whose voice it is, and break the chain

Poppy's inner voice says putting herself first is selfish and that anything she does for herself will fail. She learned it from her parents, who probably learned it from theirs and thought they were protecting her. Once you see the voice isn't yours, you can separate from it and be the person 'this playlist dies with.'

• Under 'it's selfish' is an uglier story: 'they'll pull their love away'

Mel recognizes the belief from her own life. People raised to keep everyone happy link self-care with consequences, so taking care of themselves feels like risking love. That fear, more than the word 'selfish,' is what keeps people burned out and holding back.

• Name the voice and talk back to it

Poppy names hers Vicky. When she feels herself holding back, the signal of default programming, she physically turns toward 'Vicky' and says 'Shut up, Vicky,' then states what she actually believes. Mel's comebacks: 'You're not paying my rent.' 'There's no plus-one on this invitation.' Distancing yourself from the voice drains its power, and your reticular activating system, the brain's filter, starts noticing more reasons to put yourself first.

• Start each day with 'I deserve to be happy'

Mel's main mantra for Poppy is 'I deserve to be happy,' paired with the question 'Does this make me happy?' Other beliefs to install: my parents are proud of me for being me; nobody's disappointed in me, and if they are, I'm an adult and can handle it.

• Consider dropping the word 'toxic,' unless there's abuse

Mel suggests replacing 'toxic' with compassion for immigrant parents who likely felt like outsiders with high stakes and aimed that fear and love at their child. She calls the word divisive if you want to improve a relationship. When Poppy says there was physical, emotional and mental abuse and they aren't speaking, Mel changes course. Boundaries are right, therapy is right, and reconnecting is optional and only if Poppy ever feels safe. Mel praises her for speaking up as an act of putting herself first.

• Chronic fear can block memories

Diane has blocked out much of her childhood. Mel cites Dr. Judith Willis, whose work Mel attributes to UCLA, on how nervous-system dysregulation impairs the brain's functioning. A child living in fight-or-flight because adults are erratic isn't present enough to form memories. Mel says she has few memories of high school, college or law school for the same reason.

• Treat narcissistic programming as deliberate, and reprogram deliberately

A person with narcissistic traits may not intend harm, but their lack of empathy and habit of blaming you install 'everything is my fault.' Mel compares reprogramming to a 65-year-old moving to Russia and learning to speak Russian for the rest of her life. It's hard but entirely learnable through consistent thought substitution.

• Pick a mantra you can believe, with some edge

Mel argues that 'I love myself' usually fails because your brain rejects what you've spent years disproving. Choose something true enough to accept: 'I'm a kind person doing the best I can, and that's good enough,' or 'I deserve to be happy, especially after the people who were in my life.' A little spice loosens the mood.

• Catch the filter that makes everything about you

If your boss is grouchy, your programming reads it as your fault. Mel lists other possibilities: his marriage, a divorce, irritable bowel syndrome, his own childhood trauma. None of it involves you. Most people are too busy beating themselves up to be thinking about you.

EXAMPLES

• Poppy: 'Shut up, Vicky' rehearsed live

Mel role-plays the voice ('If you don't make your boss happy, nobody will love you') and makes Poppy answer louder each time. Poppy says she'd be less intense if she believed in herself. As a child of immigrants raised harshly, she lives 'on the edge.' Her takeaway is more compassion for others and for herself.

• Diane, 65: 'Who do you think you are?'

Diane's inner critic says she's not good enough and asks who she thinks she is, a voice reinforced by a parent on the narcissism spectrum, an ex-husband with narcissistic traits, colleagues and bosses. Mel notes the hostile bite of that phrase often points to a chaotic, eruptive household.

• Diane's new mantra

Diane lands on 'I quit taking myself so seriously,' and Mel adds 'I might as well enjoy the rest of the ride.' Diane's version: the first 65 years kicked her butt, so let's have fun the next 65. Mel urges her to give herself credit for getting out of a marriage with a raging narcissist.

• Mel's own decades with the critic

Mel says she lived with negative self-talk for more than 40 years and a dysregulated nervous system for more than 45. She describes a child's brain as '3 pounds of macaroni' absorbing every speech pattern around it. Realizing the voice that held you back was never yours can stop your heart for a second. She calls it great news, because most people never learn their thinking can change.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Say the new belief every morning, even before you believe it**
  Repetition is how the old voice took hold, and repetition is how a new one takes hold. Expect it to take time, not happen overnight.
- **Use the transformation trifecta**
  Mel's broader framework is to reset your mindset, calm your nervous system, and build habits using triggers and rewards. She stresses that none of these requires spending money.
- **You're not to blame, but you are responsible**
  Your brain absorbed patterns as a child. As an adult, reprogramming them is your job. If you're cynical about change, ask who taught you to be.

One Powerful Hack to Live a Meaningful Life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2023-03-30 · Duration: 0:50:06
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3GXIfIEJok

KEYPOINTS

• The episode is about lifelines, not tattoos

Listener Jonathan Googled Mel's wrist tattoo and found only '5 Second Rule' tattoos. Mel uses his question to open a bigger subject: a meaningful mantra, written somewhere you'll see it, can act as a lifeline in the moments when you need to remember you can face something. She says more than once that she doesn't want anyone to get a tattoo because of her. A Post-it note works the same way.

• Chris's 'one gate' comes from his late father's handwriting

As a teenage ski racer, Chris shook in the starting gate, fixated on his time and the result instead of the course. His dad, often at races, kept telling him to take it 'one gate at a time'. Later his father wrote him a letter about it. Chris had a tattoo artist lift the words 'one gate' from that letter in his dad's handwriting and put them on his left forearm, placed so he sees them.

• Mel's 'it shall be' came from a friend who noticed she says it

The night before the appointment, Mel still had nothing, and she admits she was jealous of Chris's idea. Deva, one of her first life-coaching clients and owner of a Boston store, told her she should get 'it shall be'. Mel had never noticed, but Deva said Mel always tells clients that if you do the work and hold the belief, 'at some point it shall be'. For Mel it means do the work, have faith, keep your head down, and give up your timeline.

• A mantra only works if you believe it

Mel says this is why so many people get positive self-talk wrong. If you've beaten yourself up for 40 years, saying 'I love myself' or 'I look beautiful' in the mirror won't land. Your mind argues back with evidence from yesterday and can make the negative belief stronger. Rule number one: the phrase has to be meaningful, something you can 'get behind' when you say it.

• Tone it down a notch so it holds up on bad days

Instead of 'I'm beautiful', try 'I deserve kindness', 'I'm trying my best', 'I deserve to feel better' or 'my body needs me to take care of it'. Avoid inflated lines like 'I am the best', because some days you won't feel it, especially if it's on your wrist. 'I'm trying my best' is something anyone can get behind.

• Let your future self write the phrase

Chris notes their kids haven't chosen tattoos yet, maybe because they haven't figured out what they need to hear in hard times. That gives Mel what she calls a breakthrough: imagine the person you're becoming, assume it all works out, and let that future self reassure the present you. She says 'I believe in you' doesn't land as her own voice today, because she hasn't always believed in herself. It does land as a message from the future Mel who 'knows what's coming'.

• Tattoos work as 'environmental triggers'

Mel explains that researchers call a visual cue in your space that prompts a thought or behavior an environmental trigger. People usually talk about triggers in a negative sense, but they can cue positive thinking too. She covers the idea in more depth in her earlier episode on five hacks to make new habits stick. Where the cue sits matters: Chris points out that Mel's is on her wrist where she sees it all day, not on her shoulder.

• A mantra can describe who you're becoming, not just the end goal

Chris suggests a phrase can support your path of becoming instead of standing for a finish line. That changed how Mel felt about a listener's 'love yourself first', which hadn't clicked for her at first. Chris also warns against judging a phrase by your first reaction. Let it sink in over time, posted on a wall or by your bed, before deciding whether it fits.

EXAMPLES

• The anniversary appointment mix-up

Mel booked a sought-after Boston tattoo parlor six months ahead, with a big deposit, for their 15th anniversary, August 24, 2012. Pulling out of the driveway with a babysitter booked, they called and learned the appointment was for the following week. The first five or six shops they tried were full. The sixth or seventh, near their old Cambridge apartment, was run by a big bearded man who recognized her name from her WTKK radio show and said 'come on in'.

• A font chosen in a hurry

Mel realized at the shop that she had never picked a font or size. While Chris was being tattooed, she scrolled the fonts in Microsoft Outlook, picked one starting with 'Z', and had the artist print it. She had second thoughts, but says she loves the result. Chris says it looks a bit like her handwriting.

• Eleven hard years with 'it shall be'

In 2012 they were about $800,000 in debt, Chris was in the restaurant business, and they were struggling with drinking. Two years later Chris left to get sober and was 'comatose' for two years while Mel was in survival mode. She leaned on the phrase through that, the move to rural Southern Vermont, and launching a podcast when people warned there were already five million. She calls the whole tattoo night an example of the philosophy: nothing went to plan, and it worked out.

• Chris's 'you' photo

For a dream-analysis class assignment, Chris pinned a black-and-white photo of himself, taken by their friend Jenny Maloney, to his bulletin board with 'YOU' and an arrow written in Sharpie. It reminds him daily that he's good enough as he is. He tears up talking about it.

• Listeners' phrases

Denise, a single mother in Phoenix, has 'love yourself first' tattooed as a reminder that self-love is necessary, not selfish. Monica in Italy chose 'the little things' to keep going when her goal feels far away and to enjoy small moments. Mel's colleague Tracy has kept 'every day I'm learning and growing' on her bedside table for a year.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The Post-it assignment**

  Choose a phrase, or borrow one from the episode: 'what if it works out', 'courage', 'I believe in you', 'one day at a time', 'one gate'. Try it on like Goldilocks: it fits when you don't argue with it. Write it in Sharpie on a Post-it or painter's tape and put it where you'll run into it, like a mirror, laptop or nightstand.

- **Test a tattoo idea first**

  If you're thinking about ink, write the phrase on your arm in Sharpie and live with it for a while. Get a tattoo only because you want one.

- **Use 'one gate' when you're anxious about results**

  Chris uses his phrase now while building an online version of Soul Degree, the men's retreat he's run in person for six years. Marketing and being on camera are new to him and scare him. The phrase slows him down so he focuses on the next piece instead of 'how it's all going to play out'.

A Toolkit for Confidence: How to Build UNSHAKABLE Self Confidence | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-03-06 · Duration: 0:55:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMtNkJcJn3M

KEYPOINTS

• Confidence isn't a feeling; it's the willingness to try

Prompted by listener Heather, who got a bigger role but doesn't "feel confident" in it, Mel says the common mistake is waiting to feel confident. Her research-based definition: confidence is the willingness to try. Feeling confident is what shows up after you've done something many times; real confidence begins the moment you're willing to be a beginner.

• Trying builds competence, and competence lowers self-doubt

Mel describes a confidence-competence loop: every attempt either succeeds or fails, but you always learn something. That small gain in competency makes the next attempt easier, which lowers the resistance in your brain and body. Over enough repetitions it starts to feel effortless — not because you became "more confident," but because you built the skill.

• Everybody starts at zero

Whether it's guitar, a social following, a book or a business, Mel says no one skips the beginning. She started with zero speeches, zero TV experience, zero followers and no podcast know-how at 54, with five million podcasts already on Spotify. Her chopsticks example: confidence is saying "hand them to me, I'll try" instead of "can you get me a fork?"

• Imposter syndrome is a sign you're growing

Mel reframes feeling like an imposter as "a fancy way of saying you're trying something new." If you never feel that way, you're not doing anything uncomfortable, and she believes discomfort is the only route to becoming your best self. Her advice is to welcome it: "Great, I'm trying something new."

• Myth 1: confident people are the loudest in the room

Listener Alex, more introverted and surrounded by high achievers at university, worried she lacked confidence. Mel distinguishes confidence from bravado: truly confident people often don't need to prove anything and are frequently the quiet ones. Confidence isn't a personality trait; it's a skill anyone can build.

• Myth 2: confidence is built when you're winning

Mel compares confidence to steel forged in fire: the skill gets built in hard moments, when you start at zero and feel like an imposter. Winning, she suggests, tends to build arrogance and bravado and makes us forget what went into the win.

• Myth 3: you can lose your confidence

You can't lose a skill defined as the willingness to try, Mel argues; you're only blocked from the feeling because you stopped trying. If you're surrounded by high achievers, it's because you belong there and are meant to grow, so don't aim that pressure at yourself.

• Courage comes first; confidence builds over time

Her central distinction: you can tap courage before you feel assured, and each courageous action adds to confidence. You can't think your way out of fear or doubt; only action unlocks it.

• Social media can erode your willingness to try

Answering Gen Z listener Skye, who quit social media during a rough time, Mel says social media isn't good or bad; how you use it is. Feeds full of filtered bodies and Lamborghinis make you feel you're losing a race that doesn't exist, which drains the willingness to try. She also questions posting for appearances, like posting from the bathroom instead of enjoying the party.

EXAMPLES

• A 21-minute panic attack on the TEDx stage

Mel's TEDx talk "How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over," which she says has nearly 30 million views, was her first official speech, and she calls it a 21-minute panic attack. She went bright red when called on in school, and as a Legal Aid public defender in New York City got neck rashes so bad she hid them with scarves and turtlenecks, including during her years as a CNN legal commentator.

• Lying on the couch on live TV

On the morning she recorded this, Mel appeared on the Today show with Jenna and Hoda, and viewers messaged her about how at ease she looked. She calls it the result of ten years of trying, failing and learning, not a natural trait.

• Failures that led somewhere

A decade earlier Mel was $800,000 in debt, unemployed and drinking her way through problems, and that low point produced the 5 Second Rule. Her daytime talk show taped at CBS got canceled, and she says that path led to this podcast, her favorite work ever.

• Dr. Brian Little's TED talk

Mel cites the UK professor's talk "Who Are You, Really?": he's deeply introverted but has taught himself to act extroverted when teaching because it matters to him, even though it drains him. Mel's point: you're not stuck in a fixed place.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the 5 Second Rule to interrupt self-doubt

Count 5-4-3-2-1 and physically move. Mel says it shifts you from a doubting habit toward the prefrontal cortex, which helps with focus and action — for Alex, that means raising her hand before she can talk herself out of it.

• Borrow an alter ego

Ask "What would The Rock do?" or "What would Mel do?" Mel cites a Johns Hopkins study on alter egos easing self-doubt and behavioral activation research: acting like your future self now is one of the fastest ways to change mindset and habits.

• Prepare to settle your nerves

Every rehearsal is a try, which calms your nervous system because it knows what's coming. Think of the Williams sisters hitting endless balls before tournaments, or how differently you walk into a test you studied for.

- **Tell yourself this is preparing you for something**

Mel's reframe for failure: everything is preparing you for something that hasn't happened yet. Her driving fear is reaching her deathbed wishing she'd tried.

- **Re-curate who you follow**

Write down your goals and how you want to feel, unfollow everything, and refollow only accounts that align, including unfollowing Mel if she makes you feel bad.

Mindset Reset: Take Control of Your Mental Habits | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-19 · Duration: 1:20:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufQEqi4LUZ4

KEYPOINTS

• A mindset works like a pair of sunglasses

Mel defines mindset as your beliefs and opinions about how the world works, and compares it to the tint of a lens. A pessimist on a perfect Bahamas beach only notices that lunch is late. A colleague with a can-do attitude assumes a rude customer is having a hard day. Her key point is that most people don't realise they're wearing glasses at all; they think they're just seeing reality.

• Mindset matters because it decides what you do

Mel's main argument is about action, not feeling good. A dark lens says nobody will hire you after a 20-year gap, or that you can't move from accounting into interior design, so you never update your résumé. A brighter lens says 'what if it works?', and that makes you apply, put the dating app back up, or do the back stretches your doctor gave you.

• This isn't toxic positivity

Mel says nice thoughts won't pay your bills, and a positive mindset won't change discrimination, poverty, mental illness, or life in a country under siege like Ukraine or Iran. What it does is help you face, deal with and survive what's happening. The aim is moving from 'I'm screwed' to 'I can figure this out', for example finally opening student-loan letters you've ignored for 10 months.

• Your brain has a filter, the reticular activating system

Mel describes the RAS as a live network of neurons, a 'hairnet' over the brain, that decides in fractions of a second what reaches your conscious mind. Since you can't consciously process everything coming in through your senses, it works like a nightclub bouncer with a guest list. Whatever it thinks matters to you gets in, and everything else waits outside.

• The filter follows your attention, so negativity reinforces itself

The RAS judges what's important by where you spend your time, energy and thoughts. If you doubt yourself all day, it highlights the one bad email and hides the 32 good ones, and a boss's 'can you stop by my office?' instantly reads as a threat. Mel says your brain isn't against you; it's following your focus. Pointed at small wins, it shows you more of them, which is how she explains why gratitude practices work.

• Two people can see the same situation completely differently

Mel's example is a single friend you see as smart, funny, loyal and attractive, while they're convinced they're unlovable. Their filter shows them every couple in the bar and none of the single people. Each of you believes your view is the truth, and their negative story becomes self-fulfilling as they stop putting themselves out there or settle for someone wrong for them out of desperation.

• Social media feeds work the same way

Explore and discover pages respond to whatever you engage with, whether that's puppies, long nails or a video you clicked by accident, and then show you more of it. Mel's daughter realised her feed had filled up with filtered fitness models in waist trainers, which made her feel bad about a strong, healthy body. Mel's tip is to be deliberate about which accounts you follow.

• Swap 'what if it goes wrong?' for 'what if it works out?'

Mel calls this a 'substitution diet', her name for what researchers call cognitive bias modification: catch a default thought and replace it with a better one. 'What if it works out?' isn't a promise; it's just as uncertain as the negative version, but it pushes you toward action. Her examples include going to 90 AA meetings in 90 days, making 10 cold calls, and knocking on the door of a house before it goes on the market.

• The negative voice often isn't yours

Mel calls her default negativity her 'campaign of misery' and says she learned it as a child. Much of the critical voice comes from parents, other caregivers or a relative who has since died. You can't get rid of those thoughts entirely, but you can notice them without getting hooked. She calls it 'hand-to-hand combat' with your mind and says setbacks will bring the default back at times; she says it happened to her six months earlier.

• 'I'm not good enough' often starts in middle school

Mel says surveys of 250,000 students in her mindset course rank 'I'm not good enough' as the most common negative thought. Her own view, which she labels as opinion, is that even kids from secure homes start sizing themselves up in adolescence (theatre kids, sports kids, rich kids) to avoid rejection. That trains the filter to look for where you don't belong, and adulthood is the chance to retrain it to spot where you fit.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's Bronco moment

Mel's 2014 car kept showing an engine light and costing $500 per repair. Once she started thinking about a new Ford Bronco, she saw them all over her small southern Vermont town, including a colleague's husband's. She'd never noticed one there before. The cars had always been there; her filter just started letting them through.

• The 'everywhere' effect

Other examples: curtain bangs, covered-toe Birkenstocks and chunky Converse once you want them; University of Michigan stickers when you're looking at colleges; pregnant women when you're trying to conceive; couples in love when you're single. Mel says this is evidence that your filter changes in real time.

• The rose-coloured glasses study

Mel cites University of Toronto research suggesting that a good mood literally widens what you take in visually, so people with a 'rosier' outlook may notice more of the world around them.

• Listener questions from Brandy, Peter and a listener in Germany

Brandy asked how to stop spiralling into negative thoughts and reset. Peter asked how to get past self-doubt. A listener in Germany saw two hearts within an hour of trying the exercise, then became afraid to find more. Mel says fear of things getting

better is common after a lot of heartache, and that the old programming is simply outdated.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Do the heart hunt every day**

  Each morning, tell your brain its job is to find a naturally occurring heart shape: in coffee foam, a cloud, a leaf, a rock, bricks or a stain. When you spot one, stop and savour it, and take a photo or keep it. Mel's adult daughters text her pictures of theirs. The point isn't the hearts but proof that you can program what your mind notices.

- **Check your lens honestly**

  Ask what colour your best friend would say your glasses are. Then ask whether your current view of a job, relationship or health problem is actually helping you, or quietly keeping you stuck.

- **Reframes for when you don't feel good enough**

  Try 'I'm a work in progress', 'I can figure it out' and 'the people who love me are the people I need'. Look for the day's wins rather than what went wrong, and spend more time with people who make you feel good.

The One Science-Backed Habit You Need This Year | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2023-01-02 · Duration: 0:59:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIFnYopQdtc

KEYPOINTS

• Self-love is an action, not a feeling

Answering Maria from Spain, who asked how to love herself, Mel argues we get stuck because dictionaries define love as a feeling. You feel loved by others because of what they do, like Chris bringing her coffee or saying 'I love you, Mel.' So the way to love yourself is to show it through your own actions toward yourself.

• The high five habit in brief

After brushing your teeth, put the toothbrush down, look the person in the mirror in the eye, and when you're ready, high-five your reflection. Pairing it with brushing your teeth is habit stacking, which Mel says helps your brain encode it faster. It takes less than five seconds and requires no particular thoughts.

• Looking yourself in the eye is the hard part

Mel says her own research found that about half of men and women can't or won't look at themselves in the mirror, often because of regret or disappointment in who they've become. Others look through themselves or straight at what they dislike (weight, eye bags, in Mel's case one breast hanging lower). Holding a loving gaze is what we do with people we love, so avoiding it each morning amounts to rejection.

• Neurobics: pairing movement with a new thought

Mel cites research she associates with MIT and elsewhere showing that combining a physical action with a new positive thought is the fastest way to build new neural pathways. She says a high five also comes with a lifetime of positive associations (cheering, encouragement, 'shake it off'), so the gesture does the work and gives a dopamine boost even if you don't believe anything nice about yourself yet.

• Self-criticism blocks self-forgiveness

To Teresa, who asked how to stop beating herself up over past mistakes, Mel says we waste years because we don't know how to accept failures and regrets. Looking at yourself with compassion every morning is where forgiveness begins. As Chris puts it, forgiving yourself while walking down the sidewalk is futile, because the mirror is where it happens.

• If you can't love yourself, you can't accept love from others

Mel argues that if your own actions toward yourself say you're unworthy, you'll deflect the love around you. It's part of why she ends every episode with 'I love you,' knowing many listeners rarely hear it.

• Repetition matters more than perfection

Chris says transformation requires repetition. During his challenge he high-fived himself at every mirror, not just at the sink, and expects life to knock the habit off course sometimes, just like exercise or sleep. The point is to come back to the moment of 'partnership with myself.'

• Men often feel unseen

Chris, who has led the Soul Degree men's retreats for six years, says men rarely feel truly seen and heard, and tend to put the wife, kids and employer first, squeezing in a workout. Slowing down enough to look yourself in the eye can feel close to impossible for many men, so he wants partners and parents to know that.

EXAMPLES

• Mel stumbled on it after losing her talk show

Mel started instinctively high-fiving the mirror after effectively being fired from hosting her talk show. She felt an immediate lift, which became the first domino toward intensive therapy and taking her happiness seriously.

• 175,000 people, 91 countries, five days

Mel says her own challenge, in which about 175,000 people in 91 countries tried the habit for five days, showed breakthroughs in under five days. People typically laugh the first time, she says, partly because it feels dorky and partly because the brain recognises a high five.

• The NBA and math-test studies

Mel cites a study, echoed by The Wall Street Journal, finding that the top four NBA teams had more high fives, fist bumps and pats on the back in the preseason than losing teams. In another study, children facing hard math problems were most motivated by a silent high five, more than praise or growth-mindset language, and researchers retitled the paper to highlight 'the surprising motivational power of a high five.'

• Chris: 'The high five was easy; looking at myself was not'

Chris initially called the idea ludicrous. When he tried it, he saw failure: about 15 years of feeling he hadn't succeeded as a provider, a restaurant business unravelling, and the image of his father in a suit catching the train to a Manhattan high-rise. He later recognised he'd been battling depression. Mel, who stood at the next sink for years seeing a great dad and partner, had no idea. Today he says he sees a man he loves and is proud of.

• A listener named Chris and her anxiety voice, Patrice

A 35-year-old woman wrote that in 2020–21 her life fell apart. She gained 35 pounds, lost hours to TikTok, numbed herself with wine, had panic attacks and named her anxious inner voice Patrice. While cleaning a glass slider door at a client's house, she heard Mel say to high-five the mirror, did it at a big round mirror, and cried. She entered therapy in December 2021 and says she's herself again.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Start tomorrow after brushing your teeth

Look, hold your gaze until it stops feeling weird, then high-five. Do it for five days in a row before judging it.

- **Use every mirror**
  Like Chris, treat any mirror you pass as a chance to see someone worth cheering for, not to inspect flaws.
- **For men, start with forgiveness**
  Chris's message to men carrying failure, addiction or depression is to begin with yourself and forgive the choices you made with the tools you had. You're not alone in the struggle.
- **It's not a cure**
  Chris notes that when you're depressed, a high five can feel like the last thing you'd want to do. Mel presents it as a first domino alongside therapy, not a replacement.

2 Ways to Take Your Power Back When You Feel Insecure | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-07 · Duration: 1:01:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HSXaSAiLNI

KEYPOINTS

• A real-time dilemma: your ex-crush now likes your new friend

Mel's daughter Kendall, 21, a college senior and aspiring singer-songwriter in Los Angeles, texted her mid-class. A fellow musician she'd hooked up with for six months (renamed 'Steve') now had a crush on a new friend, a woman who had just offered to help book Kendall's sessions and manage her music. Kendall had an 'ugly cry,' felt the friend was gorgeous, and wondered if he'd only been in it for sex because he never said such things about her.

• Parents: pause and offer connection instead of a fix

Mel says her anxiety normally makes her jump in with solutions. This time she used her 5 Second Rule to pause, then replied 'that sucks, I hate it when the universe does that.' When Kendall asked what to make of it, Mel turned the question back: 'What do you think?' She only gave her own view after asking 'Do you want me to tell you what I'm thinking?'

• Kendall framed it as a test of her commitment to music

She'd been manifesting devotion to her work 'above all else,' and saw two people who could help her career becoming entangled as a test of whether she'd let it pull her focus. She was trying hard to hold an abundant mindset: good for them.

• When the energy shifts, slow down and pay attention

Mel's core advice: a change in the vibe around a person or project signals something about alignment. Making music is intimate, and it's hard to collaborate with people you have weird vibes with. She compares it to having a crush on a coworker, then learning they're secretly dating someone else at work and no longer wanting to share projects with either.

• The fork in the road: Kendall Zero versus the aligned you

A text, a sighting or a song puts you at a crossroads. The old self goes left into negative self-talk and evidence-gathering ('I'm ugly,' 'no wonder he wants her'). The other road aligns with who you're becoming. Kendall admitted that on day one she was already having to train herself not to go there.

• Name exactly how you'd sabotage things

Mel asked Kendall how the old her would derail it. Answer: avoid the new friend, 'pump the brakes' on that relationship, give both people the cold shoulder, refuse to collaborate and spiral into self-talk that wouldn't lift for a while. Mel said that described her own teens, 20s, 30s and sometimes 40s.

• Flip the script into 'healthy selfishness'

Kendall decided she knew in her heart she didn't want a relationship with him; part of her only wanted him to want her. So she surrendered to reality and imagined how great it would be if two people who respect her and want to pour into her creatively loved each other. Her question became: how can I make this fun and benefit from it?

• Past pain makes faster processing possible

Two and a half years earlier, Kendall had a far more painful, drawn-out, entangled breakup that took about a year and a half. Mel believes breakthroughs come in proportion to how painful the experience was, and that having processed that pain lets Kendall recognize the old road within an inch of it. Mel says the same about her own contentment at 53 after two brutal years she went through.

• Believing you're meant for more makes setbacks smaller

Kendall said that during her old breakup she didn't truly believe she was put on earth to live an incredible life. Now she can 'taste' bigger things coming, so this feels like one piece of the puzzle, not the whole puzzle, and is easier to compartmentalize.

• If you keep choosing left, life eventually forces a wake-up call

Mel says stubbornly repeating old patterns can end in a painful, shocking breakdown that makes the pattern impossible to ignore. For Kendall it was a deep betrayal; for Mel, multiple betrayals. Her plea: don't wait for your life to fall apart before inching toward something new.

EXAMPLES

• The text exchange

Kendall: 'This is the universe giving me a test.' Mel: 'Every relationship is a test; this one is saying I'm just fine on my own.' Kendall's most honest line: 'I don't want to be with him anyway. I just don't want him to want her.' Mel kept telling her the texts read like song lyrics.

• The surprise call mid-conversation

Kendall was eating a chocolate bar, then got on her bike, and briefly worried she'd run into the pair. Mel had reached her grandfather's outgoing voicemail, which Kendall has kept since ninth grade. Chris also called during recording and joked Kendall was probably after money.

• A producer's breakup, three and a half years on

Producer Maddie teared up and shared that she was still recovering from a prolonged breakup where she felt not good enough. Kendall's advice: every day, do one small thing that scares you or try thinking the other thought, 'strengthening the muscle' of turning right. Maddie realized turning left meant choosing everyone else; her dad always told her to choose herself first.

• Kendall's earlier advice to Mel

During a hard stretch in Mel's life, Kendall told her the struggles were reminding her how the people she tries to inspire feel every day, since success had distanced her from that daily struggle. Mel took it as a challenge tied to her purpose.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Small 'right turns' you can make today**
  Mel's examples: don't hang around his frat house hoping he sees you; find your friends at the library. Don't stalk someone on social media; go for a walk or a class. Each day, turn toward something new instead of grasping at what was.
- **Use energy as your compass**
  Ask 'how could I make this a win?' and notice what feels expansive versus what makes you shrink and feel depleted. Kendall's first instinct was to cut both people off, but that felt like losing power; staying open felt energizing, which told her which road was right.
- **Privacy boundary when sharing others' stories**
  Mel says nothing involving her kids, husband, friends or their texts airs without them hearing it and giving the okay, so people can speak freely and feel safe.

3 SIMPLE steps to create POWERFUL changes in your life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-06 · Duration: 1:02:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JbfAr-BQjA

KEYPOINTS

• Birthdays trigger the 'fresh start effect'

Mel recorded the first episode of her podcast for release on her 54th birthday, sitting on a hotel-room floor in a pillow fort to muffle a construction site. She describes the moment the birthday cake arrives: you stop hearing the singing, close your eyes and go inward to make a wish. She points to Wharton School research that names this the fresh start effect, a burst of intrinsic, aspirational motivation that comes when you feel handed a blank slate.

• Temporal landmarks open a new 'mental accounting period'

Researchers call the triggers temporal landmarks: a date (January 1st, a birthday, a Monday), an experience (a new semester or sports season) or a physical thing (Mel's habit of buying new journals). Like an accountant closing the books on a fiscal year, a landmark separates you from your 'imperfect' past self and briefly quiets the inner judge. That's why diets and first gym visits cluster on January 1st.

• Big life events are landmarks too

Births, weddings, deaths and breakups mark time and also change identity. After a painful breakup, she says, you might need a month or two of crying. Then you wake up one morning relieved it's over, stop judging yourself, and start building something better.

• You don't have to wait for a date on the calendar

Her invitation is to give yourself a fresh start today. With about eight billion people on the planet, someone has already faced what you're facing, built the company you dream about or healed the relationship. That's evidence your next chapter is possible.

• Step one: make a wish

Ask one question: 'What do I want the next year of my life to look like?' At 52 Mel couldn't answer it. She only knew she didn't want to stay in her current chapter, and she says that's enough. Knowing what you don't want makes it easier to remove what isn't working, and new possibilities show up.

• Step two: act like the future you, whatever you feel

Don't wait to feel happy or motivated. She says even a small mood boost improves focus, energy and productivity for the rest of the day. She ties this to the research behind behavioral activation therapy, summed up as 'act like the person you want to become in the future no matter how you feel in the present moment.' Each daily action is one brick, and a year later you've paved a path.

• Step three: find the proof it's possible

Treat anyone who has the relationship, career, body or friend group you want as a 'light on the path,' not someone robbing you of your light. Mel admits she used to give a friend's renovated kitchen a tight fake smile ('I love the white cabinets') while seething with jealousy. Her mindset flip is that success and happiness are unlimited, and the only thing robbing you is your excuses, fears and waiting for motivation.

• You are a light for someone behind you

If you've grieved a loved one, changed careers, sold a family home, lost weight, learned to live with depression or been the first in your family to graduate from college, your experience proves to someone else that it's possible.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 52nd birthday, two years earlier

She had just been fired from her dream job and lost her daytime talk show, and her book contract was rescinded. COVID shut down her speaking business while she was responsible for payroll and health care for 15 families. People in her inner circle lied to and stole from her. College was canceled, so three anxious kids were home, and her husband Chris had just been diagnosed with long-term depression. She woke up in the bunk room at her mother-in-law's house, cried, and filmed herself.

• The steps she laid out in that video

Name the feeling (lost, suspended between an old life and a new one) to tame it. Move your body to shift trapped emotion, which is why she put on an exercise tape. Do one thing that makes you happy, which for her was buying flowers. Dump your thoughts in a journal. Remind yourself 'this is temporary.' Then force yourself to dream again, because how you feel now reflects what you see in your future.

• How small actions became a reinvention

Exercise, flowers, stand-up comedy specials and journaling eventually made her answer clear. She wanted to travel less, not miss her son Oakley's high school years the way she had missed her daughters', and stop falling asleep with a to-do list. She started saying no, asked for help, went to therapy with Chris and sold the Boston-area home of 26 years for a small town in southern Vermont.

• Danielle's email

The day before taping, a woman named Danielle wrote that the 52nd-birthday video was the first Mel video she ever saw. She had been suicidal and had promised a friend, through a pact to call each other, that she'd give life 24 more hours. She spent those hours watching Mel's videos. Over the following year she kept 'chipping away,' and she learned that happiness is something you practice daily, not a reward for fixing everything first.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Oakley's introduction

Her 17-year-old son Oakley reluctantly introduced her. He listed four years on CNN, The 5 Second Rule, The High Five Habit and a million YouTube subscribers, then admitted he calls his mom, not his 'chillest guy ever' dad, when he needs anything.

- **Give up what weighs you down**
  Her advice to her 52-year-old self: have a good cry, get a big hug, then some tough love, with Toni Morrison's line about giving up what weighs you down. Mel rejects 'it is what it is'. She says it is what you make it.
- **Homework: a voice memo from your future self**
  Bookmark the episode for hard days. Record a voice memo as yourself a year from now, with your wish come true, describing your days in detail. Then share the episode with someone who needs it.