

Loving on Purpose Podcast

with Bonnie Lyman

Episode 51 Accepting What Is Versus Resisting What Is

Welcome to the podcast, Loving on purpose. I'm your host, Bonnie Lyman. If you're having trouble navigating through your relationships with your adult children, if you are struggling to connect with them or having specific challenges, you're in the right place. Welcome back, everyone. I hope everyone is healthy and safe and anticipating a nice holiday, a nice celebration come this Christmas. I can remember how exciting it was to have kids, especially when they were in college, coming home, because they were still kind of ours, weren't they? Times change, and I've learned that the more we can accept change and roll with it and not resist it, the easier life is, the more enjoyable it is. And so that's what I want to talk about today, accepting what is versus resisting what is. So I'm sure you can remember how you felt as a little child about Christmas. We would almost make ourselves sick over the excitement, the anticipation of it coming. And it just wasn't getting the gifts, the presents, that was pretty exciting. But I never can remember thinking about, oh, I'm going to get this, or how many am I going to get? But it was just kind of the thrill of it all. And it was all the lights and it was the cookies, and it was just everything that just made it a special time of year.

I can remember talking to a really good friend of ours, Teresa, I guess you could call her, my fourth daughter. She would come and live with us in the summertime and on holidays when she was in college, because her home life was not much of a home life. She had no place to go, even though she spoke so fondly of her family. But she was raised in a situation where things weren't as nice as a lot of people I know. And yet much like that. I'm not so ignorant that I don't know that a lot of people struggle in being raised in difficult situations. But she wasn't raised in a place where there was a lot of presents at Christmas. But she would get so excited hearing about Christmas. And I asked her why she got so excited. I knew there was no cookie making. I knew there were no presents. I knew there was no sharing of the true meaning of Christmas. But she said it was the food they were given. Food they were given really good tasting food, as in ham and turkey and fruit and sweet potatoes. And she just can remember that it was a special time.

And I think they did find a place to go to church on Christmas Eve. But she was able to feel as excited about Christmas as my kids were, even though she had so much less, because, number one, she chose to be excited. She allowed herself to get caught up in the season that was going on all around her. Number two, she accepted her circumstances and she didn't whine or complain about it. And number three, she focused on all the good parts of the season and what she was able to get in the way of some really good food that she didn't have the rest of the year. I know that there are

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some of you not looking forward to Christmas. Maybe you're even dreading that it's here because of the disharmony between you and an adult child. But anytime we resist the circumstances in our lives, anytime we resist what's happening in our lives, anytime we resist how we're really feeling, we are actually intensifying the discomfort. We are feeling some clement resisting behaviors that some of you may fall into, some of these hopefully not. But this is kind of global thinking or a common behavior amongst many, even just in our country. Some people resist the pain by drinking alcohol. Or maybe they start taking drugs. Or like me, when I'm resisting the gloomy weather like we've had for the past ten days, I start eating a lot of junk food.

Some of us may even resist how we're feeling. Just feeling kind of down about unmet expectations by exercising. For some, resisting may look like focusing on all that they don't have, such as maybe a lot of grandkids. Maybe them not being the first choice to whom their adult married children are going to spend Christmas with. Maybe it's even as difficult as your children having cut off any kind of a relationship with you. I'm not saying this isn't hard or that we shouldn't be in pain or sad about this. I'm not saying we need to give up our wants. But it doesn't fix things to not come to terms with accepting what is at this moment, at this Christmas. It doesn't fix things to spend energy on happenings, we can't fix it because the problem is still there. The problem, as you remember, is always our thoughts about what is happening or not happening that is causing the problem. And I realize that at Christmas time when we see so many other families gathering, and perhaps that is not what's happening with your family, that it's painful. But again, accepting that this is what's happening and not resisting it is going to help you find something good about what's going on.

The real meaning of Christmas is still there. The good part, the part where we honor the birth of a man being sent to Earth to save us all from eternal sorrow, he is there. He came to show us the way. And one of the things he's asked us to do is to love everyone. And we can't love everyone if we're resisting their behavior, if we're not accepting them for who they are, accepting that this year, maybe the normal celebrations are not going to be so merry and bright. Accepting what brings peace and that it's okay, that it's going to be different when life gets hard. Sometimes normal traditions, even at Christmas, become rather trivial. Of course they would be, because what was normal and good maybe has been turned upside down. And so we miss that and we long for that. But that's okay. But remember, we're trying to not resist reality of what's really happening. One way to diminish our pain is to accept that it's happening this year and it's happening to you.

We may ask, why me? Why our family? What did we do that would disturb the closeness our family once had? As hard as death and terminal diseases are difficult to

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accept and endure, many of us can accept it and hate it at the same time. But it is sometimes easier than when we know those people we love are still alive, but they don't want to spend time with us. The feeling that comes with children refusing to see you and disallowing you, to see your grandchildren can feel worse than death sometimes. But just as we have no control over death and disease, we don't have control over the thoughts and actions of our adult children. And so it's by accepting that this is what is happening right now that is going to help us to still keep loving them. Most people that I get on support calls about disharmony in a relationship with an adult child come to the call with the same reason.

They want to find out how to fix the problem. How can I get my child to come back into my life? Fixing the problem can only be done in one way, and that's by fixing you. And you are fixed when you can accept that you have no control over how your children feel about you. The remedy is focusing on accepting what is and then what you're going to do to move forward. Often when I start working with clients, they are angry, resentful, they're frustrated, and of course, they're disappointed. There is a lot of shooting in their conversation. My children should be letting me see my grandchildren. There is no reason why they should be cutting us off from being with them. They can't figure out where their child's thoughts are coming from that would cause them to disassociate themselves from them, the parents. We waste far too much energy trying to figure out why our children are doing what they are doing. We will get closer to feeling relief by accepting their behavior. Here are six perspectives of what acceptance looks like to me or what I can think or ask when I'm struggling with accepting some behavior of one of my adult children.

Number one asking who am I? Who do I want to be in this situation? Do I want to be the victim where I am dependent on my children changing their behavior to feel loved by them so that I can feel love for them? Do I want to be the villain where I think I'm getting revenge by withholding my love from them if they're going to withhold it from me. In other words, do I want to act like the child or do I want to act like an adult and be responsible for my own happiness and for my own choosing to love my children despite what their behavior is? Or do I want to be a parent that loves them through it all? A parent that loves without having their love returned. A parent who doesn't require anything in return. A parent that loves because that is who they are. They just love others, especially their own children.

Number two in this acceptance process is being willing to feel the discomfort. You can be heartbroken without being broken. When you are broken, you make everybody around you unhappy. You really don't have the power to do that, but you trigger thoughts in them that causes them to not be happy because they wish so badly you were happy.

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I'm not saying you're supposed to be happy when your children refuse to let you be around them or their children, but you don't have to be broken. You can pick yourselves up by your bootstraps and just decide that you're going to love them despite what they're doing. That's accepting and not resisting. When we have pity parties, we are resisting feeling some negative emotion. Number three is accepting what we don't have control over allows us to focus on what we do have control over, and that is we have control over choosing to love them even if we don't feel loved by them. People outside of my family or even others in my family that like or need association with me are available if I have that need to express love and be given some love back by many other people around me.

Notice what you like about yourself, and by loving yourself, it enables you to love those that are difficult to love. Number four is a tough one. Loving them enough to be able to set your desires aside in order to respect their needs, to be separated from you even when you don't know why they desire such a thing. It's putting their needs first over your desires. Remember, no shoulding. If we could all just get rid of the word, they should be spending as much time with me as they do with his or her parents at Christmas. If you just get rid of that word should and just accept that's what they've decided to do, then you can decide to love them no matter how much time they spend with you. Number five is cultivating new empowering thoughts about the circumstance. I use this often with my clients that are Christian. To quote Jesus who said, when hanging on the cross, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Forgiveness is a companion to love. And so they don't even realize they are doing anything wrong.

They're just trying to make peace between all these different family members that are connected in all different ways. That gets very complicated, especially when both parents live in the same town. But if you can show up as accepting their choices with love and thinking the thought, forgive them, for they know not what they do, you're going to have a lot more peace because you're accepting what's going on. Another good empowering thought to rethink. It's possible this relationship will heal. In fact, I'm counting on it, and that is going to bring you some peace. A third thought is things never stay the same. And I could talk for hours over a period of years that this has been magnified in my life. I heard a man once say about the epidemic of despair of parents with adult children is that they're unwilling to wait it out to see if things will change. And they always do. Another empowering thought hurt people, hurt others. Now, that doesn't mean you hurt them, but they could be hurting about some mental health issue, about some marriage issue, about some financial issue, about some child issue. They could be hurting and so they feel safe with you, and so they have a need to get this poison out of them, these horrible feelings. So sometimes it comes out and you're the one who takes the hurt. And number six, let's all try to focus on what they're doing right in their

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life. We have a negativity bias about us that the negative things that are going on just scream at us that it deadens the sound of what's going right. And most of the time there'll be more things going right. And so we want to learn to have compassion for people when they're hurting, when they're not treating us well, because they don't get up in the morning and think, I am going to make my parents feel unloved. That is not their intention.

Unkind acts do not make a person feel happy. So if we can accept the situation, if we can learn to control and manage our pain, we're actually helping our children learn, maybe from copying us of how to get through their pain. I've had a lot of clients said they feel like they're reinforcing their behavior by not being defensive. But you have to remember, defense is the first act of war. So I can remember this with teenagers. Somebody advising me to wisely pick my battles. But this is a battle of accepting what's going on versus resisting what's going on. We are either judging our children or loving them. Which one feels better? If we can learn to accept the situation or we're continually resisting it? What feels better? It's always our choice whether we are resisting reality or accepting it. If we resist it, if we push back too hard, if we are too judgmental, we lose every time. Of course we want a painful relationship to change, to a loving relationship. But resisting what's happening right now doesn't make that change happen. And it doesn't repair the relationship. It only intensifies your pain. Acceptance is the way out.

We have the capacity within us to forgive others who don't deserve to be forgiven forgiving others is not necessarily a benefit to them. It's a reward we give ourselves to no longer rethink and rethink those thoughts that cause us to feel so much pain. We have a perfect opportunity this week to find out who we really want to become and how willing are we to use our capacity to love and forgive. I tell you that it's 100% possible. If you choose and have the desire to be the adult, accept what's going on, be willing to feel some negative emotion, to be able to put your desires aside for their need to have some space from you. Even though you can't figure out why they want to do this, to focus on what's going right in their life and to cultivate some empowering thoughts and rethink these thoughts about what's going on that will bring you hope that things aren't always going to be this way forgiving others. Like I said before is such a great reward that we give ourselves. It has more therapeutic benefit than anything else we could do on being an influence for good in our children's life. I wish the very best for you this week. I hope you can find joy in the real meaning of Christmas. I hope you can find joy with those that you are not struggling with and that you can keep a special place in your heart to love those that are difficult to love.

I look forward to talking to you next week. If you think this would be a benefit to someone you know, I ask you to share it with them. I'm always welcome to reviews

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comments subscribing to this podcast. It just helps get it out to more people. I can't tell you how much I appreciate you taking the time to listen to me. It just feeds me knowing that I'm helping one person and maybe I can help soothe somebody's heart that they can pay it forward and soothe another person's heart. Merry Christmas and I'll talk to you next week. If you're frustrated because your relationship with your adult children doesn't look anything like the way you thought it would, I can help you. Moms who are in a painful relationship with their adult children tend to just spin in their sadness and in their pain because they're waiting for their adult children to change or they don't know what to do to instigate this change to have a peaceful relationship.

My program is called Loving on Purpose and I help you fix what's not working in your relationship so you can feel love and peace with your adult children and then be able to move forward in your life. I can help you feel that peace that will cause you to know exactly what you need to do to maintain that peaceful connection with your children. I can help you feel secure and confident in your role as a mom. I can help you be able to choose how you want to feel at any moment. And that means being able to move forward, to live a satisfying, fulfilling life that includes always having love for your children. If you want some help, if you just want to get on a call with me and see what my program is all about or how I can help you, go to [Bonnie Lyman.com](http://BonnieLyman.com) and click on the little button that says book or call.