

Ep #1: The Habit Change Advice You're Missing



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

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You're listening to episode one of the Habits On Purpose podcast. Today you'll learn what's missing from usual habit change advice. Let's get started.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits and feel as good on the inside as they look on paper. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do so you can learn to create habits that give more than they take, and now, here's your host physician and certified life coach Kristi Angevine.

Hello, welcome to the podcast. I'm so glad our paths have crossed. It's such a pleasure to spend this time together with you. Right now, as I record this episode, I'm in my home office, and it's really early morning, and at the time, my husband and kids are fast asleep. Now, if you hear the patter of one of my kiddo's feet come up to my office door and then retreat, that has obviously changed, and outside right now, it's snowing hard.

I've lived in central Oregon for about the last five-plus years, but before that, I've lived in the Southeast for most of my life. Now, as you may know, in Tennessee, a couple of inches of snow, and sometimes just a prediction of snow would shut things down; schools close, milk and bread disappear from grocery store shelves, but here there can be 2 or 3 feet of snow falling in the mountains and over a foot forecasted to fall in town and life keeps going.

School buses and mail trucks have chains, kids do recess in snow gear, and for the most part, I've gotten used to it, but it's still pretty remarkable how differently snow is handled here compared to the Southeast, and all that to say if you hear a snowplow in the background, that's why.

In this episode, I'm going to share a little bit about me and how I came to this work of life coaching on habits. I'll tell you what's missing from habit change advice and what makes habits challenging to change. You'll learn my philosophy about habits, which is a bit different than most of what's out there, and I'll tell you what you can expect from the podcast. What it is and what it isn't.

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And my hope is you'll leave this episode intrigued by how malleable habits actually are and that you will know that you are not alone if you're struggling to change something. First of all, when I talk about habits, I mean more than just behaviors. Habits are the default automatic ways we think and feel as well as the habituated ways we act.

So, when I refer to habits, I mean more than things like procrastinating or compulsively scrolling on your phone. Habits also encompass the less obvious tendencies. What I call hidden or invisible habits, like beating yourself up, people-pleasing, second-guessing, catastrophizing, struggling to enjoy white space, comparing yourself to others, harping on Menemsha, ruminating, over complicating everything.

Do these less obvious habits sound like anything you do? Now, let's touch on how you know if this podcast is right for you. Maybe your perfectionism helped you excel at your job, but the constant striving for flawlessness is exhausting; maybe you ruminate about work when you're at home and home when you're at work? You want to stop second-guessing, but you don't know how. Or maybe your pain point is time management and the overwhelm of loose ends, unfinished charts, or piles of clutter? Maybe you're on your phone before you realize it down a social media rabbit hole, staying up later than you planned, or half nodding on your kids while scrolling and checking work emails?

Or maybe you've put in great habits you love, but your inner critic is an opportunist who never rests. You say things to yourself you would never say to a friend. Things like, you aren't cut out for this. Who do you think you are? How lazy? Or maybe you feel like you've tried everything, but deep down, it seems like nothing is really changing. You just want to feel content and confident. Sound familiar?

No matter what your unique habits are or how hard they've been to change in the past, you're in the right place if you want to be intentional with this one precious life of yours, and want to crack the code of your habits, and I want you to feel welcome here regardless of how similar or different your

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background is to mine. A lot of my stories I will share will come from my experience being a physician, married, and a mom to young kids.

And because my amazing clients are all high-achieving women, I'll often use pronouns she/hers. But when it comes to habits, none of that stuff matters. You don't have to be a married physician mom for these topics to be relevant. So, no matter your career, whether you're partnered, whether you're in a same-sex or opposite-sex relationship, whether you're cis gender, non-binary, able-bodied, have a disability, own parents to fur animals, or like me, and parents of grown children.

No matter your race, ethnicity, religion, lack of religion, where you live, I want you to feel welcome here. We all have habits, and we all share the same struggles when we don't know how to change them. Now, let me tell you a little bit about me and how I came to life coaching. How did I go from loving my work as an OBGYN to being a life coach?

Over the podcast, you'll get to know me and hear more about my story, but in short, I discovered coaching by accident. I was listening to a podcast one night when I was on call. Now, before I go any further, let me just say up to this point of my life, I knew nothing about life coaching. Was it therapy? Was it an accountability partner? Was it a higher cheerleader who told you positive things about yourself?

I had no clue it was a robust and evidence-based field. Now, things are changing now, but needless to say, it was not something I learned about in medical school or in residency. What I loved was the concepts on this podcast I listened to weren't anything new, but there was something so tangible and practical about them that made them really resonate.

What I learned was coaching synthesizes the wisdom from so many fields. Cognitive-behavioral therapy, neuroscience, mindfulness, trauma, into concrete concepts and tools. Fast forward from that podcast I listened to, and I educated myself on all things coaching, and I went on to hire my first coach. Why you might ask? Why would I hire a coach when by all outside measures, my life looked amazing?

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I had a great husband, awesome family, and friends, amazing job, amazing partners, and I was doing work I loved, delivering babies operating. I had great health. Well, despite how great it looked on paper, inside, I felt so stuck and disenchanting, but I didn't know why, and I didn't know how to fix it. Outside I projected confidence, but inside I was insecure, and I was always quietly working on some personal development or personal improvement project.

I used things like work, overworking, food, exercise, wine, people-pleasing, titles, social esteem to cope with stress, and of course, none of this helped me feel any better because everything was geared to changing external circumstances without addressing what I was thinking and feeling on the inside. And when I tried to change unhelpful habits, it was so much harder than I expected. Talk about frustrating.

I could counsel my patients all day, every day, about healthy habits and stress management, but when it came to changing my own habits and my own happiness, I felt like I was floundering. I thought that after all the school and training that, I would have made it to this place where I felt content, but I hadn't. I wanted to feel as grounded and confident on the inside as I appeared on the outside.

The discrepancy between how I wanted to feel and how I thought I should feel and how I actually felt drove a quiet hum of defeat and anxiety, discouragement, and shame. And all I knew was to put my head down and work harder. The truth was, like so many of my colleagues and so many of my clients, I had insidiously developed a perfectionistic way of thinking, and I didn't think I was a perfectionist because, well, I thought perfectionists were perfect, and I knew I was nowhere near perfect.

Listen and see if any of this sounds familiar. My inner narrative was harsh, but I didn't recognize it as harsh. I walked around anxious without even knowing I was feeling anxiety. I would set these unrealistic, unattainable goals that seemed perfectly reasonable to me, and I would try to do them all at once perfectly. I struggled with analysis paralysis. I took things very personally.

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I often felt like an imposter. I assumed that what I thought about myself was an exact replica of what everyone else thought about me. My specialty was all or nothing black and white thinking. Maybe you can relate? Despite all of my medical training, I didn't grasp how much energy I spent managing my stress responses, and despite studying psychology as an undergraduate, I didn't realize how my mindset influenced my experience at such a fundamental level.

I was used to having answers, or at least a sense of how to find the answers, but here I had no clue. The catch 22 was I believed I should know how to figure it out, and therefore there was something really wrong with me because I couldn't, and I felt really alone, and like there was nothing to do but put my head down and suck it up, slap on a smile, and keep going, and in hindsight it was such a heavy burden, feeling like there's no end in sight.

As a physician, I value evidence-based practice, and I use the metric of what works. Coaching was the only thing that helped me get to the heart of lasting habit change. It helped me shift from anxious, stuck, and constantly striving to feeling really rooted and grounded in who I was and what mattered most. So, as a consonant student with no intention of ever becoming a life coach, I entered a certification training basically to more deeply learn about the concepts and tools that help me, and little by little, I started coaching other physicians.

And fast forward a few years; coaching is now my full-time location. Now, I'm here to share everything I teach my clients and use on a daily basis myself. Now, before we dive into the missing piece in conventional habit change advice, I want to give you a tip on how to implement the things we'll be talking about. So, you don't just passively consume what you hear.

If you're anything like me and the women I coach, you may be excellent at assimilating massive amounts of information, but when it comes to application in your personal life, that may be a different story, kind of like buying lots of books but never reading them or drooling over travel magazines but not actually taking any trips. I want you to be able to get real

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results, and that means bridging the gap between intellectual understanding and application.

So, to bridge the gap while you listen, whether you're on your commute or exercising or on-call, I invite you to frame your listening with two questions. How will I implement one thing I learn? How can I make it easy? Asking this will offset the tendency to passively consume but never take action on what you learn. Now, when you do this, watch for your brain to offer you the thought that you don't know. This is super common but entirely unhelpful because when you think the thought, I don't know, how do you feel?

Probably some variant of confused, uncertain, or ambivalent, and if that's where you stopped when answering that question, nothing will happen. Nothing will change. An answer like I don't know is what I call a first phase answer. Let me give you an example to explain what I mean. If you have kids or you have ever interacted with kids, have you ever asked them something like what they did at school or what they did on vacation?

And they tell you, nothing. What did you do at school today? Nothing. We all know that answer; nothing isn't true. It's just the first answer they give. Believing your brain when it offers you the answer I don't know would be like believing your kid when they say they did nothing at school. So, I don't know, and nothing are both first phase answers.

First phase answers are just a default we commonly reflect to. First phase answers are just a default we commonly reflects to but aren't accurate and definitely aren't useful. So, first of all, don't be surprised if that's the answer you get. But secondly, don't stop there when you do. Instead, this is what I recommend you do, you can think to yourself, thanks brain, nice of you to offer I don't know, but just because I don't know is the first thing I hear in my mind doesn't mean it's true.

So, let's try again, shall we? This will help you refuse to be confused so you can find a more productive response. Now, applying one thing and making it easy will be different for everyone. That's how you make it your own. It doesn't matter what you pick, just that you pick something. So, pick one thing to implement and make it easy on yourself.

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Now, let's dig into what's omitted from most habit-change advice and how this makes change so much more challenging than it needs to be. As we do, I will tell you a little bit about my philosophy about designing habits. What most habit change advice leaves out is a focus on root causes. In order to change anything, you have to know why you're doing what you're doing in the first place.

You must know the purpose or function your habit serves. You have to understand how it formed as a solution or how it was adapted or protective, how it makes sense even if it's not currently helpful. This awareness and understanding of the root cause behind our habits is the prerequisite for change.

Here's an example to make this more clear. Like I said at the beginning, I live in central Oregon, and there are large groups of deer that roam around town. It's not uncommon to see a few on your way to get the mail, or when I would walk from the hospital to my office, it would be in the parking lot or milling about the grass. They are constantly crossing the neighborhood streets.

Now, if you live near deer, you know that when a group of them is crossing the road, usually the cars slow down and wait until they cross, and sometimes this takes a while. A baby or two will cross awkwardly, and then eventually another one, and then more will follow. While the cars are waiting, cars will back up, and the people who are, say, eight or ten cars back might have no clue why the traffic has stopped.

Now, from my house, sometimes I will look out, and I'll see people in their cars who are stopped way back from a deer crossing, and sometimes they'll be grinding their necks and gesturing and frankly looking a little bit annoyed and perplexed at stopping. Now, oftentimes these folks are tourists because the locals know better. But unlike people close to the deer and bystanders like me from my living room window with a better view, the people who are ten cars back they can't see what caused the stop.

So, they don't know why it makes sense. Without knowing the cause of the stop, they may conclude there was a fender bender or that they should take

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a different route to solve for the stops. But the reality is they just aren't aware of the root cause of why they're experiencing what they are. And if they were, they would understand it better. They might go from what the hell is everything stopped for to oh, there's deer. I see now.

Habit change is kind of like this too. When you don't know why something is occurring and why it makes sense, you're simply missing key information. You're like the people ten cars back. In order to change a habit, it's easier when you have the vantage point of the cars close up. This is because when you have awareness and understanding of why you have a habit, your efforts to change a habit will target these root causes and not just the downstream symptoms or consequences.

Let's take a habit like procrastination, search the internet, and you'll find all sorts of tips and hacks. Things like start small, define your endpoints, set a timer, batch your work, reward yourself, eliminate distractions, turn off notifications, hide your phone, get an accountability partner, talk nicely to yourself. Now, none of these are bad things to do, but none of them will be a lasting solution if the root cause of the procrastination is overlooked.

Say that at the heart of someone's chronic procrastination is the belief that they can't start until they know exactly what they're doing. Because if they don't know what they're doing, they might look dumb. They might mess it up, or they might fail, and looking dumb, messing up, or failing means risking criticism, rejection, or exclusion. So, for them to truly move the needle on procrastination will require looking squarely at the narratives about failure and rejection, not just using some clever strategy like a timer or batching or positive thinking.

Now that you know the importance of root causes when it comes to habit change let's talk about why most habit change attempts fail. They fail for four reasons. Number one, they rely on willpower which, as we all know, is unsustainable in the long term. Number two, they rely on enthusiasm or motivation. They have like a New Year's resolution kind of bravado, and this stuff is always transient, which is why that's quoted at about 80% of New Year's resolutions are abandoned by mid-February.

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The third reason most habit change attempts fail is that big sweeping changes are glorified over ordinary small things done regularly. And number four, as we just discussed, is the most important reason most habit change attempts fail because they overlook the root causes of why the habits are there in the first place. Now, here's my philosophy when it comes to habits, these tenants will extend through all of the podcasts episodes.

First, in order to change, you need awareness and understanding of the root causes for why you do what you do, paired with consistent application of the things you learn. This is why I invited you to implement one thing you learn from the podcast this week and make it easy for yourself to implement. Next, I teach from an understanding that thoughts create feelings, feelings drive what we do and don't do, and our behavior produces our lived results.

Because of this, our habits don't reveal who we are so much as what we're thinking. Therefore to really change a habit, you have to know how to be aware of and understand what you're thinking. This is a skillset we will spend future episodes discussing so that you know exactly how to do it. The third foundational tenant is that habits are learned solutions. They were either adaptive or protective. They serve some sort of function.

This means when we formed them, they were the best solution we had at the time. So, maybe you started second-guessing after forgetting something really important or being hard on yourself helped you excel academically, or perhaps compartmentalizing emotions was how you got through your residency or your professional training or catastrophizing pessimism rooted from a need to anticipate and plan for the worst.

As learned solutions, habits form as the best thing, we could do with what we knew at the time. In this way, the habits we have make so much sense, even if we don't yet understand how. Since habits are learned, they can be unlearned, and they're so much more malleable than we realize, and that's exactly what you'll learn on this podcast. The why and the how of rewiring your habits, so you can be more deliberate and less reactionary in your life.

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Now, here's the next one, the habits you have today don't indicate there's anything wrong with you. They're not metrics for self-worth or any reason to judge yourself. Let me say that part again so that it can really sink in. Habits are not metrics for self-worth, and they're not a reason to judge yourself.

Habits are simply learned solutions you conditioned with repetition, and you haven't changed them yet only because you haven't learned an effective way to do so. The last piece I want to offer you is this, there's no magic bullet that makes this work effortless. There are no two ways around it. This work of rewiring habits is hard.

It requires more than just an intellectual understanding. Doing it, we butt up against deeply ingrained patterns that are fueled by ideas and rules that we've internalized. Real rewiring requires some discomfort as you're learning new skills and questioning what you may have not yet questioned.

But what you might not know is this work is not actually harder than staying stuck. When you're constantly listening to harsh inner criticism thinking that you should be different than who you are or feeling batted around by things outside your control, it's exquisitely difficult. It feels terrible, and it's so disempowering.

Yet, it's a flavor of difficulty we become accustomed to. So, what I want to offer is this, if there's going to be work no matter what, why not choose a path that helps you do things differently? So, what can you expect from this podcast? This podcast is the resource I wish I had, had when I felt so stuck.

It's meant to be the voice in your ear to remind you that it doesn't have to be so hard and that you're not nearly a passive passenger or victim to your brain. All of us have more agency than we realize. My goal is for this to be practical and tangible. So, I'll translate concepts and ideas in ways that I think will make the most sense and give you actionable things you can implement in your real life.

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We'll discuss habits and the skills you need to change them, skills of awareness, skills with processing emotions, skills of resourcefulness in the face of the unexpected, skills of tapping into curiosity and compassion, skills of directing your mind on purpose. I teach these things because they work.

What you'll hear about will always be work I've done myself and that I still do alongside my clients every day. When you apply what you learn in a way that uniquely makes sense for you and your life, you will be building a transferable skillset you can use in any situation, and this is how you'll develop habits that you love.

Which brings me to what won't this podcast do? This podcast is not about giving you answers or telling you what you should do; only you know that. I'm here as a guide. I will teach you tools and concepts, but you're the only one that will figure out what's best for you. You get to take what I offer and filter it through your own lens.

Toss what doesn't work. Keep what does, and make it your own. This podcast is not therapy or a substitute for therapy. Therapy can be amazing and has a vital role, but this podcast is not endeavoring to play that role. It's also not medical advice or a substitute for medical advice. I'm a physician, but I'm not your physician. I'm here as a coach.

Last of all, this podcast is not about giving you gimmicky quick fixes or promising a sublime destination where we arrive enlightened with everything figured out, never to face another challenger. The work of doing a deep dive into why we do what we do is more like an unfolding or unraveling of internalized, well-engrained, sometimes unexamined ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

It's a process, not a quick fix. It's a process that's ongoing and multi-layered, which is why this podcast focuses on helping you build a myriad of effective skills you can apply over and over and over again in real life. Doctor Viktor Frankl is a well-known Holocaust survivor. He was a psychiatrist with a Ph.D. in neurology.

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I want to leave you with a quote of his. He said, "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man, but one thing, the last of the human freedoms; to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances to choose one's own way."

He goes on to be famously quoted saying, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response, and in our response lies our growth and our freedom." Now, this is pretty powerful coming from someone who survived a concentration camp. And it's this idea of cultivating the power to choose our response that makes working on habits so powerful.

When we work to understand the root causes of why we think, feel, and act as we do, we take on the work of a deep understanding of ourselves. And it's from this foundation that we can learn how to choose our attitude and choose our responses going forward, even if we've not felt like we've had that choice in the past. And this is how habit work is a path to growth and agency.

So, I really hope you find this podcast helpful. It will be what I teach my clients and model for my kids so that they can start this work earlier than I did. I want you to understand that our habits are shaped by so many things; upbringing, education, socialization, and a miriad of individual internalized beliefs and value systems. And the way to change your habits isn't through motivation, willpower, or shaming yourself, but rather it's by understanding why your particular habits make perfect sense and unpacking what you're thinking so you can take it out of the junk drawer, so to speak, and look at these thoughts in the light of day.

That's the prerequisite to start thinking, feeling, and showing up differently in your life. Remember, habits are learned so they can be unlearned. And this unlearning isn't quick or easy. It's work to build a set of skills that no one has taught you yet.

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But it's definitely not as hard as staying stuck. I hope you join me in doing what I think is the best kind of work you can do on yourself, figuring out why you have the what's one thing that resonated or came up for you when you listened? How can you practice building the muscle or applying what you've learned instead of just passively consuming?

Remember the two questions from earlier? As you go on with your day, be sure to answer them. How will you implement one thing you learned, and how can you make it easy? Will you give yourself five minutes a day to consider where you want more choice in your responses? Will you commit to noticing your second-guessing or the triggers for your perfectionism? Will you journal about how your habits developed as adaptive solutions? Will you pause in the middle of writing over an email reply and check-in with how you're feeling and why?

What will it be for you? If you like what you're hearing and think others would benefit from the Habits on Purpose podcast, I have a huge favor to ask. It would mean so much to me if you would take a few minutes to rate and review the podcast. Reviews are especially important in helping a podcast be discoverable, and I totally understand that it's really easy to not take the time to do a review.

So, to give you a little incentive, to help me get this podcast off to a great start, I'm going to be giving away five-day designer planners and audible gift cards to listeners who follow, rate, and review the show. Now, it doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I really hope you love the podcast. I want your honest feedback, so I can create an awesome show that provides tons of value. So, for all of the details on how you can win, visit habitsonpurpose.com/podcastlaunch, and I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

And if you know someone you think would get value from listening and you feel called to share it with them, I would be so very grateful. Thanks for listening. I hope you have an amazing rest of your day. I'll see you in the next episode.

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Thanks for listening to Habits on Purpose. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit habitsonpurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.