

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

[Habits On Purpose](#) with Kristi Angevine

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

Welcome to Episode #66. I'm your host, Kristi Angevine.

I recently did a podcast episode with one of my coaching clients, Dr. Margaret Baum. And so many of you reached out to tell me how helpful it was to gain this insight into what coaching is like, that I decided to bring you another conversation, with another of my clients, Shannon Fitzgerald.

If you've ever wondered what's involved in coaching, and what coaching helps with, stay tuned. Today, Shannon joins me to share her experience of what's changed in her life since she going through private coaching with me. Ready? Let's get started.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. 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. And now, here's your host, Physician, and Master Certified Life Coach, Kristi Angevine.

Kristi Angevine: All right, everybody, I am really, really excited to bring to you another coaching client. And today we can have this wonderful conversation with one of my clients. Shannon, welcome to the podcast.

Shannon Fitzgerald: Thanks so much, Kristi. I'm delighted that you asked. It's fun to have a virtual coffee with you.

Kristi: Yes, we were just talking, before we started recording, about how doing these podcast interviews is kind of an excuse to just do the things that would be really great to do if we just lived near one another. So, I'm excited about it in that regard, too.

So, for the people who don't know you in real life, can you introduce to the listeners who you are, maybe where in the world you're calling in from, and maybe something about your life, something you're passionate about or a hobby that you have that is separate from work?

Shannon: Okay, perfect. So, Shannon is my name. I live in Bainbridge Island, Washington. It's outside Seattle. It's a beautiful location. And I work

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

part time in a pediatric practice here on the island as a nurse practitioner, doing what I have loved to do for four decades, which is take care of kids and families.

I have two daughters, a husband of almost 44 years, four grandchildren, and they keep me busy. That's a big part-time hobby, I'd say. I also play tennis, which is so fun. I like sewing, cooking, all kinds of things around the house, actually. We also have an Airbnb here on the island. And it turns out that one of my secret desires, I guess, had been to be an innkeeper. Because it has been really fun to create a really beautiful space for people to come and visit with an incredible view. And to just bring a little joy to the lives of strangers who spend a few days at our place.

Kristi: That's so fun. I look forward to exploring Bainbridge Island a little bit more, at some point. So, you and I worked together with private coaching, you were one of my private clients. Before we started working together, before you knew much about coaching, in the way that you know now, what did you think of coaching?

Shannon: Well, I think before I ever heard of coaching, I thought that it was possibly just therapy-lite or something like that. I didn't really have much of an opinion about it. Except, I don't think I've told you this, I did have one conversation with a life coach in 1994 or so.

It was a person who I just ran into. I was dealing with a little bit of a challenge about a medical situation in my family. And she did this really great trick where she had me list the positives and negatives on both sides of a decision. So, that it was easy to see that it wasn't either/or.

And I have used that little trick so many times with myself and patients. So, that was just a hallway conversation with someone. I don't think I've ever shared that with you. Then, I fell into listening to The Life Coach School podcast. Because it was one of those rabbit holes from one to the next, and I became pretty enchanted with the way that the founder of The Life Coach School has basically translated what I think of as cognitive behavioral therapy principles, into something really practical and actionable.

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

I thought her some of the things she said were just really interesting. So, I'd been listening to that and then heard from others. And I think, somehow, I began to think, "Well, maybe this is something interesting that people really need. Just a little bit of a guidepost and a way to see the world or see their lives in a different light, without having to think you're mentally ill to do it."

Kristi: Right. And you really highlighted an important aspect of coaching, which is that it is highly practical. And as a field, it stands on all the shoulders of so many different fields; cognitive behavioral therapy, somatics, trauma, neurobiology. And one of the hallmarks of coaching is that it is taking people from where they are, and helping them be as intentional or work towards something even better.

Which can have so much overlap with therapy, but doesn't have the focus of taking someone from a place where that may not be compatible with daily living, where you are not quite functioning, and getting you to a baseline of being okay. It's taking you from okay to even better.

Shannon: I think that's a really good way to say it. And I think of it more in the wellness category of, you're already doing well. Let's see if there's a way to see how to do a little better.

Kristi: Yeah, just to optimize things. So, you had your foundation, you discovered coaching in the hallway conversation, but then sort of developed an interest in it. What made you actually want to take the plunge and do coaching, and do coaching with me?

Shannon: I found your podcast through some other circuitous method. I think you were interviewed by someone else, and I started listening to your podcast. I thought, "Wait a minute, I think Kristi has hit on some key patterns of thinking that are common." Your audience is mostly physicians. I'm a nurse practitioner.

And although I haven't been in medical school, I think some of the ways that healthcare providers get where they are, are similar patterns of

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

thinking. Like perfectionism, and this focus on achievement, and productivity. And those are things that are important to me.

But then within me, there are these unconscious habits that I began to see. “Wait a minute, I think I could probably get myself out of my own way a little bit, if I just spend a little more time talking about what's unique to me.” And I have to say, I don't think I had any giant problems to solve, except for what I call my “magical thinking” problem. Which is that I generally think that more is possible than ever is, and so I keep finding myself over committed and different things like that.

So, that's probably where I started to really think, “Okay, I think you're saying something,” within that coaching world, “just a little bit more specifically applicable to me.”

Kristi: All right. And that really brings up the point that there are so many physicians, so many people in healthcare who do listen to this. And nice shout out to all the men, all the people who are nowhere near clinical medicine, who listen. Who hear these ideas, and go, “Oh, my gosh, I also have this magical thought pattern of ‘I can and should do more than I actually have the ability to do, or actually want to do even if I can do it.’”

So, this is not just people in medicine. This is teachers, this is stay-at-home parents, all of us can have these, right? You mentioned that particular habit, of a pattern of thinking, what are some of the habits that you wanted to work on, or goals that you had for yourself when you started coaching?

Shannon: Okay, so one of them is, I would have called it before, better time management. I can't tell you the number of books and courses and speakers and podcasts I've listened to about time management. Thinking that surely if I just could find another system, I could get even more things done. So, that's one thing. Shifting the way that I think about time to align more with my priorities. What do I really want to do?

The other thing is to notice more how certain ways I'm thinking, ways that I'm proceeding in the world, make me feel. Starting with that movie, *Inside*

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

Out, I think it was called. We really aren't very good at knowing what it is we're feeling. And I say 'we' because in my clinical practice, I noticed that kids are a little better than we are, but it's actually takes some work to notice.

Okay, when this happens, how do I feel? And more importantly, how do I want to feel? So, I think focusing away from a system of time management, to really how can I make sure that the priorities that I've identified can really be actualized? So, that's one pattern.

The other pattern, I think, is second-guessing myself all the time. So, deciding to do something, and then thinking, "Oh, my gosh, maybe I should have done it this other way. Maybe there's one more thing I should think of." I think one thing, you've called that, I don't know who coined it first, but moving more toward B- work. Which, by the way is, for anyone that's known me for any length of time, it really doesn't mesh with the way I am.

Kristi: Heads rolling, and people are like, "What the heck? Shannon said the word B- work?"

Shannon: Yeah, trying to get to where I'm just good enough about some of the things I'm doing, instead of trying to make everything perfect. The other thing is, I don't think I knew that I wanted to work on this. But in talking with you in our sessions, I've realized that I tend to not really give myself credit for things. I'll say, "Well, this happened, but anyone could have done it. Well, that's really no big deal."

And so, by learning to say, "Actually, I did do that thing. And I did it myself, and it was great. And I had a team to help me," or whatever. That has been really great for me to recognize, because then I don't feel like I have to keep doing more. So, I think I've been able to get a little more realistic about what's possible, and why, and then stop myself before I try to go overboard.

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

Oh, that's another thing. Overing everything, is what I would say. Overdoing it in so many areas. I won't even go into the list, but it turns out that everything turns out just fine if I don't overdo it.

Kristi: I just love hearing all that. And one of the things I think is so important about what you just said, is that many people, whether they're going to coaching, therapy, mentorship, they oftentimes approach it with wanting to solve for a very specific thing. Like, "I just need a better time management thing. And if I can figure out the right time management approach, or figure out the right schedule, then everything will be okay."

And then what they oftentimes discover, is that underneath that, there are other things that are actually at the core of the issue. Like, the need to over everything, I'm second-guessing along the way, I'm not as present or I'm not I'm very reactive in the moment. And I wonder why that might be? And there's actually those other things that are at the root.

Shannon: Exactly. And you know what else is interesting? I didn't share this in the in the intro, but for 15 years, I had a pretty big leadership role at Children's Hospital locally. Where I had a chance to hire and help and coach a lot of people. And I probably said a lot of the same things to other people, but then really wasn't doing it myself. So, I don't know what that is. But anyway, as I hear myself saying these things, I think, "Wait a minute, I think you already knew that, you're just not doing it."

Kristi: That's so important, and I think it's worth just a little time touching base on this. Because many times, myself included in this, we intellectually understand things. And not just intellectually, we get it so much, that we can be great advisors. And we can be great in a coaching or mentorship capacity for other people.

Because we have so much perspective and clarity that we can say, "Yeah, these are the things that are in the way when you have no boundaries, and you're saying 'yes', all the time and you're overworking. I can see it in you. I know it's important." And it's almost like, then we get back into our own minds, our own lives, and we don't see that disconnect, and actually

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

applying the very concepts that we might be passionate about helping other people apply.

There can just be a gap in the skill of applying what we already know. And so, I think that's a big part of coaching, is helping people really own their own wisdom and own what they already know, but just might not be practicing with themselves.

Shannon: I think that's really well said, and maybe that's the case with almost everything in life. I mean, most of the time, when there is a decision in front of, really any of us, you probably know what to do at getting yourself to recognize that you know, and that it's okay. That you know it and can move forward.

I don't know what that human tendency is, but I think getting a chance to outline it and get it, the why and who cares and what does it matter, is really good. It's interesting, it doesn't actually take that much of a conversation, once you start thinking this way, to get that insight. So, that's something else I think people should know about coaching.

I don't think they need to imagine that it's lying down on a couch for five years and getting at your deepest, darkest secret. It's really just what do you want to do? Where are you now? And what's in the way of it? Let's just move it out of the way.

I mean, it probably making it sound overly simple, but I think it's worth the investment to have that opportunity to think it through, aside from a meeting at work or a decision that's in front of you. But kind of like the underlying core thoughts and beliefs that you might not even know you have.

Kristi: Yeah, it really just those conversations that can seem super simple, but many of the most powerful things that we can do, they're simple, even if they're not easy. I remember when we started coaching together. I have all these fun memories. For somebody here who hasn't been coached, or maybe they've been coached in a different modality. In general, coaching

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

can be very fun. It sometimes does bring up very tender things; there can be lots of emotion, lots of processing. And also, it can be quite fun.

And it's so interesting. I remember, we were having one of our conversations, and you said, "I feel like a different person than I did at the beginning of this conversation." And it really stuck with me, just because I thought that really sort of expresses how I oftentimes feel after, maybe not specific coaching calls, but like either individual call or after multiple times of coaching on something, I realize, "Oh my gosh, I just feel like a different person."

So, when you think about getting coached, or for somebody who's listening to this, who's maybe never had the experience of getting coached and they think, "Laying on the couch, sorting through old things, it's not going to matter. Because I'm sorting through all this old stuff and what do I do?" If they've got that in their mind, can you sort of tell them about what your actual experience was with being coached?

Shannon: I think my experience would be not really knowing exactly what I needed to solve for. But bringing an example to mind would be, let's say, getting through a list, have things to do, what is that list of things? And how is it not getting done? I remember sharing with you that we had gone on this trip with this company called the Road Scholar.

We were in Newfoundland with this guy who was the guide, and he's been in Newfoundland for something like 15 years, I mean 15 generations, excuse me. So, he taught us this word called "Swarve", and that just means wandering around aimlessly. I had identified that one of the things I really like to do is just walk around our downtown and look at stuff and maybe buy a little few things or get a cookie or things like that. It's really a fun thing to do.

However, then I started to thinking, "Well, why is it that I like to do that? Well, it's because it's blank space on my calendar. I think I'm doing something on the list, but I'm actually just going on a walk and enjoying it.

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

And in the process of kind of swarving around, that's what swarving around is, wandering aimlessly. And this guide would tell us, on this bus tour, to do that. I think when he had something else he needed to do he'd tell all the people on the tour, "Okay, swarve around for 20 minutes. And I'll meet you back here."

So, I told you this word, and I said, "Well, I need to figure out why is it that I am swarving around? What is it that I'm actually getting done?" And in the context of just that one 10-minute conversation, I realized that what was really missing is that it's okay to have some blank space on my calendar and to just go do nothing or go for a walk or just not and just rest a little bit.

This is a big shift from thinking that a good day means that the whole day was full, and I got 97 things done. Don't worry, I still have that same intention, I always want to finish my to-do list. However, I'm getting more realistic about it. And now, I've decided I am just finished with swarving around with no purpose. If I'm going to have some time off, I'll do that on purpose. But if I have a to-do list, I'll just go there and get what needs to be done.

And I think that getting after the feelings of feeling confident and calm and clear and accomplished, those are the feelings I'm trying to go for. That's what I've always probably been trying to find. But now I have a more purposeful way of doing that. And just saying, "Okay, well, I already have this. I don't have to do any more to get to that feeling of clarity and calm accomplished." I think that's probably one shift.

And then the other one, is I also talked about just squandering time. So, our squandering experiences. I told you about a family vacation. We had gone to this lovely lodge, and I was telling you about this beautiful spot, and that you should take your family there and have the greatest time there. And in talking with you, I can't recount all of the steps, but I realized that again. Just feeling like in the moment with the grandchildren, with all the people. I wasn't trying to do three things at once.

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

And that allowed me to be present just for those few days, in a better way than I had been before when I was always trying to think, “Well, what else should I be doing? I've got this extra time. Is there another task I should do?” I think that pattern, back to magical thinking, that more is possible than is, I think I've always thought, “I can do three things at once. And it's going to work out fine.” No, actually. No, that's not true.

That doing one thing at a time, I really do know it, there are books written about this, people are always saying you can't multitask. I think I haven't really believed that. Now, I do. I know that doing one thing with purpose, knowing why I'm doing it and what I'm after, in general, that's working a lot better for me. And I can tell you, I just feel happier all the time. I've always been a positive happy person, but I just feel calmer, and as though I can manage things better.

Kristi: So, you brought up brought up so many great points here. One, is that when you know what emotions that you want to feel that are really useful to whatever your goals are, and you can name those and then recognize, sort of backing up, “Okay, so what am I thinking when I feel confident or focused? And what am I thinking when I'm feeling the opposite of that?” Well, it's good to notice. Right? That's a super important piece.

And then it also just highlights that coaching is just a conversation in which there are ways to sort of echo back to a client, a different way of saying what they've just said so that they can see it differently. Or asking a client questions that they just wouldn't think to ask themselves, right? And coaching is definitely not like all the things that you said, that you now are realizing and realized and integrated into your life.

It's not like you and I sat down, and I said, “Okay, so let me just tell you, when you're more present you'll feel like you're squandering less. And when you stop doing three things at once, you're actually going to get just as much done as you really need to. If I stepped in and told you, “Hey, these are all the things you need to do.” It would be the same as just

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

reading them out in the world and seeing them, but not realizing them in your own unique way.

Shannon: Very well said. And I should have brought in the thinking of 'still working on this'. I mean, there's no end to the things you can work on in this process. To say, "Well, this just happened," I mean lots of things happen every day that you can look back and say, "Well, let's see, I reacted in that way. What was I thinking just before? Why was I feeling upset? What was going on?"

So, you've helped me to see, just stop for a minute, and say, "What am I thinking about? What was a previous thought?" Yesterday, I have to say, I did get a little cinnamon roll at the bakery. And then later I thought, "Okay, what was I thinking just before that?" And what I was thinking of was, "Boy, it's been a while since I've been down here. I think I'll just get this cinnamon roll."

And then I thought, "No, what else was I thinking? I probably deserve a little treat. Why?" Because here's what I know about myself. If I do eat something I hadn't intended to eat, it's fine. But then I think later, "Oh, that was kind of a waste of time and calories." That's just a little example, that I now am a little better about. Instead of beating myself up to say, "Oh, you were supposed to go grocery shopping and you did something else instead."

Instead of saying, "What is wrong with you? Why didn't you go grocery shopping?" I say, "Oh, you know what? I had that other thing happen. I forgot that I had done this. I hadn't quite planned it right. Next time, I'll do this differently. I'll think about it in a different way." Probably using some crazy examples here. But I mean, everyone is filled with 50,000 or 60,000 thoughts or something, they say.

So, how to be a little more intentional about why certain things are happening, or not. I have really, in general, I've always had happy, good days. But now, I feel like I have days where, I don't know, it just seems like it's just calmer, smoother, and I'm not getting as frazzled.

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

Kristi: Yeah, I think you brought up such a beautiful point, that part of this work is just bringing in the awareness of, well, what's going on for me prior to doing something that I look back on, I'm curious about? Instead of beating myself up for eating something that I maybe wish I hadn't eaten. And nothing beats cinnamon rolls, right? We're not demonizing those. But just as a beautiful example, if that was not something you wanted to do, you can look back with curiosity; what was going on beforehand? And what was going on before that? Oh, so good to know, once you have the awareness of the thoughts.

And so, that brings me to a question that I think it'd be super useful for people to hear your take on. When you're thinking about the actual day-to-day shifts that you've had, what do you think is different now about when you're noticing your thoughts and when you're noticing your habits? You mentioned, sort of overdoing everything. I've heard you say before, "Oh, I just noticed..." I don't know, to throw out there, "I noticed I wanted to have 10 different to-do lists," or whatever it is for you. But what's shifted as you've noticed those things?

Shannon: What has shifted is that I think I'm getting better at taking a little pause, and trying to figure out what it was I was thinking just before I took an action or did something. And then asking myself a question like, is that really true? Or does that really matter? Or is that really what I want to do? So, a little bit of a pause in, why was I thinking that? Or I think that's maybe the pause; is it really true?

And I want you to know, I'm certainly not perfect at this. I just decided to get a new calendar system after abandoning another one. So, I'm certainly still thinking that there is a solution out there, except this time it's purposeful, because you and I have worked on this new system for me to review the previous week and get things organized. This new thing I'm doing is all digital, I really think it's going to be it.

However, I notice that I thought, "Well, I'm thinking that now. I have to make sure I really examine that purposefully, and not just abandon it

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

thinking the system is the problem.” So, that might be the difference. It’s saying, “Oh, what the heck, I’ll just do this now. It’ll probably be great, but it might not be okay. And I’ll just abandon it again later.”

I’m thinking, “Great, got a new plan. I think this is going to work because I’ve written it down. I’m monitoring it. And I’m not taking on more than I should. I have a way to check myself now.” So, I feel calmer, thinking that it’s not just a tentative plan, it’s actually something that will work.

And let me tell you, that I’ve always been someone who can get a lot of stuff done. So, that’s never been the problem, about me being productive. I can knock out a lot of stuff. And it’s never been that I’m certainly not accomplishing a lot during the day. It’s just that I’m feeling, at the end of it now, ‘oh, that was good. I got enough done. I accomplished what I said I would.’

The big difference is I’m not saying to myself, “Hey, we only got 10 out of the 50 things said done, that you said you were going to do. So, you’re just blowing it again.” Which is probably something that... Well, I’m not saying probably, that is exactly how I had been thinking before. And I’m thinking, “Okay, it’s pretty good. Got a lot of this done, make sure they have this and plan the next thing that I can actually be realistic with it.” That’s where the overdoing it comes in.

Kristi: That’s such a great example of that sort of hidden habit, that on the outside, the habit that you’re hoping to change, was get better at time management, then to get better at overdoing absolutely everything. The hidden habit is in the aftermath of maybe not doing all the things on your to-do list. Of making yourself wrong and beating yourself up and criticizing yourself.

That is the quiet habit that may not be the one that you see on paper. But that actually takes a lot of the energy out and just makes it so depleting. Makes it actually harder to get things done. So that shift, I mean, I know people listening to this can relate to that. Because not everybody knows that we are so hard on ourselves, from the outside.

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

Shannon: Yeah, and I think you said this earlier, but I'll do one of the things you do. Just to say it again. I mean, if it were easy to make these shifts, then there wouldn't be 58 books on time management and 29 podcasts. Because otherwise, you could just look at the list of what to do and figure it out.

And so, I don't want to even think about it as time management anymore. I think more of it as how am I maximizing this particular phase of my life. I've got wonderful health, I have a fantastic family, wonderful friends, I love reading, I have this really fun tennis thing that I'm doing, I love my job. So, all of that has always been true. But I think that now I can say it's okay, if it isn't all perfect all the time.

Kristi: I love that you pointed out, several times, this is still something that you work on. Once we uncover one set of thought habits and patterns of behavior, oftentimes underneath that, or in a different set of circumstances, there's more to discover. And there's really no destination, to where we land, and we're like, "Ah, I figured it out." Because we have human brains that will repetitively do what they do.

Shannon: This quest to have things organized and perfect as possible is always going to be part of me. My husband calls me "Shannon Symmetry" sometimes. Because there's a way that I like things to be lined up.

Kristi: I have a feeling a bunch of people are nodding their heads saying, "If I had that alliteration, that would be mine my nickname as well". We've talked a lot about the cognitive and thought work aspect, as well as the more emotions aspect, a little bit when it comes to coaching. But one of the things that you and I've done a little bit about was incorporated a little bit of Internal Family Systems work. I usually incorporate that when the time seems right or when the circumstances seem to be amenable to that. So, would you be comfortable talking a little bit about what your experience was, with this thing that might be a little bit new to people?

Shannon: Yeah, it's really funny. You had mentioned in one of our conversations about this concept of thinking of yourself as a bunch of

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

people in a boardroom, let's say. Where you have certain people at a meeting saying certain things, or being the kind of person who steps up and does something or the kind of person who says, "That probably won't work." And I had just heard an interview with the guy that wrote the Internal Family Systems book. I can't think of his name right now.

Kristi: Yeah, Dr. Richard Schwartz. Dick Schwartz.

Shannon: Yes, I had just heard him interviewed on this other podcast I recommend to my patients all the time, which is Dr. Becky Kennedy. She is this psychologist in New York. She's really got a really nice approach to parenting that I that I've been trying to recommend to families for a while. So, I had heard this guy interviewed, and then you mentioned it, and I thought, "Well, this sounds pretty interesting, and it makes a lot of sense."

So, let's say that I'm going to go out of town for the weekend, and at the same time, I'm going to write an article. This would be something normal that I would have thought of doing in the past, "I'm going to be on vacation, and I'm also going to write in an article." So, these two things probably won't work very well together.

But in my previous magical thinking, or I should say, my current tendency toward thinking 'if that's possible', this Internal Family Systems method allows you to say, "Well, let's see. The part of me that says it's possible to be on vacation and do scholarly work is here. But how about if the we ask the "person" who says, 'While you're away, you can write an article' to just take a seat away from the boardroom table while we figure out what's important, and then we'll talk to that person again."

I know it sounds super basic, but for some reason that that analogy makes a lot of sense to me. It helps explain why you can think a bunch of different, disparate thoughts about the same problem you're trying to solve. When I heard him interviewed, and I'm actually listening to his book right now, it sounds like he kind of made this discovery, if you want to call it, or identified this new way of thinking, based on working with families and

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

patients. And as a psychologist realizing that what he had learned probably didn't make a whole lot of sense.

Also, we've made up everything we know about psychology and psychiatry. You can't do a PET scan or a CT-scan and understand how someone's thinking or how they got where they are, why some of their behaviors are getting in their way. So, we come to these understandings about the way that we function. The human brain is so fascinating. So, it might just be my own kindergarten brain, but this boardroom thing is really helpful. I don't know if you can explain it better. That's just how I am.

Kristi: You did it perfectly. Because I mean, I think you really emphasize the fact that what we know, compared to what we don't know, the ratio is just massive. And what we think we know, versus what is actually accurate, is also an interesting thing to noodle on. The way that we come up with constructs for how to understand ourselves and understand the world is sometimes just made up. And sometimes it's empirical observation, or you go, "This is my best guess."

And then at the end of the day, we have to figure out what's most useful. And what's most useful is the way that we can understand things, so that we can actually do something about it and be really pragmatic. Because we could have this beautiful understanding of things but if it doesn't actually infuse into our everyday lived experience, it doesn't matter. So, that's why something that you might call simple, it's actually a foundational way of thinking.

When you think about Internal Family Systems, the idea that we're made up of a multiplicity, it's like an ecosystem. And when we have conflicting, disparate thoughts, that you said so nicely, we can think about it like coming from different parts of us, or different personalities or different sub-entities inside of us. That can be such a useful way.

And the boardroom is beautiful, because you can actually have a mental representation for the part of you that wants to write the article on the weekend. And for the part of you that's like, "You know what? I really just

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

want to be on vacation.” And then you can notice how you feel towards both of those parts.

You can sort of understand where they're coming from, what their positive intent is, once you can separate out from them. And not just be like, I don't know, I have all these conflicting thoughts and feelings. It's because they're these distinct sort of committee members, and if I can see what's going on for them, then we can reach a really beautiful collaborative consensus or some clarity. And then I can decide, without feeling conflicted, what I want to do on my vacation. Even if that's, “Write the article,” right?

Shannon: I think that's good, because it probably is coming back to that thing about seeking this feeling of calm and accomplishment and clarity. If I could think, “Well, if I finish that article, that project, I'll feel really good,” problem is, you can't do both of those things at the same time very well, one of them is going to suffer.

By the way, yes, I don't mean to discount psychology and psychiatry, and I have utmost respect for the work that my colleagues in those fields do. And I know a lot of it is based on human observation, our empirical observation of human behavior and what patterns usually emerge. But this doesn't explain how each person might think or feel. Each of us are so unique and we bring so much. I love working with people, and I have always gotten increased energy from being with people rather than not.

So, I think that puts me in the category of an extrovert, I suppose. I also really like family time by myself. I think that the Internal Family Systems system is really interesting, because it allows for both or allows for all possibilities.

As opposed to saying, “You fit into this box, and you fit into this box.” In fact, each of us has so many gifts, and that's why it's fun to work in part of teams and to build teams. Because without all the variety that human beings bring to the workplace, and families and friendships, it wouldn't be as much fun as it is.

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

So, I think Internal Family Systems actually fits right in with that, to say all of those people in the boardroom have something useful to bring. But let's say that you are doing a brainstorming session with a group of people and you're trying to think of all the possibilities. Right then you need the people who are practical, the accountants and the people who are the safety monitors, to step back for a minute and just let all the possibilities come forward.

And then you need you bring the realistic folks in to say, "Actually, here are some things about why that idea you all came up with might need to be adapted." The boardroom is it because I've had a lot of experience doing that kind of work. I value it a lot, the team approach to things. So, maybe we can think of ourselves as our own individual team.

Kristi: I love that. And I think everybody, everybody who experiences coaching, but specifically Internal Family Systems informed coaching, or Internal Family Systems therapy, has their own way that resonates with them to think about this. But when you can think of yourself as, 'I have a team, and me, as the leader of that team, we work together.' I mean, that can be a beautiful way to think about it.

I love how you said so many great things there. One of the things that occurs to me, as we're talking about this, is when you decide to commit time and money to coaching, it is truly an investment. There can be lots of things where we're like, "Okay, well, it doesn't make any sense to actually put money towards the thing that I don't quite understand. Do I actually have the time? Do I want to carve out the time?"

When you think about yourself, pre coaching, and you think about yourself now, what's your take on the time and money that you invested to do this work?

Shannon: I think that for me, deciding that, okay, this is a short-term project to really try to integrate the concept I've been trying to work on for several years. A way to really focus with a goal on something specific. And so, I'm working on this, well, this concept of time and using it wisely in the next

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

however many years I have on the planet. That seems to be kind of a motivator for me. To say, “Let me make sure I get a little help, to not squander that, as much as I possibly can.”

I'm also working on developing to see if it's a project that will allow me to use some of my clinical and administrative leadership skills, to build on some consulting that I'm already doing. And so, rather than just thinking about it and not acting on it, for me, it's a specific investment in getting that stuff lined out with some help, so that I can actually make it happen.

Kristi: And sometimes, actually, taking the next step does require time and investment, which you said so nicely. So, if somebody's listening and they're thinking, “Okay, sounds really interesting. I can relate everything that Shannon has said. I'm also interested in getting a one-on-one coach”, what would you say to that person, who's just considering this in terms of how they can make their decision going forward?

Shannon: Yeah, I think just spending some time... I don't think it's going to take longer than one conversation to figure out what understanding yourself better, through the lens of this coaching, is. You'll be able to know right away. You can say, okay, even if you're not even clear what it is you're trying to work on. Because I don't think I was very clear about what it was I needed help with. I just had an idea that doing all this passive learning and reading and thinking wasn't moving me forward as well as I thought I could.

Then I decided, I'm just going to try it and see if it helps. And a group coaching would be, I think, a great way to do it as well. Because I know that some of the things where I've listened to other people's coaching, it's really helpful, too. So, I just think that it's worth sitting down with an open mind and saying, what are some things that are possible?

And what are the underlying habits? That's where I think you have a real gift, is that there are underlying unseen habits about the way we move through the world, that I didn't quite recognize. That I had until I began to say, “Oh, yeah, I can change that.”

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

Interestingly, at least for me, in the several things that I've been able to improve, it was kind of an amazing shift. Okay, all right. I saw that I was doing that, I can stop it. So, it's possible to change. And I think that a lot of people think you can't change, but I think you really can.

Kristi: You absolutely can. Anybody listening who needs to hear that, the change that you want is 100% possible. And neither Shannon or I mean that in a toxic positivity cheerleadery way. We just mean, a very practical way. It's absolutely possible. Is there anything that we've missed, when it comes to your experience of coaching or things that you've taken away from it, as we sort of reach the end of things here?

Shannon: I would just say that I really appreciate the clarity and the concise and respectful attitude toward the time it takes to do the coaching that you bring. And I think that I also thought maybe it was going to take a lot more of my time than it has.

But I feel as though identifying the thinking that leads to the actions, then can lead to changing the habits. I know it's sounding overly simplistic with that, but it just hasn't taken that long for me to get it, to see how this is possible, and to make some changes. I'm sure I'll go backwards and step back into overdoing quite a few things, but at least now I'll be able to recognize, oh, wait a minute. That's me trying to overdo it on something.

Kristi: Yeah, the time savings that you can get is just amazing. And one of the ways that we talked about this is that you can change with just one thought, you can change everything. And that awareness that you brought up is the key because we aren't robots. We don't just download a program and update like our phones do, and then just change.

We have awareness. We have understanding. We change. Then we have quicker awareness next time. You just outlined that so beautifully.

I just want to tell you, thank you so much for your time. It's so fun to have you on and to have you share what your actual, real, ordinary experience with coaching is. Because I think part of the reason I do this podcast, is I

Ep #66: The Power of Coaching in Changing Your Habits with Shannon Fitzgerald

want for people to hear in themselves the habits that we all share, and some of the struggles that are there, with me sort of unpacking those and dismantling things. And to have you here to sort of put a face to that is really beautiful. So, thank you so much.

Shannon: Well, thank you for switching your career up to be able to do this. You have quite a gift and I think you should continue. That's my advice for you.

Kristi: I love it. I will definitely continue; I have no plans of stopping. And thank you for that. So, kind of you to say.

Are you ready to start your own coaching journey? If what you heard this week resonated, why wait? To get started with private coaching, where you get my expert guidance to understand why you think, feel, and act as you do. So, that you can stop all the anxiety, self-criticism, guilt over not doing enough, and stop living on default and start being truly intentional? You can learn more about how we can work together at HabitsOnPurpose.com/consult.

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.