

## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?



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**With Your Host**

**Kristi Angevine**

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## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

Welcome to Episode #96. I'm Kristi Angevine, and I'm here to help you understand why you do what you do, so you can be more intentional and live your life on purpose instead of on autopilot. Today is all about the phenomenon of using personal development tools and concepts against yourself.

This is a signature move of high achieving, highly empathetic perfectionist, and it's extremely common and often really hard to notice. So that you can start recognizing where you might be doing it, let's dive in.

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.

Hello, hello, everybody. As I record this, it is approaching the end of November, which is the start of lots of holidays. Which, for you, might mean a busy season with family stuff, food, tricky interpersonal dynamics, and lots of busyness.

When this is the case, there is no better time to be really aware of the way you handle stress, and what's most and what's least effective for you. So, in the vein of some of the least effective ways that you can navigate stress, is this common phenomenon I want to discuss with you today.

I see it in my clients, I do it myself, it used to be something I would do all the time without even noticing it, and it's the phenomenon of using personal development tools and concepts against yourself. Using coaching or thought-work ideas against yourself, instead of for yourself.

What I'm going to do today is help you see how you may be doing this without even realizing it, so you can shift this habit to one that is kinder and so much more effective. Now, using coaching tools, and using coaching concepts against yourself, is pretty sneaky. And thus, it's really easy to

## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

miss. Like I said, I used to do it all the time, and just had no clue I was even doing it.

The first step to changing any habit is to be aware that you're doing the thing in the first place. So, I'm going to give you an easy way to notice if you're doing this. And, I'm going to do this by giving you the five most common ways that this particular habit shows up.

Now, this idea of using coaching against yourself, or using any personal development tools, ideas, concepts against yourself, is one that I teach in depth to my private and my group clients, because there are so many subtleties, and all sorts of individual ways that it manifests. Each of us has a unique way that works for us to make a change to this phenomenon. There's never a one-size-fits-all approach.

But that aside, I do see some pretty straightforward themes. So, here are the five ways that I see this idea of using coaching against yourself play out. Almost universally, this will happen whenever you encounter a challenge or struggle or an uncomfortable emotion.

Number one, you think to yourself, "I know better." Or you think to yourself the sidekick thought, "I should have this figured out by now." When you know that you intellectually get something, and then you go on to tell yourself that that means that you should know better and you should have figured something out by now, that is a telltale sign that you're using coaching against yourself.

Sure, we can all have read about a concept or listened to a podcast or heard about something that would be good, but as I referenced in last week's episode, applying a concept in the wild is a totally different thing. It's the difference between reading a recipe or watching a cooking show, and actually trying out preparing the dish.

It's the difference between watching *Matt's Off Road Recovery* videos on YouTube, and actually winching your way up a trail. Knowing something intellectually doesn't mean that you're immune to the normal human

## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

experience, aka the messy, tricky, complicated, imperfect experience of everyday life.

So, the truth is, you can know a lot but it doesn't mean, and this is air quotes for you, it doesn't mean you "should" have it figured out by now. Telling yourself, or hearing your brain offer to you the refrain, "I know better. I should have figured this out by now," are classic examples of using coaching against yourself.

Now, number two, "It's just a thought. I know if I could just believe a different thought, I'd feel better." If you utter these to yourself and you feel yucky, you feel tight or heavy, you are taking a solid coaching tool and you are flogging yourself with it.

It doesn't matter if, indeed, you would actually feel differently if you saw the world through a different lens. It doesn't matter if that's not where you are right now. So, telling yourself 'it's just a thought' is the epitome of invalidating what's actually there for you.

Now, if you think, "Oh my goodness, this is just a thought," and you feel spacious and open, more settled, and a sense of clarity, that's totally different. It's when you say, 'it's just a thought' with a really cynical, sharp, snarky tone. That's when this is a problem.

Number three, "I'm a coach, so I should know better. I'm a therapist, this is what I do. I'm a doctor, I advise people about this all day. I'm a relationship expert, and I'm having a relationship difficulty. I'm a pediatrician, and I advise parents on parenting challenges all the time. And look at me having a challenge with my own kid."

When you tell yourself something like this, you're essentially saying that you shouldn't be having the experience you're having. You're also saying, "If I'm such an expert, I wouldn't be going through all this. I would have it all figured out. This would be preventable; this would be easier." Here's the truth, it doesn't matter what you are an expert in.

## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

It doesn't matter that your bread-and-butter is helping people increase their awareness. You are not immune to running into the very things that you help people with.

Number four, using personal development against yourself also shows up when you judge yourself for the presence of uncomfortable emotions, or you resist feelings because you think of them as pesky problems. You'll know you're doing this when you tend to rank emotions and judge some of them as worse than others.

So, say you feel super angry, and you think, "What is my problem? I should keep my cool. This is so unprofessional." Or you get annoyed, and then you feel really guilty because you get frustrated and annoyed with your kid or your partner. Or you feel overwhelmed, and you call that emotion indulgent and a sign of weakness that you just need to stop.

If you have an uncomfortable emotion that you find yourself resisting or judging, that is using a tool against yourself.

Finally, number five, you see other people's progress or epiphanies, and you are jealous, resentful, or you feel 'less than.' Underpinning this one, is the idea that other people use the tools and you did not. Other people are where you should be and you're not.

So, say you have a colleague who's people-pleasing tendencies in the past have completely shifted, they've basically dissolved. She is now filled with self-trust. She doesn't second guess. She's comfortable saying what's true and authentic for her, even if it may be unpopular. She doesn't seem riddled by self-doubt.

You see that and you think, "Oh my gosh, I will never get there. I'm clearly not doing it right. There's something wrong with me. There's something less than or problematic about me."

So, these are the five most common ways that shows up. You tell yourself, "I know better. I should have this figured out by now." You find yourself thinking, "It's just a thought. If I could think differently, I'd feel differently."

## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

You say something like, “I’m a doctor, so I should know better. I’m a therapist... I’m a coach... I’m a...” whatever, “I should have this all figured out.” You judge uncomfortable emotions or resist them. You see other people's progress or epiphanies, and you use that as a whip against yourself.

Using tools and ideas against yourself boils down to judgment, invalidation, and making yourself wrong. It’s characteristically extremely harsh, even if you don't appreciate it as harsh. We know this because it's not how you would approach a loved one.

Here's the thing, there's no upside to it. Like, if making yourself wrong and using a tool against yourself had an upside, and we could just sort of tolerate it and then ultimately leverage it for good, that would be a different story.

You know when you're exercising, and you really have to push to do something difficult, it's not easy and your legs are burning, and you have to dig really deep to keep going? More times than not, that kind of physical challenge has positive payoff: Improved strength, improved stamina, ultimately better speed, more fitness.

But in isolation, when you make yourself wrong, there is not this kind of benefit. What does it really do? What it really does, is it creates discouragement, defeat, guilt, and self-loathing.

So, what happens when you use a tool against yourself? When you don't like yourself, and then you feel a crushing weight of guilt? Well, when you're in this emotional state, you are ripe to compare yourself to others who seem to be doing better. You're more likely to take things personally.

You might get snippy or curt or lash out at people that you love. You might get really rigid and try to control minutiae. It might be so uncomfortable that you seek relief, and you might find it most easily in a drink, your phone, some food, and some online shopping. All of these things are usually more fodder for your inner critic to show up.

## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

It's a cycle that goes nowhere good. Yet, everything we do, we do for a good reason. Every habit you have is here for a good reason. They always make sense. So, how does using tools that are meant for good against yourself make sense? Well, most likely, at some point in time, it served some purpose. It was either protective, or it was adaptive. And, it worked well enough.

It may have started out innocently and then morphed into something that you're using against yourself. You don't necessarily need to know the exact origins of this tendency of using coaching against yourself, but my guess is if you reflect, you will see that it is not incongruent with old patterns.

But just because something makes sense, and it worked well enough in the past, doesn't mean that we necessarily need to keep doing it in the present or the future. So, the key to changing the phenomenon of using coaching and personal development tools and ideas and concepts against yourself is to first be aware you're doing it.

Once you're aware, you call it out. You name it. This gets back to what I teach with the 3 N's: To notice, name, and normalize. First, you need to Notice that you're actually doing this thing, by using something against yourself. Then, Name it for what it is. And Normalize it by remembering, it makes sense you're doing this. Once you use the 3 N's, you get to decide on purpose to stop doing it.

So, let's talk about what the alternative looks like. The alternative is acceptance. The alternative is kindly, thoughtfully, patiently meeting yourself exactly where you are, and bringing in curiosity and bringing in self-compassion.

Now, this isn't something that's always easy to do on the first try. I mean, ask me how I know. But ultimately, it feels so much better. Let me assure you, it's possible, for even the most perfectionistic, most self-critical of you who are listening.

Here's a way that I find really useful to think of any personal development ideas and coaching tools. I like to think of these ideas and tools as they are

## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

intended for a specific purpose. Just like household tools, or bike tools, or a specific equipment that you use in the O/R, or certain tools used to work on your car, or your lawnmower or your toilet.

Just like these tools are intended to do a certain job, coaching tools are intended for a certain job, with a benefit. As soon as you use a tool that is outside the scope of its natural purpose, it is a misuse. So, here's an example. Say you need to lower your bike seat. If you don't have a quick release, you may need a hex wrench to loosen it. And then, you may need a torque wrench to tighten it, so that you don't over tighten or under tighten it.

But if you take that same hex wrench, and you take that same torque wrench, and you try to use those to say, hammer a nail into a wall, or open a can of soup, it's not going to work as well as when you're using it for its intended purpose. These tools are no longer being used inside their scope.

So, if you take a concept like cognition drives emotions, thoughts create feelings, that is a tool to help you understand the lens through which you may see the world. It's a tool to help you see what that lens might be blinding you from seeing. It's a tool to help you understand where your emotions come from. And, it's a tool to help you see that you might be perpetuating a certain reality for yourself that is strongly connected to how you're thinking.

But as soon as you start using that idea, that thoughts create feelings, as a whip, and it sounds like 'what's my problem? I keep thinking this way. It's just a thought. I should be able to change this,' that's when that really positive beneficial tool morphs from a tool to a weapon. This is a misuse.

To recap, using coaching or therapy or personal development concepts and tools against yourself sounds like, "I know better. Intellectually, I know better. I should know better, I'm a coach, a therapist, a trainer, a department chair, I'm a leader. This shouldn't be my struggle; I should be further along."

It looks like judging or resisting emotions. It looks like comparison to other people's progress or breakthroughs, in a way that's unfavorable to your



## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

own. It's any way you turn a tool into a weapon. It is harsh, and it's not how you would treat a loved one. And, you know you're doing it based on how it feels when you do it, which usually feels really bad.

So, the solution is to notice, name, and normalize. And then, to be really intentional about only using tools for the purpose that they are intended for. Lastly, to decide on purpose to set down the whip and to practice meeting yourself where you are.

I hope this idea in this episode is very helpful for you as you start off your holiday season. As we wrap up 2023, I'm going to start letting you know details about how, if you're a women physician, you can join the next round of *Habits On Purpose* for Physicians small group coaching.

And how, if you'd like to start learning about personal coaching in my private coaching practice, you can learn. If you want to be the first to hear about these ideas and hear about enrollment for the small group coaching, just listen for the next one minute and you'll hear all the details.

Take care, and I'll talk to you next week.

If you enjoyed what you listened to this week, let me know. Find me on Facebook at *Habits On Purpose* Facebook group, and consider scrolling down before you listen to the next episode. Let me know what you thought of this podcast with a short review. Literally, a sentence or a phrase about the podcast, it helps more than you know.

It helps other people find the information here. And, your word of mouth endorsement is better than anything that I can do alone. I know your time is valuable, and I appreciate that it's no small thing to take a moment to do a review. So, thank you so much in advance, it means so much to me if you do it.

If you're listening, and you're thinking you would like help bridging the gap between consumption and application, that's what coaching can do for you. My coaching comes in two flavors: Private coaching, and an intimate small group coaching program, with CME, for women physicians.

## Ep #96: Are You Using Personal Development Against Yourself?

To learn more about private coaching, go to [HabitsOnPurpose.com/private](https://HabitsOnPurpose.com/private). Or to learn more about the Habits On Purpose for Physicians small group coaching program that's going to come up in early 2024, go to [HabitsOnPurpose.com/waitlist](https://HabitsOnPurpose.com/waitlist), to get on the waitlist and be the first to hear about when enrollment opens.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit [HabitsOnPurpose.com](https://HabitsOnPurpose.com). Tune in next week for another episode.