TRANSCRIPT OF EPISODE 23

“WHEN OTHER PEOPLE CAUSE OUR SUFFERING”

Hello, podcast universe! Welcome to Episode 23 of the 100% Awesome Podcast. I'm April Price and I'm so happy to be here with you.

Before we get started, I wanted to be sure to tell you that I reworked the way that I do my podcast pages on my website in order to be more helpful to you. I've added more show notes. I added a place where there'll be links to people or books or references that I make during the podcast so that you can be able to access those things. There's also a place where I put some questions and applications from the episode that will help you in your life.

And then I had a client who said it'd be really awesome if there was a transcript available. So I've made the transcript available on these recent episodes and going forward and you can just go on there you can read it or you can download a .pdf of it and read it later. So all of that is available to you in the show notes. There's a link there you just click that link it will take you to my webpage for the episode and all that information is there for you.

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And you're welcome. Right? I hope that will make your life a little better and enhance your experience with the podcast. And speaking of making your life a little better I think you should sign up for coaching. I know that many of you have never been coached but I want you to know that it can offer you incredible freedom and relief. Some of you think you can't change. Some of you think your circumstances are unsolvable. Some of you think that you're hopeless or broken or stuck. I only know this because I used to think the same thing and none of this is true. You can change anything you want. You are worth the effort. You can change how you feel about your life. You only have to change your thoughts and that change starts simply with awareness which is what we do in coaching. We just become aware of the way we're thinking and it is so powerful. I know it sounds like nothing at all but it is everything. And if you sign up I'll show you exactly what I mean.

Okay so today on the podcast I want to continue our discussion talking about other people's models and as I was putting this together I remembered this story about my daughter a few years ago. She was in Sunday school class and the teacher asked the class what are some of the challenges in your life. And my daughter raised her hand and she's like "Other people." And the teacher was like "What do you mean? Like peer pressure? Like friends? And my daughter said, "No just that other people exist—just that there are other people. This is really hard for me."

And I think so many of us can relate to this. Really like my life would be perfect if there were all these other people making it impossible. So this week on the podcast I want to do part two in talking about other people's models. Other people have thoughts which create feelings which fuel their actions and then they get results. And we call this their model. And last week we talked about what to do when other people's thoughts and feelings were causing them suffering and pain. This week I want to talk about when other people's models— their thoughts their feelings their actions and their results— cause us to suffer and bring us pain. In other words we're going to talk about when other people cause our suffering.

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Now to begin with I want to explain that the title itself is misleading because the truth is that other people can not cause our suffering. It feels like they can. It feels like they do. But remember other people cannot ever make us feel anything— even suffering. The only person who can ever make us feel anything is ourselves because every feeling we ever have is created with our own thoughts.

This is the law of the universe. No one else's thoughts or words or actions can create feelings that jump into our body. If that was true this would negate our agency. We wouldn't have a choice about the way we were feeling. But this isn't how it works. The only things that can create our feelings in our bodies is our own thoughts.

Now I know that you know that this is true but it never ever feels like this is true. I know this is true. I know this principle. But just this morning my son called me from early morning seminary to tell me that he couldn't start his car. His battery was dead and I was in the middle of a leg day at the gym and I did not want to leave the gym. And so I felt put out and it felt like my son was making me feel put out and I didn't want to feel put out, so I called my husband who was asleep and then I was mad. And it felt like I was mad because my husband was asleep and couldn't help me stop feeling put out. See?

It felt like all the other people in my life were making me feel all these negative emotions. In my world, it seemed like I got a phone call. Then I felt put out. I made a phone call. Then I felt mad. But in reality there was something critical between the circumstances between the phone calls and the feelings that I had—and that thing was my thoughts.

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I had a thought like "I don't want to leave the gym halfway through and I shouldn't have to. Boys who are old enough to drive are also old enough to be self-reliant"—or something like that...it was a lovely thought.

And then when I called my husband I had a thought like "It's not fair that he gets to sleep while I help all the people. We had a deal, right? I was supposed to take care of the newborns and he was supposed to take care of the teenagers." So that's a lot of thoughts and a lot of "shoulds" that I have for all the other people in my life. That's a lot of manuals and instructions on how other people should behave. They should be self-reliant. They should be awake to help me when I need it. They should be in charge of the teenagers. I did the newborns.

It felt like the people in my life were causing me suffering but it was always and only my thoughts that were causing me suffering. If I had never had the thought that David should be awake or if I had never had the thought that my son should be able to manage by himself then I wouldn't have felt any of those negative feelings. This is what we do as humans. We like to blame other people for the way that we are feeling.

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And whenever we blame someone else for how we feel we call this emotional childhood—meaning that we are suddenly dependent on someone else's actions someone else's behavior for our feelings just like a child. Like a child is dependent on their parents to be able to survive and have the things that they need, just as a child is dependent on their parent, when we make our emotions dependent on other people's behavior we are acting like an emotional child. And in that moment I was dependent on my son's and my husband's actions in order to feel the way I wanted to feel.

In other words if they could behave then I could be happy and if they didn't I was going to be put out and angry, right? I turned all of my emotions over to them and made it contingent on their behaviors. In contrast what we want to choose is emotional adulthood or I like to call it "emotional self-reliance." Emotional self-reliance is recognizing that I'm in charge of my emotions. I create my emotions and I am never dependent on other people for how I feel. The more and more we can choose to be emotionally self-reliant and take responsibility for our own feelings that we have created with our thoughts, the more control and power we will have over our own lives.

Now this is just a tiny example from one morning in one day. (I know you guys all wish you lived with me, right?) But these experiences happen to all of us hundreds of times a day as we choose our thoughts. We live with and around other people. We have thoughts about their models. We have thoughts about how they're thinking and feeling and acting and being and these thoughts create feelings inside of us. When we're acting in emotional childhood, we think the feelings we're having is because of their models. When we act as emotional adults we know that our feelings are because of our own thoughts about their models.

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Do you see the difference? Emotional childhoods says because other people act like this—then I have to feel this way and that leaves us completely powerless. Emotional Adulthood on the other hand says people get to act and then I get to think about it anyway I want and that gives me power over my own emotional life.

So if we take this even one step further emotional childhood says other people act in a way that makes me suffer. And there's nothing that I can do about it. Where emotional self-reliance says "When I think about the way other people act in this way I cause my own suffering and I can change that anytime I want."

Now I know what you're thinking. You're like, "How is it fair that I have to be responsible for all other people are acting?"But I want you to see what good news this is. It means that your suffering is not required. It means that you get to choose how you think about what other people are doing. And sometimes you might want to choose to suffer. I'm not saying that you don't. But it can be powerful to take responsibility for that choice and no longer be at the effect or be the victim of others and other people's behaviors.

And I know that some of you will think this is not fair. You'll say that I'm discounting your pain and you're letting people off the hook. You'll think that I'm saying it's your fault when you suffer. But it's because I'm not discounting your pain that I'm telling you this in the first place. I know you are in pain. I was in pain this morning. I know you are suffering but when we say it's because of someone else's actions then you're powerless to change your pain or get any relief from it. I know that you are in pain. I know that you are suffering and I want you to be able to do something about it. That something is recognizing that your thought is the only thing that can create pain for you. It's never our fault when other people choose to behave badly but if those bad behaviors create our suffering, create negative emotion, then we have no power to create the life we want. We will always be the effect of other people's bad behavior we will always be in pain. We will always be punishing ourselves for the behavior of others and that is what is not fair.

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And so this is not how God designed the system. He gave you agency to choose how you will think about everything that happens in your life how you will think about other people's behaviors and actions so that you don't have to be at the affect of other people's choices. You are only ever at the effect of your own choices.

I heard Rachel Hart doing some coaching one time and she said a statement that has stuck with me. She said "We overestimate how much other people can change and we underestimate how much we can change." And that really stuck with me because we are always waiting for other people to change in order to feel good, right? We think they should be able to change. They should be able to change faster. They should want to change and then we hold our emotions hostage until they do change. This is a painful way to live and it makes you waiting, always waiting for their change until you can feel better. And really we might wait forever.

But at the same time we underestimate how much we can change. Other people don't have to change in order for us to change our thoughts and that will in turn change our entire experience with them. You underestimate your ability to do this because you think that your emotions are dependent on someone else and they aren't. You only have to change your own thought to change everything else.

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So if you're ready to change how you feel about other people in your life, causing you suffering, you start by taking responsibility for your own thoughts and feelings and then just consistently recognize when you are giving emotional responsibility over to others and indulging in emotional childhood.

So I want to apply this by talking about three ideas that often keep us trapped in emotional childhood, that often keep us blaming someone else for how we're thinking and feeling and acting. When we believe these three things we turn our emotional lives over to others and allow their behaviors to dictate our feelings.

So the first idea is this we think we know better we think we know what is best and they, the other people in our lives, are doing it wrong. This thought would keep you in emotional childhood. When the people in our lives choose to live their lives differently than what we think is best, we get frustrated and worried and stressed and our brains are sure we are going to die or the other people in our life are gonna die. Either way somebody is going to die and that will be bad.

And so we resist the way that people are. We resist their behaviors and we want them to behave differently. We say things that sound so nice they sound like this: We just want them to believe the Gospel. I just want them to get good grades. I just want him to answer the phone when I call from the gym. We want them to go on a mission. We want them not to date or marry that person. We want them to be nice. And this list goes on forever we want other people to behave in a certain way because we believe we know better.

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The trouble is when we resist their actual behavior we are making things harder for us. Resistance is weight when I do resistance training I'm doing weight training I'm moving heavy things and pulling heavy things or I'm pushing against heavy things. And when we resist reality, when we want people to be different than they are and we think we know the better way, we make our lives heavy. We make our spirits heavy. We're weighed down with worry and fear and anxiety. We have to use tons of mental and emotional energy to resist the behavior of others which we have no control over. They always get to choose. That is their right and then we exhaust ourselves by pushing or resisting that choice.

Now to illustrate this I want to give you like a really light example from our lives. But the principles apply to any circumstances that you find yourself in, when you think you know better, when you think you know how other people should behave, and it applies no matter how big or how hard the issue is.

So a couple of years ago David needed to buy a new car and in Arizona if you buy an electric car you get this special blue license plate that allows you to drive in the carpool lane any time you want, even if you are the only person in the car. And David wanted one of these blue plates worse than he wanted anything in his whole life. That plate was like the holy grail to him and he was going to do anything to get one. So David spends a lot of time in his car. His job requires him to go to multiple hospitals every day and some of them are a fair distance from our house. Plus he has corporate meetings and he's always in the car after work. He has Bishop meetings and youth activities and so he does a lot of driving and so he thought this plate, this blue plate, would be the answer to all of his problems.

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And so when he went to buy his new car he just had one stipulation. It had to be eligible for this plate. Remember to get this license plate you had to have an electric car and this was before they were mass producing the Tesla and so most of the electric cars could only go about 40 miles on a charge. And I told David I'm like "That's ridiculous. That's not nearly enough miles. You won't even be able to get to work and home or like me to say Ethan's baseball games, right? You're going to run out of charge and it will be like we only have one car. We won't be able to rely on your car to be able to go anywhere."

And David didn't care. He only wanted that plate and so he decided to buy this car—he bought a Nissan Leaf and I told him "Please don't buy that car. That car is completely impractical. That's for people who don't drive a lot and they just stay in their neighborhood. That's for people who are the opposite of you." Right?

Well David bought the car and he brought home and he hooked it up and he plugged in the extension cord to the wall and he made his application for this new license plate. And in the meantime I was in total resistance to this car, right? I know better. I know what David needs and I know the kind of driver he is. I know our life. I don't want to be the owner of 1.5 cars—one that works and one that doesn't if you have to go anywhere far, right?

So two days later David calls me from the freeway. He ran out of electricity on the way home from work and could I come and get him? I was so steamed. Right? Because I knew this was going to happen. I told him this was going to happen. I went to pick him up. I could not even bring him a gallon of gas to get to the gas station because the car does not take gasoline. What good is a car that doesn't take gasoline, right?And I'm like there with him on the side of the road and I'm losing my mind because I knew better.

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Okay, so I want to break this story down for a minute. David is another person in my life and he makes a choice that I do not agree with. It doesn't make any sense. It doesn't fit our life. It's going to make my life harder. It's going to make his life harder. Now, do you see the parallels to the people in your life that are making much more painful decisions that you do not agree with?

You think it doesn't make sense. It doesn't fit the life you thought they were going to have. It's going to make your life harder. It's going to make their life harder. And this is what we think when we're in resistance to the decisions and behaviors of other people. But here's the thing. Other people get to choose. That is their right. That is the plan, in fact.

My resistance did not change David's mind. It just made me mad right? I could have said what I thought and then just loved him and let him choose. And the result would have been the same. But my experience would have been vastly different. That's what I mean. Your resistance is not going to change others it's not going to change their decisions of their behavior. It is only changing your experience. Your resistance to the choices of others doesn't protect them. It doesn't change their mind. It doesn't cause them to choose something different. It doesn't prevent anything bad from happening. Your resistance changes you. It makes you hard live with.It makes you miserable. Would you rather be right than feel good?

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So Byron Katie uses a technique called the turnaround. And whenever we think that other people in our lives are causing us to feel bad we can turn the situation around and see what we're doing and what we're doing is exactly what we wish others would not. So in the case of the car I thought David was making a bad decision. But if I turned that around I can see how I'm doing exactly what I wish David would not. If I turn it around I see that I'm making the bad decision to be angry and frustrated.

Another way to look at is I thought David was making our family's life harder. But if I turn that around on myself I can see how I am doing exactly what I wish David would not. In what ways was I making my family's life harder? I was angry at David. I was creating contention and defensiveness in my family. I was making my life harder. I had to feel the terrible negative feelings about David which was so much harder than feeling love. So when I thought he's making my life harder, in reality, if I really flipped it around, and look at my own behavior I can see that in fact I'm making my family's life harder by being in resistance to him and thinking that I know better.

When you think someone else is doing something hurtful you can turn it around and see how you might be doing the same things that you wish they were not. For example if you think your son or daughter is throwing everything you taught them about the gospel away and you're in resistance to them, how are you throwing everything you know about the gospel away in the way that you treat them? How are you refusing to love? How are you turning your back on what Christ taught you about love and compassion and understanding? In what way are you throwing your relationship away by refusing to love them as they are or by thinking that you know best?

That thought would keep you in emotional childhood because it makes it so other people have to do what you say in order for you to feel good. They have to agree with you and act accordingly in order to feel good and people just aren't good at doing that.

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Okay, the second thought we have about other people's behaviors that keeps us emotionally dependent on them is that we think their behavior is about us and our lovability or even our worthiness. Let me just give you a couple of examples that I see in myself and in my clients.

So when our husband looks at pornography we make it mean that we must be lacking or he doesn't love us or he doesn't value the relationship. Why? Because there's something wrong with us. When our daughter is and kind of others and we make it mean that we're failing or we did a bad job as a mother. Why? Because there's something wrong with us. When our mom doesn't agree with our parenting choices we make it mean that she thinks we're doing a bad job. Why? Because there's something wrong with us. When our child misses curfew or doesn't get good grades or ignores our instructions. We make it mean that they don't respect us. Why? Because there's something wrong with us. Do you see? Other people are free to choose to act how they want and then we're free to think it means something about us—that there's something wrong with us.

And in reality it has nothing to do with us. The actions of every other person are fueled by their feelings which are fueled by their thoughts —their thoughts. And yes, sometimes those thoughts are about us but they are still just their thoughts, their choice, and they are 100% optional for them. They are not the truth about us. They don't mean anything about us. But our human brains which are convinced that there's something wrong with us likes to make about us and how we're feeling or how we're being mistreated or how we're unworthy or how we're bad or how we're being maligned. The more you can stay out of other people's models and completely allow them to think and feel whatever they want the more peace you can have.

So how do we do this? How do we recognize that other people have their own thoughts and feelings and it's not about us? I think one question that can be really helpful is the question: So what?

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Let me explain. So I talked to a client today who said, "They think I was wrong." And I said "So what?" And she said, "Well they're questioning my loyalty and my love of my integrity." And I said, "So what?" Because really, for each of us, so what? Because they think you were wrong doesn't mean you were wrong. It can be so helpful to escape the emotional childhood of thinking that someone else's actions are about you by asking the question: So what? And then the follow up question is: Why is this painful to me? In other words, "What am I making it mean? Why do I care? Why is this painful to me?

So if my daughter is mean to someone else, why is that painful to me? It's painful because I make it mean that I didn't teach her and then I'm a bad mom and that I failed somewhere. I'm making it means something about me that isn't true. I did teach her and now she's choosing something out. It's not about me.

If we go back to the car example, the reason that it was so painful that David made the decision to buy a Nissan Leaf was that I made it mean: "He never listens to me. He doesn't care about my opinion." I made it mean there was something fundamentally wrong with our marriage because I have a husband who doesn't value my opinion and my incredible insight. And that was absolutely unnecessary suffering. It didn't have anything to do with me. His thought that he wanted a blue plate drove his entire model. It had nothing to do with me. When you can ask, "Why is this painful?" it allows you to find the painful thought behind what you're making someone else's actions and words mean. Then you can question and release it.

So I want to give you one more little example of how this works. So my daughter is in China right now and she said that everywhere she goes people are always like looking at her and staring at her. She's a white girl with blond hair and she's like people just openly stare at her on the street. Anyway she said that like after they get done staring then they talk to each other and she's like "I don't know what they're saying because they're speaking in Chinese."

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Now they could be saying all kinds of things all kinds of horrible, hurtful things. But because my daughter can't understand it she doesn't make it mean anything about her. And in the same way we could do the same thing with people in our lives right? And I just think this is such a powerful example like we give those words meaning and we make it mean something about us. But in the same way that if they were speaking in a different language that we didn't understand, it still wouldn't mean anything about us. It's just their thought and their words and it doesn't mean anything about us.

We only feel bad because of the meaning we give it. If we don't understand it, we don't give it any meaning. Do you see? It's not the words themselves that create hurt. It's the meaning. Because when they're speaking the words in Chinese, there's no meaning behind it for my daughter. So it's never the words people are saying, it's never the actions people are doing, it's the meaning we give it that causes the pain.

Okay, the last thought I want to talk to you about that keeps you blaming others for your feelings is this idea that "it isn't right or it shouldn't be this way." It's the idea that something has gone wrong and it's not fair. And when we think the way that other people are treating us isn't right or isn't fair. then we want to blame them for how we feel. We want justice. We want someone to make it right. And then we have to hold on to our story and her and our negative feelings until it can be made right. Otherwise our brains think that other person will just get away with treating me however they want.

The trouble is they are allowed to treat you however they want. They are getting away with it. The problem is that when you are hurting or resentful or feeling mistreated you make yourself feel bad. You create negative emotion for yourself to deal with. You pay for it. They get away with it but you don't. They treat you bad. And to get justice, you treat you bad; they hurt you and to make it right, you continue to hurt you by feeling terrible.

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So I'm going to give you a couple examples of this of how we think about things. We say things like: that's not what families should do, or mother shouldn't say that, or he has no right to treat me that way. All of these thoughts are asserting that what someone else is doing isn't right and they shouldn't be doing it. But here's the trouble: they are and you're in resistance to what is. You're making it heavy and unwieldy and hard by resisting it.

That's not what a family does? Apparently it is. Now what do you want to do? Mothers shouldn't say that? Mothers do. A mother did. Now what do you want to do? He has no right to treat me that way. He actually has every right to treat you how he chooses. Now what do you want to do? No one can make you do anything.

Now I know you think this is crazy and heartless and like April, people just get to do whatever they want? But I'm trying to show you where your agency is. When you think you have to feel bad until these things are made right, then you always have to feel bad. And that's only bad for you. Feeling bad is optional. Thinking that it should be different or that isn't right doesn't make you feel good.

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It makes you feel like a victim. When you recognize that people get to act how they want and then you get to feel how ever you want regardless, that is where the power is. So what does that look like? It looks like they are mad but I am not. She is mean but I am not. He is rude, but I don't have to be. It always lets you decide how you want to feel how you want to behave who you want to be. I don't get to ever decide what is right or what should be or how other people should act. What I get to decide is what feels right for me and how I should act. That's it.

If we go back to the story of the very beginning, remember I was upset and suffering in emotional childhood because I thought: "This isn't right. If he can drive he should know how to jump a dead battery. If I took care of the newborns, David should take care of the teenagers. It's not right that he's asleep when I've already given up years of sleep." It doesn't even make sense. But in the moment it feels so righteous it just feels so justified. And then I was hot and angry and upset for an hour simply because this isn't right.

What's not right about that? What's not right is that I am suffering and I'm creating my own suffering. And even if it's not right, who is suffering? I like to ask myself and my clients "What if it's exactly as it should be? What if families are supposed to treat each other like that? What if mothers are supposed to say that? What if he can treat you any way he wants? Because they do and they are. You being wrong to yourself will not make it right. You mistreating you, by feeling all kinds of negative emotions, doesn't exact justice. It just hurts you. And listen, I hear you. Other people are doing it wrong and it isn't fair, but punishing yourself is not changing them. It's changing you.

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Remember the things that can help you as you try to take your own power back and take your own responsibility for your emotional life. Remember to try the turnaround— in what way am I doing exactly what I wish the other person would not do? Ask yourself "What am I making this mean? So what? Why is this painful?" And instead of noticing how it's not fair the way other people are treating you, start to notice how it's not fair how you are treating you. You get to react in any way you want. Treat yourself fairly. Don't punish yourself for the bad behavior of other people.

When you can own that you are creating every feeling you have by how you choose to think about what other people do, then you get the experience that you want to have. Because no matter what other people choose, you get to choose to and feel and act the way you want. And that my friends is 100% awesome. I love you for listening and I'll see you next week.