

TRANSCRIPT OF EPISODE 33 “CREATING NEW THOUGHT HABITS”

Hello, podcast universe! Welcome to Episode 33 of the 100% Awesome Podcast. Thank you for being out there, listening, sharing, and subscribing to the podcast. It means so much to me!

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So Christmas is less than a week away. Are you ready? Would it make you feel better to know that here at the Price home we are not? not? My college kids are finishing their finals and headed home today and tomorrow. And I'm not sure what happened to all my well-laid plans to have everything done so that I could just be present with them and enjoy the holiday, but I admit, we are scrambling now. As Ethan says, "Let's go." Right? Right? It's on. But either way, they are coming home. And this weekend we're going to go to the new Star Wars film and hopefully both the saga and our Christmas will have a happy ending.

I wanted to give you one quick reminder that if you want to win one of the mini coaching packages that include four 45-minute one-on-one coaching sessions with me, you need to go to my website aprilpricecoaching.com and sign up to get my weekly email or you can just text the word "awesome" to 6 6 8 6 6. It is such an awesome opportunity and it's such an awesome weekly email. So what can I say? I'm a giver.

Alright, today on the podcast I want to talk to you about the idea of thought habits. So as you know, a habit is a pattern that we develop as we do something over and over again. And a thought habit is just a thought that we have thought over and over again. It's a well-rehearsed neural pathway that our brain is really practiced at thinking and it's practiced it so much that it's almost become an automatic thought.

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For example my brain can drive me to the gym without me even thinking about it, right? Going to the gym is a habit for me. I do it six days a week and once upon a time my brain had to think about how to get there, where to turn, where to slow down, what street it was on. But those neural pathways have been traveled so many times now it's just a habit. I just get up bleary-eyed and put my shoes on and the car pretty much drives itself to the gym. I don't have to think about it.

So the reason that I was thinking about habits is because, as you know, it is December. And for as long as I can remember I have thought that December is hard, right? So you have your regular life that you're just barely managing and then you add all this celebration and hoopla to it. And you add all these parties and decorations and gifts and service and recitals and concerts and traditions and baking and cards and suddenly it feels like almost unmanageable right? It feels so heavy to me.

And that is because of what is happening in my brain. Because all of these celebrations also require an inordinate amount of work and energy and time and money and planning and cleaning up—on top of regular life. Did I mention that?

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So do you see? see? The story that I have told for many years is that December is hard. And I have this old complaint that I would give to David about how Christ came to make our lives easier and how Christ came to ease my burdens, and then we humans have just gone and made our lives so much harder with so

many more burdens to celebrate his birth. And I would say to David like, "This can't be what he intended when he was born."

So anyway after last Christmas I told David like "I'm done. I am never doing that again. It's just too much." I told him that next year—which is this year now—that we should go on a trip because I am not going to buy one more gift, right, and not do all the presents and the wrapping and the stuff, and all that part at least would be simplified. And so that's what we did this year. We didn't buy any presents. We're going on a trip instead.

And David did all the planning for it. I have no idea where we're staying. I don't know when the plane leaves. I don't know a single detail about what will happen when we get there. My plan is just to pack my bag when David says it's time to pack it.

Theoretically, this should have greatly simplified my December and allowed me to find some peace and joy in the season. And yet I find myself still feeling overburdened and thinking that there's too much to do. And that December is hard. Now part of this is because the phrase "December is hard" is just a thought.

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It's just the thought that my brain made up and so when we changed the circumstance of December by planning a trip instead of buying and wrapping presents, you would think that that would change how you would feel. But it didn't—because I was still thinking the same thoughts. It's only ever our thoughts that create our feelings and not the circumstances. And so I still have the thought that December is hard. And so I still feel overburdened even though technically I have less to do.

So as I have thought about this and wondered why I still feel terrible about December it occurred to me that thinking December is hard has just become a habit for me, right? I have a well-practiced thought habit. I thought "December is hard" a lot, for many years, and so I have believed it. I have practiced thinking it and I'm very good at thinking it. And I've gathered all this evidence for it, right? right? Filing cabinets full of evidence in my brain that prove the thought correct: "December is hard."

And because this thought is a habit and I haven't taken time to question it I haven't even considered if it's true or if it's serving me to think it. And this is what happens with our thoughts. When we think a thought again and again our brain gets better and better at thinking it. You might have heard this phrase "neurons that fire together wire together." Meaning that, as we think certain thoughts, those signals get passed along different neurons in our brain and the more we repeatedly think the same thoughts the faster that neural circuit gets.

And here's why. So I want you to imagine for a minute that your brain's neurons are like the branches on a bush or the branches on a tree. And when you think of thought, neurotransmitters have to travel from one branch to another in order to send their signals. So when you think a thought over and over certain branches get used more than others. Right? When I think "December is hard," the branches for "December is hard" in my brain light up. So now imagine this bush with all these branches inside of it.

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And so to be efficient, the brain then has special cells called microglial cells which go through and prune or remove all the unused synaptic connections, so that the signal can travel faster through the bush.

So the question is like how do the microglial cells know which connections to prune? So researchers have just started to kind of like unravel this. But what they know is that the synaptic connections that get used less right, they get thought less, they get marked by a protein. And then when the microglial cells come by and they detect that protein they bond to the protein and destroy or prune the synapse. And so this is how your brain makes physical space for more thoughts and stronger connections.

And so I want you to imagine a long time ago I stopped using the synapses that said, "December was fun and exciting" and my brain's microglial cells, seeing that I never used the thought, "December is fun" or "I love December" just pruned those synapses. And so now my brain is super efficient at thinking "December is hard" right? It's almost automatic.

I want you to see that we create thought habits because our brain likes to be efficient and to be able to send signals quickly, so it prunes away the neurons that think the thoughts that we don't think very often.

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So I want to give you a couple examples of this. The other day I was on a video call with some of my colleagues that I went through coach training with. And it has been a couple of months since we have seen each other and we were catching up and ask each other how everything was going, and how each other's businesses were coming along, and what we were going through as we learned the ropes of marketing and entrepreneurship. And I, of course, was talking about how much negative emotion I have as I put myself out of my comfort zone and build my little business.

And one of my colleagues said, "I just refuse for it to be hard." She said like, "This work brought so much relief to my life that it would be an injustice to use it against myself now and cause myself pain just because I'm building a business. So I just refuse to beat myself up about something that is such a blessing in my life."

And I was just kind of stunned for a minute. And I realized that thinking "building my coaching business is hard" has just become a bad thought habit. Thinking that it's scarier than anything I've ever done is just a bad habit. And the more I think it, the more my microglial cells are pruning away all the connections that think "this could be fun," that think "this could be an adventure," that think like "this is the most challenging thing I've ever done and I'm so privileged to be able to do it."

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Do you see? see? We get to think about our lives, our Decembers, our businesses, whatever it is, any way we want. But so often, we only think what we've practiced thinking. We just keep thinking what we've practiced, and our microglial cells go through and prune away everything else and so we think the automatic habit without even questioning them.

Even as simple as something like the question "How was your day??" So I've noticed this because since my daughter Olivia has been home from China she asks me this almost every day, at dinner right? And it always takes me by surprise because I'm just not used to answering the question. But nearly every day she says to me, "Hey Mom, how was your day??" And she's like so expectant. Right? Like ready to hear how awesome it was and almost automatically I find my brain saying, "Terrible."

And what I find is that my brain has to work really, really hard at finding evidence to the contrary because the thought that it was terrible is so practiced and so habitual my brain doesn't notice all the good and positive and wonderful things in the day. "I have running water. My day was amazing. You are here and

not in jail in China. My day was amazing. I got to coach five people and show them that there is a way out of suffering. My day was amazing.”

These are not the default thoughts of my brain. My default thought is “Terrible.”

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Okay, so now I want to give you a little good news. What I want you to know is that whatever thoughts habits you have that aren't serving you, right— maybe they're about you, or your worth, or your body, your abilities, or your capacity, or the contribution you're making; maybe they're about your life, or your relationships, or your money, your job, even your house, right—we have these thought habits but whatever those thought habits are, if those thoughts make you feel terrible and don't drive your best action, you can change them. You can change them.

The brain is amazing, right? It has this characteristic called “neuroplasticity” meaning that nothing is set in stone. Neurons that have been pruned back or trimmed away can be reconnected and re-fired and a new neural pathway can always be created.

So how do you know when you have a thought habit that isn't serving you? So you can tell that it's not serving you by the results you're getting in your life. For example, when I think “December is hard” I feel overwhelmed and burden and stressed and then I act from those emotions, right? I write the cards, but I don't enjoy it. I serve the people at church and I resent it the whole time I complain and yell and overeat and whine at my husband. I notice how much harder my life is. I notice how no one is helping me. I build a case against the early Christians for thinking up the holiday in the first place right. And none of these actions give me the result I want. None of these things that I do bring me closer to the people that I love or the God I worship.

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This is a thought habit that is not serving me and I want to change it.

Okay, so how do we do this? The first step as always is awareness. You have to look and see what is your current thought creating for you before we can create a new habit. We have to understand what our current thought habit is producing in terms of our feelings our actions and our results.

So you just need to identify an area of your life you feel bad about it. I feel bad about December and I hate how I feel in December. But my current thought, and not the fact that is December, is creating that feeling for me. My current thought and nothing else creates the feeling of overwhelm for me.

So what about you? What do you hate feeling right now? Whatever it is, your current thought about it and nothing else, is creating that feeling for you.

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So just notice that your thought is creating a feeling that you don't like, and the thought is just a habit. It's not true. Every thought is optional but sometimes when we have a thought habit we think we have to think the thought. It just is the reality. So I like to use a question to show myself that it's never necessary to keep thinking any thought.

So one that I really like is: What if you couldn't think that? What if that thought was totally unavailable to you? Then what would you think? Right? So if I couldn't think December was hard, then what would I think? How would it change things for me if that thought was completely unavailable?

So I have a client recently who told me, "I'm just mediocre. Like I'm okay, but I'm not great." He said it like it was true. He was just telling me how it was, right? He was just giving me the facts. I have brown hair and blue eyes and I'm just mediocre. And this thought, this thought habit, makes him feel defeated and heavy. And feeling heavy, he doesn't move forward towards his goals. He doesn't work on the projects that he has. This thought "I'm just mediocre" is just a thought habit. It's a thought that he's thought repeatedly over and over again until it is one of the most practiced thoughts in his brain. So I asked him, "What if you couldn't think that thought? Then what would you do?" And he said, "Well then I'd just get to work."

Exactly.

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So most of us are just living at the effect of old thought habits. We just keep thinking the same way we've always thought. And then living our lives with the same actions we've always taken. So the first step is awareness. Your feeling is created by a thought you keep thinking. So ask yourself, "What if I couldn't think this thought? Then what would I do?" Next, you have to create a new habit in its place. You have to reprogram your neural pathways. The brain doesn't like a vacuum and if it doesn't have something else to think it's going to go back to that old habit.

So you have to have a thought that can replace the old thought habit. And then you'll need to practice that new thought again and again and again.

So in March David and I took a trip to Grand Cayman and on this island everyone drives on the opposite side of the road as we do. And so David was driving, and his brain has a thought habit about driving on the right side of the road, and it does so automatically almost without thinking. He's been doing it for over 30 years, right? And so there are some strong neural pathways and some serious thought habits about driving on the right side of the road.

So as we're on this island he had to like concentrate when he was driving, right? He had to purposely think about which side of the road he was on. He had to be deliberate on every turn and make sure that he was turning into the correct lane.

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He had to think about it every time we got on the road and he had to think about it the whole time he was driving. And in fact, even the steering wheel was on the other side of the car, right? And so on our cars in the U.S., the turn signal control is on the left side of the steering wheel. Well, on the island, the turn signal is on the right side of the steering wheel. So every time David wanted to turn he would hit the signal on the left side of the steering wheel and the windshield wipers would go off, right? Every single time. He'd go to turn and then there went the windshield wipers and it drove me crazy, right?

He just kept hitting that turning signal on the windshield wipers would go up and then he'd remember, "Oh yeah, that's on the right side." But what was happening is that he just had a very deep thought habit about the signal on the left.

And so we were there on Grand Cayman for four or five days. And like on the last day he turned out of the driveway to go back towards the airport and he used the signal on the right side of the steering wheel for the first time. There were no windshield wipers. It took four days, but his brain finally created another neural pathway and hit the signal on the right. Right in time for us to go home. But I just tell you that story because it is the same for you and your thought habits.

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At first your brain will almost automatically go to the habitual, practiced thought. But when you see the thought come up like “December's are hard” you have to practice a new thought instead on purpose and just keep redirecting your brain until your brain learns the new pattern. Until it learns that this signal is on the right.

This is exactly what I did when I changed the thought “I'm bad with money” to “We live a life of so much abundance.” Every time “I'm bad with money” came up I just redirected it to “We live a life of so much abundance” until it's automatic. And this is exactly what I did when I changed my thought that “My body has limitations” to “My body is amazing.”

So whenever the old thought comes up and it will, because it's a well-worn pattern on your neural map, you just have to redirect it to what you want to think instead, until it starts to prune the old pattern away and think the new thought almost automatically.

So finally, the last thing I want to offer you, is the idea of a circumstance-resistant thought. And what I mean by this is that ultimately you want to create habits that serve you and help you no matter what happens in your life, no matter what the circumstances are.

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And the idea behind this is to ask yourself, “what do I want to believe about my life?” How do you want to think about your life? Because you get to decide. You get to decide what you think about December; you get to decide what you think about your body, and your money, and any area of your life. You get to decide that you're right on track or that everything's a disaster. And the choice you make, the thought you choose about your life, makes a difference.

So the other day I was listening to Russell Brunson and he was talking about how four or five years ago he stopped saying that he was fine. He said he didn't want to think about his life that it was fine that it was just okay or that it was just good or fine. So when people asked him how he was doing he started saying “I'm amazing” or “I'm awesome.” And he started to give his kids to say it too. And he decided that his life was amazing. It was so much better than fine. And so he decided to think about it on purpose like that.

Now you might think of course that Russell Bronson's life is amazing and it's easy for him to think that. But what I want to show you is that he had the thought first. He thought his life was amazing when he has a human brain just like yours that could notice all the negative and all the stuff that was just okay. He thought his life was amazing and the more he thought it the more he believed it and created that thought habit. And then the more he sees amazing around him all the time.

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So what do you want to believe about your life? Do you want to believe that the universe is always working in your favor? Do you want to believe that nothing has gone wrong and this is exactly how it should be? Do you want to believe this is fun? Do you want to believe you are lucky?

So the other day I was watching a training session where Brooke Castillo was teaching some of her coaches and she had everyone come up with the thought that they wanted to think about their life. And so there were all these different thoughts. Some of them were like “This is going to be fun” or “I’ve got this” or “This is where I shine.” Somebody said, “This is happening for me” and somebody said like “Love is always an option” right?

So they had all these thoughts that they wanted to think about their life. And then she said, “Okay, what if you could only think that sentence from now on? No matter what happened you could only think that sentence or a version of it no matter what? No matter what the circumstances were, you could only think this thought.

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And then she played this game with them where she gave them all these circumstances and they had to test their thought, right?

C = So like you walk into a huge long line at the DMV.

T = This is going to be fun. This is happening for me. Love is always an option right.

Like you can just apply whatever thought you have and then it's going to change your experience in that long line at the DMV.

She had one called Cancer Diagnosis. Somebody thought was “This is where I shine.” And then somebody still had “This is going to be fun.” And she asked them like how could it be fun? And she said, I admit that all of it might not be fun but thinking it's going to be or that there are parts that could be will put your brain to work finding the fun—it will change the experience and you'll see it from fun. And it will change your experience with cancer.

She had one that said Divorce. Somebody had a sign that said, “This is happening for me.” Somebody else had one that said, “Love is always an option.” Somebody else said “I've got this.”

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So however you decide to think about your life, no matter what the circumstances, these thoughts will change your experience in the world. They'll change your experience with the circumstance. Like it's kind of mind bending, right? That we could have a circumstance-resistant thought and that thought would change our experience no matter what happened.

So most of us haven't really thought about this. We haven't thought about how we want to think about our lives. We just go through thinking on default and our brain's habits are always to go to some version of “we're going to die.”

But what I want you to remember is that we only experience the world by how we feel. We are either experiencing the world as a sensation or as an emotion. That is the only way we experience the world—through our sensations or our emotions, how we feel about it. And how we feel is always created by our thoughts. So really, your whole life and how you experience is decided by how you choose to think about it. It's not what happens. It's how we think about what happens that determines our entire experience in life.

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So we have to decide how we want to experience it rather than just going on default, thinking by habit. When you decide to think about your life on purpose, to choose how you will experience anything, any circumstance, it will change the life experience you are having.

So for me I have decided to think that my life is 100% awesome—no matter what. It's 100% awesome because it's all happening for me. Even the hard parts are necessary parts of my human experience and I get to feel all the emotions, right? All the good and all the bad, and it's 100% awesome. I'm lucky to have the chance to have that experience as a human.

Now, as you know I'm not perfect at this, right? But this month has been such a good reminder for me that I need to choose that thought on purpose. I'm only experiencing my December right now because of how I'm thinking about it. I could be having a completely different experience, right? Yeah I've heard of people who think this is the most wonderful time of the year. There are even songs about it. Those people are having different thoughts and those thoughts are just as available to me as they are to them.

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So clearly I need to apply a circumstance resistant thought to my feelings about December. This is 100% awesome; in my business it's 100% awesome. How was your day? 100% awesome. It would totally change the experience I'm having.

And the power of this for you and for me is that it takes so much of the unnecessary pain out of the way we are experiencing our life. So I just encourage you to do this. Think about how you want to experience your life. What do you want to believe about your life? Just pick one sentence, one sentence that you want to believe about your life and make it your circumstance-resistant thought.

No matter what happens, this is your go-to thought. You can pull it out of your pocket and use it every time you need to feel immediately better and completely change how you are experiencing your life. As you think this thought again and again and again and redirect to it, it can become a powerful, positive thought habit for you.

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So a few weeks ago, after my son destroyed the car from a flat tire, I could have thought how hard this was right? I used to have this old thought habit and it comes up now and again that “The fall is winning,” right? “You can't fight the fall. Stuff breaks. Everything goes to chaos. Everything is hard.” And so when my son had this accident, that thought came up for me again. It was an old thought I have: “The fall is winning” and just for a moment I fell into that old thought habit.

But then I remembered that the fall happened for me and I chose to think, “This is 100% awesome. He's learning and I'm learning and it's all 100% awesome. I'm learning that none of this matters and what really counts is that he can count on me and my love.

And when I took the car into the shop the guy who was helping me was like so distraught for us, right? He's adding up the damage and he just keeps shaking his head. He's getting more and more upset as the bill climbs and he just keeps saying like, “Oh this is just too bad. It's just too bad. Like this shouldn't have happened and it's just too bad,” right? But I kept thinking, “No, this is 100% awesome. I have a son who made a mistake and I have the money to fix it and nothing has gone permanently wrong. There's always a way to fix it.

And when my son makes mistakes that money can't fix, I will remember the same is true. Nothing is ever permanently wrong. The fall doesn't win in the end and that is 100% awesome.

Do you see how my thought creates my experience? It will be the same for you. What do you want to think about your life? What habit do you want to create that will apply in every circumstance you find yourself in?

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Okay, that's what I have for you today. Remember that your life experience is solely because of how you think about it. And mostly we just fall into old thought habits. Life is hard. I never get ahead. I'm failing. I'm not enough. These are just thought habits. And none of them are true. They're just thoughts we've practiced again and again and we're really good at thinking them. But they are optional and none of them are required. You get to think about your life any way you want and the thought you choose will determine your experience in the world no matter what your circumstances are...and that, my friends, is 100% awesome. I love you for listening! Have an amazing December and I'll see you next week!