

Ep #04: Control Enthusiasm



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With Your Host

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Hey, this is Melissa Parsons, and you are listening to the *Your Favorite You Podcast*. I'm a certified life coach with an advanced certification in deep dive coaching. The purpose of this podcast is to help brilliant women like you with beautiful brains create the life you've been dreaming of with intention.

My goal is to help you find your favorite version of you by teaching you how to treat yourself as your own best friend. If this sounds incredible to you and you want practical tips, I'm changing up how you treat yourself, then you're in the right place. Just so you know, I'm a huge fan of using all of the words available to me in the English language. So please proceed with caution. If young ears are around.

Oh hi. Welcome back to *Your Favorite You*. Today I'm going to be waxing poetic about a topic that will likely be something that I work on improving in myself. Until the end of time, may I get a drum roll, please? Just kidding. I'm all alone in my office right now. The topic for today is Control Enthusiasm.

Back in the day when I was way more self-critical than I am now, I would jokingly, but not jokingly, call myself a control freak. As I've gained compassion for myself and wisdom about why I was so fixated on controlling everything in my life. I came up with the term "control enthusiasm." Come to think of it now, it may have been suggested by my coach, Maggie, when I was calling myself a control freak.

This is another example of the beauty of having a coach. Your coach holds you in the highest regard possible at all times, even when you're down on yourself. If you already have a coach and you don't find this to be the case, may I suggest you get a new coach. Okay. Enough about that. I had about 45 years of being a control enthusiast, so I'm really proud of the work that I've done in this realm in my life.

It turns out that this goes hand in hand with my being a perfectionist. If I can make sure that everyone else in my life is doing everything perfectly, it will help me to maintain the facade of myself and my life being perfect. My favorite version of me now recognizes what I have control over in my life.

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I used to think that in order for me to be happy, I had to control everyone else I cared about and make it so that they were happy too, or at least pretending to be happy for my sake. Or I tried to help them avoid pitfalls that I could see before they could see them. And then I would get so upset when they wouldn't listen.

I would get indignant when things turned out the way that I predicted they would turn out. And you know, some of my favorite words just string together, used to be I told you so, but it turns out that saying, I told you so, doesn't taste so good in my mouth anymore. I now firmly believe a couple things.

The first is that what happens to me in my life is always happening for me instead of to me. And so, it stands to reason that if I believe that about myself, I can also believe that about other people, whatever happens to them is for them. The other thing I firmly believe is that I couldn't possibly know what's best for anyone.

I'm still working on figuring out what's best for me, so who am I to say what's best for anyone else? I think the biggest place that I struggled with this is of course in my most intimate relationship with my husband, with my thinking that if I could just get him to do what I wanted him to do, that we would both be happy and not recognizing, you know, that he's kind of in charge of his own happiness.

And of course, I can contribute to his happy, I can contribute to his sad, I can contribute to his frustrated, whichever emotion, but I certainly am not in control of it. I kind of need to let go of that control it. This has really helped me in our relationship. Now, if he were here, he would say, we're still working on this.

And yes, it is a work in progress. Remember, 45 years of doing it one way versus four years of trying it this new way, I need to give myself lots of grace. And I often find myself again thinking that I know best, but the good news is now I recognize it so much quicker. I course correct. I ask for a do over now for that type of thing as soon as I see it, instead of letting it linger.

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And then I think the other thing that happens for us as parents is that we're sold a bill of goods. The bill that we're sold goes something like, it's our job to make sure that our kids are happy, to make sure that they're productive members of society to make sure that, you know, they're living their best lives or something like that.

I think a lot of us think that if we get out in front of them and smooth the path for them and they follow behind us and do exactly as we say that we can reach that goal of them being happy and productive and contributing, but that my friends is not possible and so many of us spend so much time trying to reach this impossible goal.

It simply is not possible. And also, even if I could do it, I wouldn't, knowing what I know now that you know what makes us strong and what makes us resilient and what makes us ultimately successful is not having a smooth path and success after success. It's through some of the struggles and making mistakes and having values big and small, make them feel powerful and actually empower them and make them strong and build resilience.

One of the ways I saw this play out as a mom was when my oldest son didn't make this high school soccer team his senior year. It's interesting because just prior to this happening, I was questioning how I was going to teach my kids how to deal with hardship if they never had any in their life. We are quite fortunate, and I recognize this, but we are fortunate that our kiddos have had a relatively stress-free life.

What this incident taught me was that I don't need to go looking for opportunities for life to hand my kids a pile of shit. Life will do that often if you live long enough. Anyway, it was at this point with the upset that came with him not making the team that I learned the value of not trying to fix anything for him.

There was nothing to be fixed. We were getting calls from other parents on the team. They were upset for him and for us, and they were well meaning when they suggested that I call the new coach and ask questions. Some even suggested that we make a big deal out of him not making it. All he needed from us in this moment was to sit with him to allow him to be upset for as long as it took.

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When this happened, it was my first coaching experience with Maggie and I messaged her quickly and said, “you know, Jack didn't make the soccer team and I don't know what to do,” and she empowered me so much. She said, “you do know what to do, Melissa. Just go do it.” And I just went in and sat with him and allowed him to be upset.

I also learned to take good care of him, myself in this situation because I made the mistake of thinking I had a whole senior season of watching him. I had no idea that his last game was already passed in his junior year, and it turned out to be such a valuable lesson for all of us. For him, he learned that shitty things could happen, and life still goes on.

He found out that his friends were his friends, not because he was on the same team as them, but because he was a pretty great guy. He found out that our love for him had nothing to do with his accomplishments on the pitch. I found out that he didn't need me to try to make him feel better. I could just sit there with him and love him no matter what.

It also taught me to try to enjoy all the little moments with him because you never know when it will be the last time that you see them on the pitch, the last time that you pick him up, the last time that they crawl in bed with you at night because they're scared, or they don't feel good. So powerful lessons we had all around.

As parents, it is so difficult to accept that it is not our job to make our kids happy. It is not our job to control their every move. They are not remote-control robots. In my role as a pediatrician, I saw this play out. Time and time again. Once your kiddos start deciding when to poop on the potty, they are pretty much in control of everything.

Now, this doesn't mean that you don't set loving boundaries for them to help them when they're young, but it is not your job as a parent to control them. The silliest and perhaps most illustrated story from my own life where this would show up was when we would go out to dinner as a family. My boys are now 20 and 17 approaching 21 and 18, which is unbelievable to me.

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So, they of course, order their own meals from the wait staff. When we go out, when I hear what they're ordering, I have to remind myself that I don't have to eat what they're ordering. I used to drive them crazy by interrupting them during their order, saying things like, "are you sure you want the chop salad? They have the Caesar." Or, "are you sure you want medium rare? or mac and cheese and fries. That's a lot of carbs."

Now, to be sure, the reason I did this was because when they were younger and they ordered the "wrong thing," I had to deal with the consequences. Them whining ... them eating my food because they didn't like their own.

So, my butting into their order was protective for me. But I didn't need to do this for them at their ages anymore. And I see now how it may have led them to having a lack of self-trust by me not trusting them to know what they actually wanted to eat or how they wanted their meat cooked. They certainly perfected their death stare when they were ordering, and I tried to butt in. You can imagine the looks.

Anyway, so my control enthusiasm still rears its head every once in a while, and John and the boys still have to sound the lane departure warning every once in a while. But I'm happy to recognize it now and see it for what it is and knowing that I'm well intentioned and being able to tell myself it's okay.

This isn't your fight to fight. This isn't your decision to make. This isn't your problem to fix. Or simply *this* doesn't need fixing. You just really need to be there for your kiddos and be the presence and have them know that you love them. Whatever the outcome, whoever they are, that's the more powerful thing.

You can also do that for your husband. That's pretty powerful too. For me, I've realized that the key to questioning my need to control others. So that I can have peace came from realizing that the reason I did not have peace was because I was not approving of myself. I was not accepting myself. I was not trusting myself.

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Once I started approving of myself, accepting myself just as I was and trusting myself to always take care of me, no matter the outcome, no matter what I did, no matter what those I cared about, did or didn't do, that was the key. It turns out that you can create your own peace in yourself. Spoiler alert, you can actually create any emotion you want for yourself too.

Once you start doing that, you no longer need to rely on anyone else. You hold your own keys to your life, and that is a powerful realization. If you are a self-diagnosed control enthusiast, or if you would like help figuring out how to create the life you want for yourself with love and intention, I would love to be your guide.

Allow me to show you all the power you already have in your life and to invite you to step more fully into it. It's the best.

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I, so look forward to meeting you.

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