

You're listening to Episode 179 of the Devoured Podcast. Welcome to Devoured, the podcast for women like you who have tried restrictive diet after diet and are ready for simple solutions and resources to help you lose weight for the last time from a place of abundance and peace. If you're looking to end the yo-yo of comfort eating and rigid weight loss protocols, and instead step into living your life on your terms while losing weight in the process, you're in the right place.

Party, party, party people. Welcome, welcome, welcome to the show. Super happy you're here. We have such a wonderful subject that I just feel so passionate to share with you today. This term likely might not be new to you, but I'm going to ask you to take a little time with a subject today and really investigate and allow yourself to create both your own relationship with the term, as well as understanding that ... Let me just say the term, your inner critic. We're talking about inner critics today.

Really understand that this conversation is here to serve you. Sometimes I think a common pattern that people can fall into and even be shown that has to be the pattern that they have to live their lives in is to take new information, information that they're learning things that they are educating themselves on and taking that information and weaponizing it against themselves. This is a really common pattern of diet culture. So if this is something that you recognize that you might have done or that you can be doing or you slip into patterns or episodes of doing, just remember that that's really normal.

It's something that I say so often so my clients are going to laugh, but like nothing's gone wrong. Nothing's gone wrong if you feel like when you take new information, your go-to habit is to use that information against yourself. Nothing's gone wrong because that's just a nervous system, it's a body that's trying to utilize information to the best of its ability. And what I want to offer too is that we can't pretend that the world is like perfect sunshine and rainbows. So there is utility to the ability and pattern of taking information and using it against yourself.

I know that can sound so funny on the surface, but just remember we come to our habits and our actions innocently, and there is always a utility to what we're doing. And the only reason we talk about really any subject is to allow ourselves to come into the space and the place for awareness to see, "Okay self, is how I am doing this thing adaptive for me or did I simply learn how to do this in a certain way? And now the action has become maladaptive."

That doesn't mean it's bad. It's just not suited for the job. So recognize like I'm going to just give a brief overview of what an inner critic is and how I support my clients through navigating actually being relational with your inner critic. So allow this information to serve you and take what you will to play with this. Because guess what? Even our conception of discussing something that can feel kind of bigger, like an inner critic. It's not fun to be like, "Man, I criticize myself in X, Y, and Z ways where I say these things that are unkind to myself that I wouldn't say to other people. I'm critical of myself in these ways."

Just remember that even our conception of how we come to the conversation of being self-critical, we actually are also in charge of if we'd like to, if we create some play, we can come to this conversation with curiosity, with wonderment. It doesn't have to be this heavy, heavy subject unless we so desire it, unless it is feeling like that is the most accessible way we can approach that conversation. My too long don't read. You just get to be and that's 100% awesome. And within that beingness, you are in charge and you can decide.

So let's talk about inner critics. So to me an inner critic is simply that voice that comes from within that chirps up and has an opinion about how you yourself are navigating the world. What you're doing in the world, who you are in the world, the things you want in the world, the things you've done in the world, the things you're doing in the world and how you view the world. So it can go from the tangible what you're doing to the intangible what you think about the things that you're doing, what you think about how other people do things that you think about the world.

So the inner critic is just going to offer a critical lens. And I use that word critical because I want you to be allowing yourself to come to this space this week of recognizing that the inner critic, the reason that we can feel like an inner critic is taking up a lot of emotional energy is that we allow its criticism to be part of our everyday experience of honoring its criticism. So I want you to be considering if you notice that you have a critical voice inside of yourself which too long don't read as well, most of us do. Know that that came from a place of you taking care of yourself.

If we didn't have a self-critical voice, there are opportunities where we could be jeopardizing friendships. We could be actual relationships. We could be not in touch with how other people feel or we could be less in touch with cultivating community and as social creatures, well, community is pretty life supporting, it's pretty life-giving. One of the most tragic things for a human is to experience real isolation, to experience the feelings of isolation. If you feel isolated, that's real isolation, let alone if you feel isolated and you have literal isolation as well. That's why this pandemic has been so stressful for so many of us because I think its really illuminated just how we've had to fall back on our strengths of how we do connect with people, how we do create social ties, how we strengthen those social ties.

It illuminated a lot for us in terms of us being social creatures and what that means in a very individualistic nation, really. So the inner critic is critical and it's doing its criticism from a place of trying to keep you safe. It's trying to navigate and make sense of your world both your inner world and your outer world so that you don't what? Mess up. Make a mistake. Do something wrong. Do something bad. In order to be good, to feel good. Inner critic wants you to be valuable. And so it's going to be on the lookout for things that are going to happen that it doesn't want to have happen in your life where its conception of your value is challenged.

So think about your inner critic as almost like a guard dog for your current identity. And I want to add in here that in the identity work, which is what Lean + Liberated is to a certain extent, what coaching allows to me, where I see ... Let me add this in too. I think coaching is a very powerful tool and I've seen people honestly use it poorly. And that's my judgment and my bias as someone who does coaching. So I want to offer because I'm someone who does coaching and receives coaching, and I'm sensitive. And I want to be heard and listened to. I want to offer to you that when we started to move into the realm of like identity management, coaching is not to change your identity or take you out of your current identity.

If that's what someone believes coaching is, I would really challenge that and ask them if they're allowing their clients to be in charge and in the driver's seat. But what coaching does that helps you tune out the noise of what isn't in your true, authentic values-driven identity. And so the inner critic is like the guard dog that's protecting your identity right now. And the only reason we'd want to explore the inner critic is if the inner critic is on hyperdrive of hyper-managing the identity that you currently have that isn't fully serving you to the full extent it could.

That's why in Lean + Liberated we do core values work. Because it's not just another program where it's like, "Well, eat more vegetables and you'll feel great." Lots of veggies feel really good for a lot of people. Okay, okay, okay. But we come at really saying, "How do I nourish myself? Why am I choosing to, and how do I do this for life?" From a place of saying, "I am in charge of allowing my actions to fall back on my values, so that the inner critic can see and can trust the identity that it is protecting." Because remember, like I said a couple minutes ago, our inner critic is here actually to protect us even when things feel really like how many of us have recognized like, "Man, my inner critic is really self-critical. I'd love to have less criticism."

Just remember that that inner critic is trying to do its job. And so us being the person with the identity, I love the visual of a dog, so part of the episode I'm going to be sharing with you I want you to visualize and conceptualize your inner critic in whatever way makes sense to you. Maybe it isn't a guard dog.

Maybe it's if you're into like family systems, maybe it is a member of the family. Maybe it's someone who isn't the adult in the family. Maybe it's the teenager or the toddler or something else where it has a bit of a different relationship to you the identity holder. But I love the visual of a guard dog because for me as a dog owner, I can understand when my dog is barking at the mailman or is barking at a weird noise that the front door. Even if I'm like, "Oh my gosh, Hazel, be quiet. It's fine. It's a branch that fell outside. We're fine. We're safe."

I can understand why the guard dog is trying to guard even if in that moment it doesn't have the full amount of information or it doesn't feel safe enough. It's trying to just gather based on the tangible information it has in that very moment. It's trying to make a quick snap decision. I'd rather protect you than not. Because if I protect you, you're protected. And if it was a big deal that I'm protecting you from, we did it like mission accomplished. And if I take a break right now and something bad really was there, if that wasn't a branch falling outside and that was an intruder, I can't conceptualize a life where I allow that to happen. So I'd rather overly protect you than under-protect you.

I can understand a dog's logic. So for me, the ability to come home into a place of "Yeah, as I'm shifting, growing my identity, and then I'm coming into my identity from this value-driven place. Of course, the guard dog is maybe going to be a little confronted by that." It's not a big deal. It doesn't mean anything has gone wrong. So we'll allow yourself that space if this is a brand new conversation, but if you're liking what I'm saying here, allow yourself the space to say, "Actually nothing has gone wrong when my inner critic is a very self-critical. Usually, it is tripping up and deciding to say something, be critical about something when it is feeling confronted. When it feels like it needs to be managing its identity."

That's really when that inner critic speaks up. If you step back and you look at your week or your month or what things tend to bother you, that inner critic is going to try to be managing different circumstances or situations in order to feel like you know how to navigate them. Because the inner critic is going to say, "If I'm not here, you won't be able to handle things. You'll goof up. You'll do the wrong thing. You'll eat the wrong foods. You'll look like a buffoon in front of other people."

The inner critic typically tries to keep us safe from judgment, it tries to keep us safe from death and it try to keep us safe from feeling of aloneness, of being booted out from the crowd. So when we start to see that the inner critic is just trying to protect us, it can really allow us to sink in to understanding, "Yeah, actually in this journey of tending to myself, I actually get to allow a stronger relationship with my inner critic." Instead of saying it has to go live out in the dog house or it's up for adoption.

Because I see that so often where people feel like once they understand these subjects, I have to get rid of my inner critic. I have to never have an inner critic decide it's going to tell me something never again. No, the dog is going to bark and we can love it for the reasons it's going to bark. By love I mean we can just hold space for it. We don't have to be like, "Oh my God, yay. You're barking." We can be like, "Hey, shush." But from that place, we're going to allow our nervous systems to not have to feel confronted and at the ready every single time, our inner critic shows up and speaks its mind.

So this is such a big part of what we do in Lean + Liberated as well. I keep bringing it up because it's just it's so important. Whether you label the inner critic or not, it's going to be useful to understand that this entire process is identity management. And so of course who are we without our identities? Of course, there can feel like there's a huge confrontation. I think that's why it's so amazing when new women sign up for Lean + Liberated because I'm like, "Yeah, you're ready to open yourself up and see that you are in charge of your identity." You don't have to fake it till you make it. You don't have to make a new identity. You don't have to get rid of the old identity. All of those are just those patterns of diet culture. This or that, on the wagon, off the wagon. If I'm not this, I must be that, either/or. Instead, it's both/and.

I know this subject today got a little meta. I'm not talking about the tangibles of food, but what I'm trying to say here is that your inner critic, if you'd like, you can label it. If you're a visual person, you can create a visual around it. Like I said, I like it being a guard dog. And you can decide the relationship you have with it. You don't have to get rid of it forever and ever because that's a lot of pressure on you to uphold and manage that. You can humanize your relationship with an inner critic because the inner critic is there for a reason. It's just there to keep you safe.

And the only thing you're allowing yourself to explore is to understand, "Oh, what it deems as keeping me safe might not actually be needed anymore." It doesn't mean it goes away. It just means it's like sleeping on its doggy bed during more of the day. And when it barks, I can simply notice and become curious if I'd like to notice, "Well, what is it barking at? That's interesting. What does its bark sound like? Oh, that's interesting too." And with this, remember, to me the guard dog, when there's something happening. It's a little frenetic, it's not just barking at the door, it's barking at me to go pay attention to what is at the door.

And so when its barking at me, it's just allowing it. It's not having to get into the muck with it and be like, "Oh my God, who is it? What's going on like point?" That reinforces that what it's barking at is a big deal. Instead, if we cultivate the relationship and we show the inner critic, "Hey, here are the things I do want you to bark at." Like I said, it serves a purpose. The guard dog keeps the home safe, but we're the ones who get to teach it what it can bark at. So at one point in your life, maybe there were certain ways that being self-critical felt like they did keep you safe. You did something that reinforced that like, "Ooh, I just avoided humiliation. I don't ever want to feel you humiliated. I'm going to keep up the action that I took that helped me avoid that in retrospect."

So we just have these different stories throughout our lives that we've collected that have informed how the guard dog and the inner critic works, but what we can do in the present moment is that we can attenuate and you can really do this. And this can come from the practice of saying, "Oh, I can label my inner critic? I can allow it to be. And through that, I can tend to my relationship with it where I can understand how and why it's trying to serve me. And I can help it better define how it will serve me and how it does serve me, then I can have a strong relationship with it. And when it barks at the door, I can take it seriously. And also when it's a dog being a dog, I can just kind of roll my eyes and say, 'It's just so mailman. We're okay.'"

I find this as so useful for women when they're really looking at their foods. They're coming to it like, a specific example would be like deciding on a snack. "Oh my gosh, what is my inner critic telling me? All the barks, all the yips about snack time. Unpack, unpack, unpack. Okay, now that I've done that, what do I want to be snacking on? Ooh, all the stories that come up around me being a person who decides what to have a snack on. Okay, unpack, unpack, unpack. Hear the barks. Hear the yips. Okay. All right. Am I hungry right now? Ooh, what does hunger mean to me? Oh, bark, bark, bark, and unpack, unpack, unpack."

It's just this gentle layering over time. Let me add in here. Sometimes when I use the term time, this can be a process that is like for you by you. So sometimes doing the unpacking or deciding like, "Hey, do I want a snack right now? Man, I used to have a lot of thoughts about snacks, but I'm actually just hungry right now so I'm going to have one." It can be as simple as that. So remember like I said at the beginning of the episode, allow yourself to take information like this. It's information about the inner critic and let it serve you versus noticing if you tend to take information and then you layer it on and you allow it to confuse you or overwhelm you. You feel like it's something that's now in your to-do list or one more thing to look out for to fix yourself.

Because remember, those are the patterns of diet culture. And that's just that inner critic saying, "Oh, there's something I've really got to be worried about. Let me be at the ready." Truly the guard dog, the

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inner critic can actually be something that does serve you that you can kind of laugh at, roll your eyes at. And when you allow it to be a relationship that you're coming to from curiosity and humor or even just neutrality, whatever feels approachable for you. You're going to have that deeper relationship so that when it does perk up, you can decode what it's saying instead of getting into a frenzy or getting in the muck with it. So use this example this week. I hope you all have such a great, such a, such a, such a great week this week. I will see you on the next episode. Bye.

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