

129: Joy

[00:00:00] **Elena:** Hello and welcome to the bright morning podcast. I'm Elena Aguilar.

[00:00:09] All right, everyone. We are nearing the end of the school year. And to help you have meaningful transformational end of your coaching conversations, I am giving you the short series on conversations in which you can also explore emotions. And I density as you close up the school year with the folks that you coach.

[00:00:36] This is the third and final episode in this short series. The first one was about anger. The second one was about sadness. And so if you miss those, I encourage you to go back and listen to those today. I want to talk to you about joy and. You're going to get three things. In this episode, you are going to first understand how exploring the emotion of joy in a coaching conversation is not the same as toxic positivity.

[00:01:07] You are also going to understand why it is essential to explore joy. And finally, I'll give you some tips and some question stems to guide a client in exploring. Before we get into that. I want to thank Erin w from Wisconsin, who is a podcast supporter. Thank you, Erin. Thank you so much for your support.

[00:01:28] It really does make a difference. And I want to ask you folks, if you haven't already rated and reviewed this podcast on apple podcast, it really is helpful if you do that. And I read all of those reviews. And they inspire me and energize me. I really appreciate them. Okay. Let's jump into this episode. You may already know this, but our brains have a negativity bias, which means that we pay really close attention to the things that aren't working.

[00:01:59] Like we hear and retain critical feedback that we get for decades. You might. A hundred pieces of positive feedback on a PD session that you facilitate. And then one piece of critical negative feedback and it lodges itself in your brain. And you remember it vividly 10 or 20 years later, at least I do. We have this tendency to see our shortcomings in neon and all the things that we do well, just pale in comparison. This is really about our brain and I'm not going to go down that track right now, but just know it is about the way our brains are designed. We might feel like there are far more words to describe the uncomfortable emotions than there are the ones that we want to feel more often we put so much attention on all of the unpleasant emotions and, again, this is neurological and it is also cultural.

[00:02:52] So that's something else, but I'm not going to go in that direction either. Right now, I do write more about, those ideas in. So, if you haven't read that book, then that might be a next step for you. Onward, cultivating emotional resilience in educators and in the onward workbook, you'll find activities to guide you through all the content in onward.

[00:03:14] Okay. So because we have this negativity bias and to some extent a, dysfunctional cultural orientation towards emotions, even in the sense that we categorize them as positive and negative and control these emotions and manage those emotions.

[00:03:30] That's dysfunctional. It's not really healthy. So because of all of that, it is critical that we practice noticing. Bright spots or joy or success. We actually have to train ourselves to regularly and intentionally notice what is going well to regularly and intentionally celebrate, appreciate ourselves and others.

[00:03:57] And. For all of you who coach people or supervise people or support people, then it's also critical to hold space and time to acknowledge success and growth and celebration enjoy. I want to make a distinction right here. I want to pause in this and say, there is a big difference between exploring joy and recognizing Brightspace.

[00:04:23] And toxic positivity, which you may have heard about because lots of people are talking about it these days, but toxic positivity is when someone always says things like, just look on the bright side or there's always a silver lining. You just have to look for it. You know what? That sounds like maybe you've said that and maybe you've said that with good intentions, cause you want to help people feel better.

[00:04:45] But the thing about what is called toxic positivity is that it's really a denial, a sadness and a. It's a suppression or a repression of those feelings. So when you're doing that to yourself, you know, I should just look on the bright side, there's a silver lining. You are denying the sadness and the anger, and maybe the fear that you are also experiencing.

[00:05:11] And when people suggest that to other people. You just need to look on the bright side of things. I actually think about it as a kind of a form of violence. I think it's a really destructive way of saying to someone else, your reality, isn't valid, your reality doesn't deserve acknowledgement. Just be positive.

[00:05:33] Just be grateful. Just look on the bright side. I think there's a violence in. I needed to say that because in this episode, I want to guide you through how to include an exploration of joy in an end of your coaching conversation. But this is not a suggestion to engage in toxic positivity. And that's why this episode is coming after the ones on sadness and anger, because it is likely that within one coaching conversation you might facilitate.

[00:06:08] Your client's exploration of all of these emotions, sadness, anger, fear, joy, all of those are tangled up. last year at the end of the school year, I had a really intense conversation with a school leader who I've been coaching for years. And there was a lot of sadness and anger, , it was the end of the 2020.

[00:06:33] 2021 school year. So lots of sadness and anger and change in loss. And then I remember there was this moment in the conversation, and I said, I'm curious what you learned about yourself as a leader. This. This is a question. I ask people a lot regularly. What did you learn about yourself as a leader this year, last week in that meeting and so on, but that question really shifted the conversation.

[00:07:00] It actually led her into a place of deep joy and appreciation because as she started talking and she realized that she had learned so much and that awareness and that insight she had, that she'd learned so much, it made her feel deeply satisfied, which she recognized as joy. From that place of recognizing her learning and her deep satisfaction and joy, then she started wandering into our exploring other moments.

[00:07:35] Of joy and meaning and satisfaction and growth and connection. And she talked about relationships that she had built with staff members and community members. And she described this program that she had piloted, which was in response to the pandemic, but it had opened up these really important conversations about how students were served in their.

[00:07:58] And then she also talked about how she had come to realize that she needed to set more boundaries around work. Cause she was really burning out and that had led her to spending more time with her partner, which had been really satisfying. And she found this path into a whole ecosystem of.

[00:08:16] This whole world of joy that she had experienced that school year, but that she hadn't been as aware of or as present with, she just hadn't paused and named it, noticed it and accepted. She hadn't sunk into the feelings of it. So our resilience is built by exploring emotions, all of them by exploring joy.

[00:08:48] If the word joy doesn't work, for you, or if it is triggering, even you could substitute another word you could think about happiness or love or meaning or fulfillment, word that encompasses these emotions that we generally want to experience more. So know that when you guide a client into exploring joy and into being present with whatever joy, love, fulfillment, meaning you're helping them cultivate resilience.

[00:09:21] Okay. Now I do want to say that if someone seems reluctant or even resistant to exploring joy, don't put. What that likely means is that you need to rewind the conversation and do some more excavating, an unpacking of sadness and anger, because it's hard to access joy when you have a lot of sadness and anger presence, or fear or shame, those uncomfortable emotions need to be accepted and acknowledged.

[00:09:52] Sometimes you might hear resistance to exploring joy. It might be expressed a cynicism, which has really a mix of sadness and anger, or it can sound like sarcasm. And if you hear that cynicism or sarcasm, those are two cues to rewind. And dig into emotions a little bit more. I want to make sure that if this is peaking your interest and curiosity, and you're recognizing how, what I'm talking about in terms of how to coach emotions could be used throughout the school year, not just in end of your conversations.

[00:10:30] I hope you know that I am presenting my workshop, the art of coaching emotions on June 20th. And 23rd. There is still time to sign up and you will learn a whole lot of strategies to coach emotions that you can use in every coaching conversation, and that are relevant outside of your work world as well.

[00:10:51] Okay, so to close up this episode, I want to give you some questions that you can ask a client at the end of the year in a final coaching conversation to open up a reflection on joy. And you can start with the one that I already suggested, which is simple. What did you learn about yourself this year that can often lead folks into.

[00:11:13] Recognizing and acknowledging their strengths, their skills, their growth. You can also ask the very simple question. What were a few bright spots from the year? What were a couple of highs by saying a few or a couple you are indicating that you recognize that there's a whole bunch of other spots from the.

[00:11:39] And you're not asking someone to ignore those. Here's another question I like if your best friend has seen everything you've been through this

year had watched you teaching or leading or coaching or whatever, what would they congratulate you on?

[00:11:55] And then this last set of questions begins with, what do you look like when you're content? Like if I was watching a movie of you teaching, how would I know when you are content?

[00:12:07] What you are asking for is for someone to reflect on. What they sound like and what their body looks like or what their body is doing. So then after they tell you that you say, okay, now I want you to imagine watching this year as a movie, but you're, fast-forwarding through it. And so you're just seeing quick images and I want you to look for those moments when you were happy, content satisfied.

[00:12:34] Tell me about what you said.

[00:12:36] those questions, a couple of them are really simple, but they can open up space where people can explore joy, satisfaction, meaning, connection, those emotions that we appreciate and know that when you start exploring those, we can all so wander into the terrain of sadness. Anger, fear, shame. And so on the emotions all live really close to each other.

[00:13:09] Sometimes they'll feel like they're in a soup too. And so sometimes when people recall feeling joy, they become more acutely aware of all the moments when they didn't feel joy. So just be prepared for these end of year conversations in which you explore motions to circle around through an exploration of many emotions.

[00:13:34] That can happen. And it is normal because emotions are normal. We are human beings. We have emotions and we can learn how to explore them, express them and move through them. All right friends, that's it for this third episode on how to explore emotions in end of the year coaching conversations, I hope it's been helpful.

[00:14:00] And I want to remind you that if you found this useful, share it with someone else. The way that most people start listening to new podcasts is by getting a recommendation from someone that they trust. I hope that more people might be able to access the content we have on this podcast. And you can help us do that.

[00:14:20] Just share it with someone. All right, friends. I want to thank Leslie Bickford. Who is the podcast? Producer and Stacy Goodman. Who does the sound engineering take care, everyone. And I'll see you next week.