

Ep #100: You're Not Supposed to Feel Motivated All The Time



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With Your Host

Kori Linn

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This week we're talking about motivation.

You are listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It, the podcast for ambitious, high-achieving women who are ready to stop feeling stressed about work and kiss burnout goodbye forever. Whether you're starting a business or staying in your day job, this show will give you the coaching and guidance you need to start loving your work today. Here's your host, Career Coach, Kori Linn.

Hey y'all, happy Wednesday. I have a topic today that I'm so excited to talk to y'all about. But before we get into that, a little bit about what's going on with me. We have been in a crazy heatwave in California. By the time this comes out the heat wave will be done.

But here now, today in the recording of this podcast, the heatwave is very much here. And it's only like 11:20 in the morning, but the room that I record the podcast in, I mean, it has air conditioning in that there's a window unit I could turn on. But I'm not going to because it would be extremely loud and disruptive.

And usually even throughout the summer I record in here with no problem around this time of day, but right now it's so hot, and getting so hot throughout the day, and staying so hot overnight, that even though it's only like 11:20 in the morning, it's really hot in here. And I a little bit wish I'd recorded this earlier.

But you know what? I didn't, and I'm going to record it now because now is the time I have available on my schedule to do it. And because I'm so fucking excited to talk to y'all about what we're talking about this week.

Which is something people want to talk to coaches about a lot, which is motivation. And something I hear about a lot is like, I just need to feel more motivated. I'm just not as motivated as I want to be, I'm not as motivated as I used to. How do I create motivation when I'm not feeling it?

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And it's interesting because motivation is just, by so many people, seen as this thing that they think we're supposed to have all the time in abundance and something's wrong if we don't. And that's not my take on it, y'all. As you may have guessed from the title of this podcast, I don't think you're supposed to feel motivated all the time.

I don't think the goal is to feel motivated all the time. I just don't think you're supposed to. And I think the pressure we put on ourselves to feel motivated to do everything all the time, including things we don't like doing, it's not very fun and I think it makes us feel like shit, honestly.

I think for a lot of us, we internalize this as like there's something wrong with me because I don't feel motivated. And sometimes it's to do something we don't actually want to do, but think we should do. And sometimes it's to do something we do actually want to do, but in that moment we're not feeling motivated.

Now, I think this is a little bit interesting and I want to dive into this a bit because I think there's a difference between I'm not motivated and I have negative thoughts about myself and that activity such that whenever I try to do the activity, the negative thoughts and feelings arise and become so big that it's very difficult to do it, or the negative thoughts and feelings come up before I even get started so I never do it.

So to me these are two different things. And there's a lot of podcasts already where we talk about like, hey, if you have a thought like, I suck at this, you're probably not going to want to do it. That just makes sense, right? If you know your brain is going to say a bunch of mean shit to you. every time you think about doing it, or start doing it, or do it, or have done it, like yeah, of course that's going to create a desire to avoid it.

And if that is what you're dealing with, I would actually suggest listening to the podcast episode on the pleasure gloss. I talk about the pleasure gloss, and I also talk about what I call the displeasure gloss, or the pain gloss.

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Which is like our brain forms associative connections really strongly and pretty easily.

So if there's something you do that feels great and you like or you have really good thoughts about it, you're going to want to do it because your brain associates it with pleasure. And if there's something, even something you want to do, but you have a lot of self-critical thoughts about it or negative thoughts about it, you can easily build up this associative displeasure or pain gloss that will make you not want to do it.

So an example I use a lot because I think it happens a lot is people want to write a book, but either while they're writing they think a bunch of negative thoughts about themselves, and the book, and their writing. Or they think a bunch of negative thoughts about how they haven't done it yet. And then they create more avoidance by building this like pain loop so that even when they think about writing, it brings up pain, and shame, and guilt, and all these negative feelings and then of course they avoid it.

So that's not what we're talking about today, but that's like a little review of that concept.

What we are talking about today is what is motivation? And why do we have it? And how much of it are we supposed to have? So again, I think a lot of people think they're supposed to have like this unlimited supply of motivation. And in the current world so many of us, especially those of us listening to podcasts, we have these like extremely full and busy lives where we're trying to do just absolute fuck loads of shit all the time.

And it's like career stuff, doing our projects, doing our work. And then it's like life stuff like doing our laundry, feeding our bodies, doing our dishes. And then if you are a parent and have children there's way more laundry, and way more feeding, and way more dishes.

And plus, like I love children so much, but they get like sticky jam hands and then they touch everything in your house so then everything your

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house is sticky. And so you're either living with the stickiness or you're like constantly working on undoing the stickiness.

And if we have a significant other it's like, having a significant other is great, like it's an enjoyable experience in a lot of ways. But it's also a lot of work and it's a lot of like chosen conflict. And sometimes conflict you didn't choose that's just sort of happening. And there's a lot that goes on with the upkeep of that.

And so then like what if you also have like hobbies. Like if you are trying to write a book, or you're learning knitting, or you're taking Portuguese classes or whatever you're doing, that's like more stuff more stuff. And a lot of people want to have like some kind of movement habit or thing like that, so then that's something they're trying to fit in.

I know for me I do PT exercises most days, I take a long walk most days, I do intentional writing practices. I used to do it every day, but honestly, now I don't. And so we have all this stuff, right?

Not everybody, but I would say I think most of us have all this stuff that we're trying to do, and we don't feel motivated. We just don't fucking want to. And for a lot of us we're like what I'd actually like to do, if I'm being really honest, is sit on the couch and watch a lot of Netflix or like I want to eat this ice cream, or drink this wine, or sleep later, or go to bed earlier and not deal with all this shit.

And then I think people weaponize this against themselves and think that they're lazy, or that something's wrong with them, or they just don't care enough, or they're like not trying hard enough, they're not a hard enough worker. And they really like pathologize against themselves the fact that they don't have this like constant unending stream of motivation.

So first of all, what I want to say is I don't think you're supposed to have motivation all the time. I've already said that but I'm just going to keep saying it this whole podcast. I do not think you're supposed to feel

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motivated all the time. And I do have some data that I'm going to reference to back that up.

So I listened to this podcast a while back from Huberman Labs and it was about dopamine. And dopamine is, listen, I'm not a scientist, obviously. I'm, I'm a coach and I know a lot about mindset, but I'm a layperson when it comes to this kind of science shit.

But from what I understood from that podcast, and go listen to the actual source material if you want. From what I understood, the dopamine, what it does is it kind of like rewards you or makes you want more of certain things. And what it's supposed to do is basically keep you alive, right?

Like if you eat food you get some dopamine, and you're like, okay, this was good, I should do that again later. And, you know, it's associated with sex. It's associated with sex, right? Which is like from the biological side, like reproducing for the species, right? Although for us in current days, it could just be for pleasure or for fun.

And there's all kinds of stuff that like hooks into the dopamine loop, right? Things like chocolate, things like wine. And sometimes when something hooks into that loop we will experience a lot of desire to do it and keep doing it. And it's interesting because that's kind of like motivation, but different. But it's kind of the same if you think about it from this way of what's going on in the brain.

But one of the things that was mentioned in that podcast that I thought was so interesting is like, when you do something you have like a surge of dopamine, and then the dopamine goes down. And I've been thinking about that ever since and it's kind of like this idea that like as an animal who evolved, because other animals also have brains and have dopamine loops and have urges and drives, right?

So as an animal you are not supposed to be motivated and like doing shit all the time. You're not supposed to always be like hunting. You're not supposed to always be eating. You're not supposed to always be

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procreating or having sex. You're not supposed to always be sleeping or whatever, or staying warm even though those activities may feel good.

Sometimes you're supposed to just be like resting and chilling. And sometimes you need the motivation to go like get up and do some shit, right? So if you think about the way humans evolved, and if you look at other like apex predators, right? So other predators who are like at the top of the food chain, they don't have natural predators of them, they're no one's natural prey, they're not doing shit all the fucking time, right?

I remember reading this thing on, I think it was like Facebook one time, and I think Kara Loewentheil posted it, she's amazing. And it was about how lions are not always being productive, they're not like always doing stuff. They're not like always managing projects. They like hunt, they feast and then they fucking sleep, I don't know, like 18 hours a day or something.

So listen, before I get a bunch of push back, I'm not suggesting that all you do is hunt and sleep 18 hours a day. Like hunt, feast, sleep 18 hours a day, that's not what I'm suggesting. But what I am suggesting is that I think we have an unrealistic idea of how much motivation we should have.

And again, I think we weaponize that against ourselves and make it mean something bad about us. And I think we don't take into account how much motivation actually we're going to have, like when we're making plans for ourselves, when we're making schedules, when we're setting our calendars.

Now, listen, I also don't think you have to have motivation to do shit. I was actually, speaking of Kara Loewentheil, I was on a call that's part of The Clutch. So The Clutch is Kara's membership program, which is actually amazing. I'm a member of it and I do highly recommend it.

And it's a great coaching investment that is on the lower end price point wise. So if you're looking for a way to invest in coaching for a, I guess a two figure investment versus like three, four, or five figure investment, and by two figure I mean like less than \$100. It's less than \$100 a month to join

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The Clutch and I think it's a pretty great way to start getting into thought work if that's the investment level you're at. And eventually I'd like to have some kind of offering like that, but I don't right now. So I highly recommend Kara's.

Anyways, I was in a call in there and it was like, they're called coop calls, so it's a call with just a bunch of the members. There's no like actual coach, it's like not an official thing. It's not an official offering through the program, but it's like all these people who get together who love coaching, and love thought work and want to talk about it and coach each other.

And we were having this conversation, and someone was saying something, and I'm not going to share that part because it wasn't important. But one of the other people in there said this thing that I thought was really brilliant and I thought would be really useful for this podcast. And what this person said was, what if wanting is different than choosing? And this person's name is Celeste H.G. Boyd.

I totally was like, you're a coach, obviously. What a brilliant question? Celeste is not a coach, but we will still link Celeste's information in the show notes because what a brilliant mind and we want to keep up with people with brilliant minds and great questions. And we love to give credit to the people who inspire us on this podcast.

So again, what if wanting is different than choosing? So I wanted to bring that up in this podcast because what I'm trying to say here is I do not think you're supposed to feel motivated all the time, but I do still think you can do shit even if you don't feel motivated.

I think we get this idea that in order to do anything we have to feel motivated. And I'm like, no. If we're only going to get to like a limited amount of that, and as like animals we're only supposed to have a limited amount of that, then expecting ourselves to have an unlimited amount of it or have it about everything we are choosing to do doesn't really make any sense to me.

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So basically, you're not supposed to feel motivated all the time and you don't need to in order to create an incredible life and career, in order to create a satisfying as fuck life and career. And when you realize that you don't have to have motivation to do stuff. and you can just choose to do it, whether motivation shows up or not, then you can stop attaching your worth to how much motivation you have.

Because I think we get this thing that it's like, oh, if I have more like I'm better, that's better, but no. And if you're like a highly productive person and you're doing a lot, I think it actually makes sense that you probably are using your motivation and not having as much of it leftover, but you may still want to do other things.

Like I never feel motivated to go to the grocery store, I just choose to go. And I choose to go oriented on future Kori's happiness. Because future Kori wants to have some fucking groceries in this house. Future Kori would like, we talk about this all the time, broccoli, cauliflower, right? Eggs, I love eggs.

So I'm going to go to the grocery store and get those things. I'm going to choose to do that as a gift to my future self, I don't have to feel motivated and I literally almost never feel like what I would say the feeling is of motivation to go to the grocery store, I just choose to do it.

Now, here's another thing, I also think a lot of us are sort of addicted to productivity. And I don't mean addicted in the clinical sense, I mean it in a more just like casual metaphorical kind of sense. I think a lot of us attach our value, our worthiness as a human to what we're doing and how much we're doing. And so we expect ourselves to do a lot and we expect ourselves to do it all perfectly and we overdo.

We overdo it at work. We overdo it at home. We overdo it in every area of our lives. And then guess what? We're fucking tired. We're fucking tired. You maybe heard me like slap my leg. I was like, "Ah, we're fucking tired." And when we're fucking tired, we don't want to do shit, right? So then of course, motivation is not going to show up.

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So this is a pattern I see a lot, where people will have been performing, and performing, and performing, and over delivering, and like fueling themselves with anxiety and stress responses for years. Like 10, 20, 30 years of their lives and then their brain and body get fucking tired, and they're exhausted, and they don't want to do anything. And then they're like, "Oh, my motivation is broken."

And I'm like, no, I think you actually still have the capacity to feel motivated, but you've depleted the system, and I would even say like abused the system, such that it needs to recover now. And I think when people are in that position, again, we can still choose to do stuff, but we need to kind of get back into balance and recalibrated.

And then it might be a while before that motivation kicks back in. Because oftentimes we take ourselves like so far past our empty gas tank limit. And since we're not cars, we're people, we can like really, really, really push that and a lot of people do. And so I think it's also important to say in this podcast, I think a lot of us need to like reset our relationship to motivation and have a different understanding of what its role is going to be in our lives.

Let's also just take a minute to talk about like humans aren't supposed to be awake all the time, right? You know this. We kind of, like the science says we should be sleeping, I don't know, like seven to eight hours a night. And I don't usually use should, but the science says the body does well on that amount of rest, right? And I think it is really different person by person, and there's books you can read about that too.

But it's like I think sometimes we also think we're never supposed to get tired the same way we think we're always supposed to feel motivated. And so my clients will be like, "Well, I'm tired." And I'm like, "Okay, but you're supposed to be tired." Like literally you're supposed to get tired, like every single day, right? Like you, as a body, as an animal are supposed to have energy, use the energy, get tired, rest, recover, and repeat.

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And so many of us are trying to like run our lives like we're like iPhones that never need charging, right? Even your iPhone needs to fucking charge, right? It's a machine and it still needs to charge. But so many of us are like, "Oh, I should just be able to be super-duper productive all the time and sleep for like a little tiny amount of time and then always feel great."

And I'm like that's literally not what the mechanism of your body is meant to do. You are meant to get tired. Your motivation is meant to run out because you're meant to rest and recover and to not exhaust and deplete yourself.

So again, just because you're not feeling motivated doesn't mean you can't do something. Again, you can always still choose. And also there should be limits. There are supposed to be limits. And, yeah, I can just hear some of y'all being like, "But how am I supposed to keep up with this life I've designed if I need to rest and recover all the time?"

And I'm like, first of all, if you're not giving yourself time to rest and recover, are you actually enjoying that life at all? Because I think a life in which we don't have any time to rest and recover is probably actually pretty miserable, even if it's like checking all the cultural boxes.

And then second of all, I do think you can have a truly incredible life. But no, I don't think it probably is going to have like every single thing that culture says it should have in it. More is not always more, you know what I mean? I mean, listen, I like more. More is more, I get that. But it's not when we're cramming our lives full of stuff and then we don't have enough energy to be present for any of it.

So I want to be really clear about what I'm saying here, do I believe you can have an absolutely thrilling, electrifying, satisfying as fuck life and career? Yeah, I do. I really, really, really do. But I don't think it's going to involve you being motivated all the time. And it's probably actually going to involve you doing a lot less than what you're doing now.

Now, that doesn't mean you're going to get less impact. I think when we do less we get more impact. I think when we do less, when we constrain down

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to what actually really matters to us, we get better outcomes, we get more impact, we have better relationships. But it's true, we may check fewer boxes.

There may be some things that we've been trying to keep up with for years and years and decades of our lives that we choose to let fall by the wayside, right? And we don't have to frame it as fall by the wayside, I think even that like I'm like, oh, look, that's my own internalized productivity culture coming out in my language right here.

But I know people who don't grocery shop anymore, they get their groceries delivered, it saves them time. Like they were like, oh, that activity, not part of what I want to do with my life. They didn't want to like choose to do it when they didn't feel motivated, that's a beautiful thing.

And for all of you, I can almost guarantee, I can't quite guarantee but I can almost guarantee there's tweaks like that you can make to your own life too, where things you're forcing yourself to do that you don't actually like or want to do at all, there's probably a different way to get the thing done.

Or maybe the thing doesn't need to get fucking done and you could create a satisfying as fuck life that doesn't involve that thing. Or that involves someone else being responsible for it in one way or another, whether it's someone you pay or like you make some kind of negotiation in your household to have someone else do it.

So what I want you to take away from this podcast most of all is just, honestly, a sense of relief. Now, you might not all have that. Some of you actually may feel extremely fucking stressed out by what I'm saying in this podcast because you may be really hooked in still to the idea that you need to be super productive to feel good about yourself. I get that. I also want to be super productive.

And why do we want to be productive at all anyways? We usually just want to be productive so that we can think we're doing enough and feel good and enjoy our lives. And sometimes choosing to be less productive is

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actually what's going to get us to that place instead of like spending all of our lives with this endless to-do list.

Because have you ever noticed, even if you get everything done on your to-do list, your brain just adds more shit to your to-do list? That's a hamster wheel that's never going to take you to the place you think it's going to take you to. And I think the sooner we realize that, the sooner we can have insert to build are actually truly satisfying as fuck life versus that imaginary life where we finally got it all done and everything's taken care of.

Life is cyclical. A lot of stuff, as soon as we get it done, we just have to do it again. So when we're rushing, and rushing and rushing and trying to cram everything in, we're just making ourselves run on the hamster wheel faster. It's not more enjoyable and it doesn't create better outcomes.

So again, I invite you to just like let this be a relief. You can have a wildly satisfying life. You can have an intoxicatingly satisfying career. You can have a great time with both of those and so much more. And you don't need more motivation than you have. You're not supposed to feel motivated all the time.

You can create a magical life without more motivation, and I can help you do it. And there's two ways I work with people to help them do it. One way is in Satisfied As Fuck, which is my small group coaching program and we're doing consults for that now.

And it's an extremely wonderful place to be with like the most incredible clients. And we're working on truly being able to feel satisfaction, because a lot of people, it sounds easy, but a lot of people really struggle to actually ever feel satisfied no matter what they achieve.

And then we're also working on making the big and small changes to your life and your career and anything else to make it more of what you want it to be, but partnered again with that ability to feel satisfaction when things go well, which so many of us don't have. That's one way I'm going to work

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with people. As I said, the consults are happening now, and the next cohort will start in January.

And then the other way to work with me is as a one on one client. And for my one on one clients, for SAF, for Satisfied As Fuck it's like a group, it's a community, we grow and learn by seeing each other and by being witnessed and by being inspired by each other's coaching. And it's a really wonderful place to be if you want to learn from other people's coaching and be part of a community doing the same work. And it's not the right fit for everybody.

So the one on one coaching is for people who want a very unique, tailored, customized experience. It's all about them and everything that they're working on with a lot of individual attention and the ability to get coached on multiple things every week, and to have my undivided attention. So some people are going to be a really good fit for SAF, some people are going to be a really good fit for one on one.

There's probably a few of y'all out there who would be a really good fit for both. If you really love coaching and want to have both in your life, that is an option. And there's lots of other coaching options out there besides just mine if there's something else that would be a really good fit for you.

But working with a coach is a great way to take the things we talked about today to a deeper level. And if you want to do that me I would love to do it with you. And if not, I wish you all the luck and all the best in your journey because I want you to have the exact coach who's right for you, whether it's me or not.

But most of all this week what I want you to do is love yourself as the human you are who sometimes feels motivated and sometimes doesn't. All right, that's what I got for y'all this week. Have a great week, I'll talk to you next time. Bye.

Thank you for listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It. We'll have another episode for you next week. And in the meantime, if you're feeling

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super fired up, head on over to korilinn.com for more guidance and resources.