

The Complete Transcript of Podcast 12 Where we discuss: Dealing with Difficult People

Intro: Welcome to solutions for health and happiness with Claire and Helen - the Lightning Process Team. Want to live a life you love? Start here...

Helen: Hello and welcome to Podcast 12 in our series. I'm Helen Harding and my co-host is Claire Brooker.



Claire: It's great to be here again.

Helen: So what we're going to do is have a quick recap on what we explored last time when we were talking about overwhelmed. Our top tips were: pause, calm yourself down and remove yourself from the situation that you're in and give yourself some space; learn to say no - you don't have to take on every job; prioritise - focus on one thing at a time, one step at a time; and check out your environment - is it helping you or hindering when it comes to your calmness?

Claire: Thanks Helen. So in this podcast we're looking at dealing with difficult people. As human beings, our happiness depends a lot on the quality of the relationships that we have. If you have a negative person in your life, we want to help you deal with this effectively.

Helen: It can be very difficult when you have someone that you're really close to who's always squashing your dreams, bringing down your mood with their pessimism, someone who's untrusting or anxious or tries to talk you out of all of your new schemes - your scuba diving course because it's too dangerous. Or perhaps they just judge you really harshly or judge others harshly, and to be honest, you're fed up with it. So how do we deal with this?

Claire: It would be really easy to say we just ignore this person and walk away from them, and this is a brilliant strategy if that person is, say, a rude lady at the checkout but not so easy if this person is your mum or your dad, or perhaps a sibling or even a close friend.

Helen: The first step is to start by understanding the reasons for their negativity. Usually it has a root in fear and fear can take many, many forms. It could be the fear that life's dangerous or the fear that people can't be trusted or even the fear of failure. Fears feed off one another, and into one another, ending up with a big mass of fear, just 'gunking' up a person's beliefs and approach to life.

Claire: I love that word 'gunking'.

Helen: It's great.

Claire: Yes, if you imagine operating from these fears, you can see how it might make sense for that person to question your dreams or warn you off trying new things or judging you for your seemingly risky choices. Fear really is the antithesis of feeling empowered or influential in your life and this is often the biggest issue for seemingly negative people. They don't feel that they are in the driving seat of their life, or they feel out of control in some way, so they may seek to control your life instead.

Helen: And the only reasonable way to deal with this negativity yourself is to find compassion for that negative person. Take responsibility for your own happiness despite what the other person thinks, and be mature in how you interact with this person.

Claire: Yes, so how do we find compassion for this negative person is a good question to ask.

Helen: It is. And what we've done is notice that although someone is negative towards you, their intentions are good and they really want the best for you.

Claire: Yes, what you definitely don't want to do is give them a lecture on what they should be changing about themselves. You know, most of us are really not that good at taking criticism and for the person who's prone to negative thinking; this is just totally and utterly amplified. What I find helpful Helen, is realising that I only have to deal with this person for a limited amount of time and you know what? They have to listen to themselves 24 hours a day - they have it much worse than I do!

Helen: They do. It can be quite a miserable place I imagine. So what we're looking at is recognising you're responsible for your own happiness rather than someone else. And it's a really important shift in mind set which is crucial when dealing with this person. It would be easy to blame this person for your bad mood, but the thing is, no one can make you feel a certain way without you allowing it. So recognise you have complete influence in how you respond to this person. And a great thing to do is to refer back to Podcast 4 where we talk a lot about influence.

Claire: Thanks Helen, and thanks for the reminder about Podcast 4, that's a great one to listen to. So start to assert some boundaries; they could be a limit on the amount of time you spend with this person, limits on how much you divulge to them – do you really want them puking up over all your dreams once again? You know, you can also visualise a protective shield around you when you're in the company of this person. Imagine this shield protects you from their negativity and only allows positivity and all things useful through. It also allows you to give positivity to others as well. You can make it a certain colour or a shape, just play around with it. It works really well.

Helen: It is a brilliant tip. So do what it takes to preserve your own happiness. Don't allow yourself to fuel negativity by responding to it in a negative way. Be a great role model for this person instead. A great quote by Shirley McLaine - she says "Dwelling on the negative simply contributes to its power".

Claire: Yes. I was reading a really great blog the other day called 'The Tiny Buddha'. You may have heard of it, and they had a great tip in the blog, and it's to have in your mind that you understand that person's pain and what they're going through – but actually it's most helpful if you don't feed into that. And this can help you approach this person with both kindness and firmness, so they don't really bring you down.

Helen: Do you remember the story about a Buddha when we were training? It was about a golden Buddha that sat on a hill and he had this great big happy face and just always beaming this great big smile. And there was somebody in the village locally that hated the fact that this Buddha was always happy, and they went up to the Buddha every day and they threw insults at him and shouted at him and said really mean things to him, and this Buddha just continued to be very peaceful and smiling. And one day, someone went up to the Buddha and said 'Why is it, why are you happy all of the time when you are having all of these insults hurled at you?' And his reply was 'That's their insults. I can choose what I take on board and what I don't'. So I think that's a great story to link in with this podcast.

Claire: Yes definitely. And as you stay secure in your own positive outlook, you'll become a great inspiration for others and because states of mind and body are contagious, they may follow your lead and start living a life they love too!

Helen: That'd be great. Another thing to bear in mind is if you feel constantly triggered by this person's negativity, the fact that you're finding it tricky may alert you to something unresolved within yourself. Perhaps if you were fully secure in how you view yourself and the decisions you make, you wouldn't feel so wound up by this person, and it wouldn't be such a big deal. It'd be more like 'Oh there they go again' and let it just brush off of you like water off a duck's back. So maybe take the opportunity to just think about – is there something I need to address here, is there something that needs resolving?

Claire: Yes, and following on from that Helen, a good question to ask yourself is whether you get anything from hanging out with this negative person. I know it sounds weird to think about it in this way, but questioning what you get out of it gives you another perspective. You know, have you fallen into a caretaker role because it makes you feel valued and needed in some way? It's just something to be aware of. Ask yourself also is it time to let go perhaps of this relationship now? Has this relationship run its course? A recent podcast we did on co-dependency is also a really useful resource to consider these questions in a bit more detail, and that's Podcast 10.

Helen: That's a great one. So tips for today are: treat the negative person with compassion, understand what it must be like to live with such negativity in your life, after all, they have it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and don't know how to stop it; take responsibility for your own happiness, assert boundaries and ensure you're doing what's right for you despite this other person's perspective; and make sure you're responding to this person with maturity, don't fight negativity with negativity as that's just going to fuel the fire. Instead, ask yourself how you want to respond to them that's healthy for you. Also, start to ask yourself if you get anything from this person in your life and whether you've just fallen into the caretaker role that Claire's just described.

Claire: You can't save everyone, can you? You can't always save the world. However, what you can do is make the world a better place by working on yourself and becoming self-aware and protecting your own happiness. You may even help this particular person by showing them it's possible to live a life you absolutely love.

Helen: Well it's great that you could join us today and we've reached the end of this podcast. If you've got any questions for us you can contact us on our website which is www.lightningprocess.co.uk or leave us a message on iTunes. Have a great week!

Claire: Thanks for listening.

Helen: Bye!

Outro: Thanks for joining us, until next time! You're one step closer to living a life you love.