



Wednesday Workshop: Supporting Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Podcast Transcript Season 3 Episode 7: May 5, 2021 Self Worth & Motivation

Presented by Marissa, Adult Domestic Violence Advocate, and
Nouchee, Dual Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Advocate

MARISSA: Hello and welcome to The Women's Center's Wednesday Workshop, a podcast that shares helpful insight for survivors, community members, and service providers alike. The Women's Center is based out of Waukesha, Wisconsin. We welcome and serve survivors of all ages, races, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, nationalities, and immigration statuses. The mission of The Women's Center is to provide safety, shelter, and support to empower all impacted by domestic abuse, sexual violence, child abuse, and trafficking. Each episode will feature instruction on a healing topic. Today our topic is Self-Worth and Motivation. We are your hosts. My name is Marissa and I'm the Adult Domestic Violence Advocate here with The Women's Center

NOUCHEE: And my name is Nouchee and I'm the Dual Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Advocate. May is Mental Health Awareness Month. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Southeast Wisconsin is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to provide help to those affected by mental illness. NAMI Southeast Wisconsin works to improve the understanding of mental health conditions and share the hope of recovery by offering information, support, education, and advocacy services. According to NAMI, millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness each year. It is important to break the stigma of living with a mental health diagnosis and ensure that nobody feels alone or without the support they need. Our next episode will go more into detail about the intersection of mental health and trauma. Advocates at The Women's Center are not licensed therapists, but we can offer crisis intervention, emotional support, and coping skills for those who have survived abuse, as well as partner with our clients to find safe community resources that fully support their needs.

MARISSA: So what is self-worth in the first place? Self-worth is a person's own evaluation of how they see themselves and the value that they bring into the world.

When we feel very confident, we may have a higher, more positive self-worth. And when we're feeling low, we may have a lower self-worth. And this can fluctuate too, that's a normal part of the human experience.

For victim/survivors of abuse, they may have a complicated relationship with their own self-worth. If we look at a power and control wheel, we see that abusers often use emotional abuse, isolation or minimizing, denying, and blaming to undermine their partner's feelings of adequacy, competency, or worthiness of love. Something an abuser might say is “nobody is ever going to love you, like I do”. And this may sound romantic at first, but this type of language can be weaponized by abusers. This can make their partner feel like they will never find a healthy partner and need to stay in the relationship and endure the abuse to feel loved. An abuser making constant negative comments about a victim/survivors' character or values, or gaslighting them into questioning their own reality, can often cause them to internalize these messages and feel so worthless that they no longer feel empowered to stand up against the abuse. I tend to call this process “automation” because often an abuser starts these comments specifically to turn them into negative self-talk for the victim/survivor. The abuser gains the same amount of control but for “less work or effort” over time.

NOUCHEE: So what are some ways we feel worthy or that positive self-worth? A way that we feel worthy is when we identify things that make us feel good about ourselves or think about things that we've accomplished. So we might feel a great sense of self-worth when we complete a goal. And this can be big or small. Another way we may feel positive self-worth is when we recognize our strengths. So, what do we do well? You know, are we good at painting, singing, dancing, cooking? Or just whatever feels fun to you? What do you enjoy doing? We may also feel positive self-worth when we think about the challenges that we've already overcome. And when we also think about things that we're proud of ourselves for doing. Again, these are some ways and situations where we may feel positive self-worth.

MARISSA: And with that, what are some skills or tools that can help us build our self-worth. So, one of our favorite things to talk about and something that's perfect for any time, any occasion are positive affirmations. So good things that we can tell ourselves like “I am worthy, I am strong”, things such as that. You can tell them to yourself, write them down. You can display affirmations at home or work anywhere you may see them regularly. And use those affirmations or that positive self-talk often. And when we're hearing ourselves use some negative self-talk or putting our own self down, try some gentle interruptions when we do this. So things like “actually I can do this” or “I'm not worthless at all”. Even naming it can be helpful too by saying “that was negative self-talk and I want to show myself some more kindness than that”.

Another way to build our self-worth is surrounding yourself with support people who remind you of your worth. When we do receive a compliment from a support, we may be quick to push it away or discount it saying “no” or “but”. Try to challenge yourself to accept what they say. They know you and they aren't saying this for no reason. For me, I try to envision their voice retelling me the compliment when I struggle with my own self-talk. Reflect on these compliments and try to incorporate them into your positive self-talk when you can.

And be gentle with yourself when you have bad days, we all do. The goal is not perfection. Forgive yourself for times you were not kind to yourself or made mistakes that you now regret. We're all human and I know this is a cliché, but it is so true- it is so important to trust and believe in yourself.

NOUCHEE: So now we're going to talk about motivation. So what is motivation? Motivation is the reason or reasons for behaving a certain way or doing something. There are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is when we do something for an internal award. So, doing something because we simply enjoy it, doing something for personal growth, to learn, etc. Extrinsic motivation is when our behavior is influenced by external rewards. So, whether that be money, a salary, grades, praises.

And some things we do, may be both intrinsic and extrinsic. So, for example, working a job because we feel really fulfilled from it (learning about things that we're passionate about) and also because we want to get paid and have money. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are valid, and they both serve us in some capacity. It's important to have a balance of the two.

MARISSA: And again, because we are human, there are just times where we don't feel motivated and there can be some common factors as to why that is. Something that I feel like we've all gone through in the past year are the effects of COVID-19 or quarantining. Even though things have improved since last year, again, we have likely all undergone the traumas of the past year and have had it impact us negatively. Things such as health concerns, experiencing loss or grief, a lack of financial stability, just to name a few.

The current news cycle can be really exhausting right now as well, trying to keep up with current events. There have been some recent traumas in the news, particularly for the Black and Asian American Pacific Islander communities, and we can't ignore the impact that that has had on the psyches of so many.

Abuse can absolutely negatively impact our motivation. So for instance, attempts of leaving that didn't quite work out such as maybe the abuser utilizing more power and control. The victim/survivor facing barriers such as money or the legal system. Abuse

may make us feel trapped or that we've run out of options or that we feel knocked down. We may not have been given the opportunity to have anything of our own to feel motivated about such as jobs, access to friends or family, and so on. And constantly having to endure emotional abuse and internalizing those messages.

So with all of these, it's important to name and acknowledge these things. They are real and they impact us every day. You're not lazy. You've experienced trauma and maybe relying on your survival coping tools, and not necessarily the ones that help you thrive. Try not to chastise yourself for not swimming a marathon when treading water alone is difficult. You're doing the best you can and it's important to recognize that. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we need to satisfy our more basic needs such as the physiological (food, water rest), safety or shelter, belongingness and love from friends or family, esteem (feeling adequate and capable) before we reach that self-actualization or achieving our full potential. So again, all of this is to say it is so important to acknowledge the things that are going on around you and the barriers that you might be up against. You're not lazy. You're trying your best and it's okay to be where you're at. It's okay to want to be more motivated and we're going to talk about ways to feel motivated next.

NOUCHEE: Yeah, so some ways to feel more motivated is to keep the end goal in mind but remember to get there in steps. So set up small goals to keep motivated and celebrate successes along the way. If possible, don't set extreme time limits on yourself. And don't punish yourself if things don't get done perfectly. Be flexible with yourself if possible.

Another way to feel motivated is to reframe and refocus when you can. So similar to the gentle interruptions of negative self-talk mentioned earlier, it's also important to refocus on where we've grown rather than where our shortcomings are. So this is not the same as “just getting over it”. It's normal to feel hung up on our failures rather than our successes and occasionally, reflecting on our challenges or learning edges can help us grow further. Reframing and refocusing is so important, especially when we feel stuck. So for example, if we're feeling unmotivated, because we know that there are more chores or homework assignments that need to get done, instead of focusing on how much more needs to get done, which can carry feelings of hopelessness and can be overwhelming, reframe it and think about how much you've already completed. And let that feeling motivate you so that you can get things done one at a time.

Another way to reframe and refocus is realizing that you've already overcome so much. Acknowledge how far you've currently come, sit with it, and “smell the roses” when you can. I know we often look towards the future of feeling like we need to constantly be improving or moving our goal line further and further away. But sometimes, it's nice to just sit with the moment and realize that you might be right where you wanted to be 3-6-12 months ago. Give space for how far you've come and be proud of yourself.

MARISSA: Another piece of that is to show yourself some grace and patience. Healing is not linear, self-worth is not static, and motivation fluctuates. If you feel this way, nothing is wrong with you. You again are human. We may hear about success only being on a specific timeline or done a certain way, for example, making it while you're still young, experiencing the pressure to have everything together once you've reached a certain age, and so on. We don't have to follow this one rigid path to be successful and there are many others that haven't followed that path. For instance, designer Vera Wang entered the fashion industry at age 40. Actress Viola Davis had her first major role, as well as an Oscar and Globe nomination at 44. Julia Child put her first cookbook out at 50. So again, all of that's to say is that life is not a race. This is a process that will take time and that is okay. And it's okay if these things don't work right away for you. And it's okay if you need additional or professional support for more help.

NOUCHEE: Thank you for joining us to learn more about Self-Worth and Motivation. Our next episode will be about Stigma of Disclosure, Trauma, Mental Illness and Support.

The Women's Center focuses our work in partnering with clients to overcome barriers and gain a life free from violence. Our work is grounded in equity, upheld by inclusion, accountability, self-reflection, and continual growth. We believe that it is important for survivors to feel seen and heard. We believe that Black Lives Matter because we cannot end violence without addressing the distinct injustices that Black and Indigenous People of Color face. We know that all forms of oppression are ultimately connected, and when we center individuals most impacted, we are also supporting survivors who have faced any form of violence. While we are not experts in anti-racism work, we aspire to be allies in this movement. We all have a responsibility to contribute to unlearning racism and intersecting forms of oppression that take place in our communities.

If you would like to talk with an advocate about your own experience with abuse, please call our 24-hour hotline at 262.542.3828. Learn more about The Women's Center at www.twcwaukesha.org, and find this episode and resources by clicking "Resources," then "Podcasts" on our website. Thank you and be well.