

Ep #38: Stepping Back into Your Power



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With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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What I'm saying is as we start to go into summer, as we start to open things up, let's create a new plan. Let's change our expectations around what does reopening even mean. Because there's an enormous amount of freedom when we give ourselves permission to create where we want to be.

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Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Hey, hey everyone. Welcome to episode 38. So as we start to ease into opening up some of the states, I am super jealous of those of you who live in states that are actually opening up. For us in California particularly, Silicon Valley, my county, we are not. So we were just given an indefinite shelter-in-place order for our county.

So you know, there's a ton of counties in California, so everybody is on a little bit of a different timing and pace from each other. But needless to say, California is a very slow reopen. But I am hearing that other states are trying to sort of ease into this process and what not.

So I thought maybe we should talk about kind of getting back into life. And I think what's interesting in the midst of this whole COVID pandemic, we really got challenged in our normals. It started to make us really question, what is normal, and we started to really grieve what we used to have.

And so I'm sure you all saw it. There was a saying that was going around that's like, let's just embrace our new normal. And I always had some resistance to that because I'm like, this new normal is shitty. Social distancing, being terrified of a virus and people losing their jobs and businesses, I don't think so. I'd rather not make that something that's a new normal, so no.

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So I had a bunch of resistance to it. However, I know the heart to which it was intended. It's like, let's get used to the fact that worldwide, shelter in place is a thing. And it wasn't a thing, even in February for us in the US. We didn't even know what that was until it started rolling out.

But now it appears, we're starting to enter a phase in some states, and again, in my state, not a whole lot has changed, so that's just kind of where we are with that. But it's May. By the time this episode releases, it'll be June. And we're kind of getting into summer.

And I think there's a part of us that equates summer with freedom, time off, time to destress and decompress and be with family and friends and travel and get on an airplane and go somewhere exotic or go somewhere fun or just go somewhere for a weekend with a pool.

And because of the whole COVID thing, we know our options are fairly limited and that sort of sucks. So I think it's time for us to play with this idea of owning our power again. What does that look like as we slowly reopen? Because many of us, for the last, 11, 12 weeks, depends on how long you've been doing this, one of the things we've been grieving is how many of our freedoms we lost in the midst of this.

You lost your freedom to just hop on an airplane and fly to New Zealand if you want to. That wasn't any longer an option because things were shut down and closed, or you couldn't see in person certain family members that were maybe high risk.

And so it started this immense amount of grieving for a lot of us as we've already discussed in previous episodes, and we had a really hard time adapting to that and dealing with that and managing all the emotions around that, feeling like something bigger than us, powers above us had all the choices and decisions and were making them for us.

And it kind of put us all in this spot where we felt a little bit powerless. And you have a trauma story in that, you're going to feel pretty triggered. And now as things are opening up, I think it's time for us to start playing with this

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idea of embracing what feels good to us. Let's start stepping back into some of our internal power.

And so let's talk about this idea of just normal. And when you think about what normal even means, normal is just another word for things that we're just used to. Normal tends to be routines. Normal tends to be predictable. That's how we tend to define normal. Like, we're used to it. We don't have a whole - normal is almost - we almost like, shrug our shoulders and we're like, I don't know, it's just normal, it's just the way things are.

So then you have something extraordinarily terrible happen like a COVID pandemic and nothing is normal anymore. And it freaks out our brains, right? Our brains just start crying out and getting really upset because nothing that we're familiar with is happening anymore.

And so as we ease back into new life, the thing is that I don't think normal is coming back any time soon. COVID is here. And so we are going to slowly start to reopen, but from the states and the people that I've talked to that are in states that are reopening, I mean, it still sounds to me like there's a whole lot of precautions that are being put in place.

And again, this is not my lived experience because we're still very much sheltering in place as is, where I am in California, but I know other states are starting to reopen so I'm just hearing this secondhand from people that there are still a fair amount of precautions that are going on.

So even if you're allowed to go to a restaurant or you're allowed to go to a store, there's still a lot of precautions in place. And so it's still triggering a grief response because you're trying to do the old stuff the old way, and it's not available right now. You still have to stand six feet apart. You still need to wear a mask in some states. It just depends on where you are.

And so we have to get away from this idea that external things bring on internal strength or external things bring on internal happiness. They don't. And this is something that we're challenged by because we like to do things out in the world and they tend to bring us a sense of happiness or we feel

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distressed when we do them. And now those things aren't the same. They're not the way we remember them. And so we need to step back into our power internally.

And this is not a new concept. This is actually where a wealth of abundance and prosperity lives. It is actually inside of you. It's not in all the externals. It's not in all the things that are shiny and beautiful. It's not in all those things. Those things are all temporary fillers. But we need to learn how to support our internal worlds so that we just feel good.

And there's no perfection, there's no feeling perfect or 100% great every single day. That just doesn't exist. But what does exist is feeling good more days than not. And so sometimes you have to do some heavy lifting. Sometimes you have to go to therapy and work on trauma. Sometimes you have to get some coping skills for anxiety.

Sometimes you have to do a little bit of the heavy lifting before you start to feel that. So just because we can't go everywhere that we want to or we can't visit the same places that we used to in the same way doesn't mean we have to feel powerless every day. It doesn't mean that we have to feel overwhelmed every day. We can start to change the story.

And so just as things are starting to open up, maybe this is your time to start changing your internal story around how you feel. Because I think it can be a little bit of a dangerous mindset to just wait for the pandemic to be "over," and I do that in quotes like, I don't know what that looks like.

I'm with you guys. I get all the same information you guys get and reading all the same things you're reading, and so I don't know if we can ever go back to a time where this didn't happen. I think we have to grow through it. I think we have to take into account what routines that we've put in place throughout this time that actually support us and work for us, and kind of decide if we want to keep that.

And then what are some things that we've found that we don't really like, that we don't want to keep going forward? And we kind of process through

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that. But when you take it on with more of that mindset, you have freedom of choice. You have freedom of choice in how you feel and how you think and how you want to move forward in this thing.

No one can define that for you but you. And I want to put some realistic things around this. I mean, grief is still very much a part of this. And the very thing about grief is that it comes and goes like waves. It comes and goes like the weather. One minute you can feel totally fine, happy, and empowered, and the next minute you can feel not so great.

And so you want to just move through and learn how to support your emotions. Emotions are messengers most of the time, and so learning how to hear them and support them and have some goals along the way is going to be a great strategy.

So in other words, all in all, what I'm saying is as we start to go into summer, as we start to open things up, let's create a new plan. Let's change our expectations around what does reopening even mean. Because there's an enormous amount of freedom when we give ourselves permission to create where we want to be.

And again, you don't need a whole lot of externals to achieve internal freedom. That's what human enlightenment is all about. It's what the philosophers have been writing about for hundreds of years. And so we don't want to wait until it's handed to us. We want to start creating it.

Because having a good relationship with yourself is the gift that keeps on giving. It is not selfish to work on yourself. It is not selfish to engage in self-care. It is not selfish to take the time to support your internal world because the relationship with ourselves is the relationship we take everywhere.

So how we talk to ourselves, the stories we tell about ourselves in our own brains and our own responses and our emotions ends up being how we sometimes treat other people or sometimes the lens for how we see other relationships. And so there is a huge opportunity here for you to start

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working on the relationship you have with yourself so that you can improve relationships with other people.

So maybe that's a goal of yours going forward into some of this reopening. But what I want you to hear from me in that is that is never a waste of time. It's never a waste of time to work on the relationship you have with yourself and working on mental health. Never, never, never ever.

Because a lot of times, it's actually the missing key element in relationships. When we're suffering in relationships, a lot of times, taking time out and supporting ourselves, finding the right therapist, finding the right things to do is sometimes the best thing that we can do for ourselves in terms of moving to the next level.

I've heard that countless times from people, that instead of doing couples therapy or instead of doing family therapy, when people do their own individual work and then they come together in relationships, a lot of times, they can see each other clearer. So this isn't a perfect science or anything. Nothing about anything I've talked about today is - there's no perfection in any of it.

It's just general understandings that when we work on ourselves, it changes the way we see the world and the way we see other people. So as we move into some of these reopening stages, here's some things I want you to ask yourself.

So instead of giving you a bunch of tools, I think it'd be good for you to consider some questions to start some of this self-evaluation process. Because no one can define this for you but you. And that's the power. That's where the power's at. Rather than me telling you what you should be doing, I want you to think about what are my goals for this next phase? What do I want for summer going forward?

So here are some things to consider. Number one, what are some things that you've learned that make you feel good, that make you feel

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empowered? One thing that I've noticed is more people than ever, at least where I am, have been exercising outdoors.

I cannot tell you, in my entire existence, I have never seen so many people out on family bike rides on Memorial Day like I did this year. Like, it blew my mind. Now, a large part of that is because gyms are closed. But how cool is that?

I think there's probably some new activities you've been engaging in that maybe make you feel good or empowered. And just because gyms open up doesn't mean you have to go back to the gym. Maybe you want to keep doing family bike rides or maybe you want to keep hiking with your friends every Saturday or whatever.

But just because we're "going back to normal," whatever the fuck that means, doesn't mean you have to. If you enjoy baking bread, keep baking bread. If you enjoy being outside in the sun, continue doing that. There's a chance that in the midst of all this crisis and turmoil, there's some good things that came about it.

Like maybe you learned how to do some new things that you want to continue to do because they make you feel good and they make you feel empowered. And you want to make sure you're including that.

Number two, what time of day offers you the most time to just be? So is it first thing in the morning before the kids wake up? Is it in the afternoon when the kids are napping? Is it at night when everyone else has gone to sleep? When do you have time that is just dedicated to yourself?

And when you're evaluating this, you might think, "Well, there is no time that's just for myself." You might have to intentionally create it. And my guess, if you've had to work from home, educate your children from home, have Zoom calls, birthday parties from home, whatever, you have figured out a place in your house where you can be alone.

And I have seen some very creative setups that I've been very impressed by. So just kind of notice like, maybe in the midst of all this shittyness,

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you've figured out a quiet place where you can grab 15 minutes alone. And maybe that's something that you want to continue and you want to fill up those 15 minutes with self-care or listening to a podcast or listening to meditation music if that's your thing, or just staring at the wall while you drink tea because it's your first moment of silence.

Whatever it is, but kind of figuring out what fills me up in a 15-minute amount of time. Because I'm making the assumption that we're all busy and we all have a lot going on. I mean, even though a lot of people have been home, there's still a ton to do because your kids are home all day. You've got to entertain them, you've still got to cook meals, you've got to do shit.

It hasn't been just all calm and chill just because you're at home. Most of the people I've talked to, like, it's the opposite of that. There's a lot going on at home.

Number three, I want you to think about who in the midst of all of this has been a supportive figure to you. It may not be the people who used to be supportive figures, right? And so who are your people that you want to continue to have healthy connection with?

Because the last thing you want is to have developed good connections with people and then here we are, we're opening up the country again, and then you're just ghosting on people. That's not cool. So thinking about like, what relationships do I want to continue to foster and to nourish that feel good to me, and how do I want to do that.

And of course, this is state by state. I don't know if you're allowed to see people face to face. Again, California, we can't. So all of our shit still stays on Zoom and FaceTime and all of that stuff. But for those of you who have maybe some different setups in your state, you might be able to do different things. So that's why this is a question. It's kind of like, based on what's coming up for you in your state, how do you want to interact with people socially?

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And then number four, I want you to consider your own boundaries. This virus threatened all of us on different levels and you are allowed to have whatever experience you are having, whatever reaction, whatever response you are having to it. It doesn't have to be the same as someone else's.

And so as we reopen, there's going to be peer pressure on both sides. And so really important that you know what feels safe and good to you and that you put up internal and external boundaries around what feels safe to you. Just because things are opening up doesn't mean you feel safe enough to go to the grocery store or maybe you don't want to go to a shopping mall.

That's okay. Own what is true for you. Everybody is getting information and everybody needs to make the best decision they can with the information in front of them, and I really think we need to create a community and a dynamic of respect for each other and our decisions based on what's going on.

Just because things are opening does not mean people are going to feel safe like they want to go out. And on the other hand, some people can't wait to go out. So it's on both sides.

And then as you consider those things, try to create a plan for yourself going forward. What do I want my summer to look like for me? What feels supportive to me as a human, to my internal world, to my mental health, to my physical safety, to my physical health? What feels good?

And start kind of developing a plan moving forward of what you want to keep. And let me just do a little thing here for people that are in California or are in states that are not opening up right now. You might be thinking, "Well that's all well and good, but nothing's really changing."

So again, the heart of my message today, this is about creating internal change for yourself. We are not being reliant on external things. This is about creating your own internal plan of feeling empowered in the midst of all this shittyness.

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So just because you might be where I am, the state that I'm in, maybe you're in the same county as me, I don't know, where not a whole lot has changed, still considering these questions gives you a lot of information about how you want to move into summer.

Because otherwise, we run the risk of feeling really deprived and getting really resentful of the fact that we can't have the summer that we really, really want. This is a way to create some mental and emotional shifting around power.

Supporting your internal world so your external world feels better. That's what this is about. So regardless of what your state is allowing or not allowing, this is about evaluating what is right for you going forward.

Alright my friends, I hope you found this episode helpful. And of course, if strong emotions came up for you, triggers, overwhelm, anxiety, any of the things, take it as information that something in your internal world needs support. And there is never shame or blame in getting mental health support in your local state of residence. It is probably the best thing that you can do for yourself.

And lastly, if you liked today's episode, be sure you get on my email list. I communicate with you guys weekly there and give all kinds of fun stuff. So the way to do that is to get on my email list, nicolesymcox.com, right there on the front page. Alright my friends, I will see you next time.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.

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