



Episode 24 - The Dark Side of Self-Improvement

Welcome to this episode of the managing the smart mind podcast with Master Certified Coach Else Kramer, a.k.a. Coach Kramer.

Today I want to dive into something I've been noticing a lot in my coaching practice, which I call the 'Dark Side of Self-Improvement'.

What is the dark side of self-improvement?

Now you're constantly bombarded by messages that you can have a better life - which, by the way, is usually true.

You CAN have a better life.

But what all these messages suggest is that it's conditional - that you need to IMPROVE before you can breathe out, relax, have that better life.

Self-improvement messaging makes you believe that in order to have a great life you need to:

- become a morning person
- write every day
- work-out before 7 am
- learn to plan

and so on.

In other words: in order to have a better life, YOU need to become better.

Which, when you turn it around, becomes:

You can't have a great life right now because you SUCK.

It's when our brain buys into this that it actually start working against us, rather than for us.

We start working on the assumption that

1. We're broken
2. We need to constantly work to fix ourselves
3. We won't feel good until we reach our goals

And this is bad enough in itself, because these aren't fun basic beliefs to carry around.

But there's more.

At this point, lot of us get into a kind of abusive relationship *with ourselves*.

We don't need an outsider to treat us like crap - we take on the role of slavedriver and try to beat ourselves towards our goal.

Which results in - you've probably guessed it - even less confidence and self-esteem.

Hello vicious cycle of self-deprecation through self-improvement.

- You don't get to feel OK in the moment - because you've bought into the idea that you need to be fixed before you can feel good.
- You don't get to feel OK on the way to your goals - because you've bought into the idea that you can't be happy until you can achieve them.
- And you have a hard time working on your goals because you feel awful all the time, which tends to result in first escapism and then even more self-flagellation (beating yourself up - ecclesiastical style).

Because you feel awful in the moment, you try to get away from things. Which means you keep breaking promises to yourself (to eat less, get up early, publish the reel) and then wonder why you're so unreliable.

Why you can't stick to the plan.

When you keep this up long enough, you may give up completely.

Or, alternatively, decide to spend a shit ton of money on someone or something on the internet that promises a very easy and instant fix to all your problems (which, I can tell you, does not exist).

Net result: your self-worth decreases in all possible areas.

All thanks to so-called self-improvement.

Ironic ha?

So how do you say 'no' to self-improvement?

Your brain is probably saying right now, hang on, if I don't work on improving myself I will just sit on my divan forever and eat macaroons or nachos or ice cream whilst binge-watching all the things.

In other words, you tell yourself:

"I can't be trusted to do the right thing. "

And that, my smart friend, is the root of your problem - and of the solution.

You don't trust yourself to do the right thing.

You think you need to be monitored, policed, supervised.

You're constantly eroding your self-worth and self-trust.

And exhausting yourself with 24/7 supervision.

So let's go there. Let's go to that scenario where you sit on your comfy couch, or wherever you tend to relax.

Really picture yourself sitting there and not doing anything 'useful'.

How long do you think you'll last?

Seriously?

I give you a couple of days - a week at most if there's a lot you're trying to get away from.

After that, the pain of sitting on the sofa will become bigger than the pain of doing something that serves you, and you'll naturally switch back to behaviour that does. Like picking up empty pizza boxes, having a shower, checking your e-mail.

Is this always the case?

No. If you're in so much pain that you can't be with it, you will find other ways to move away and not be with yourself. This is when it's time to reach out to a therapist.

But in all other cases, your brain will start to dislike the stasis more than the movement, and help you switch back.

Worst case scenario: you've done nothing for a couple of days.

Thing is, this isn't really what you fear, although that might be what you're telling yourself.

What you fear is the way you treat yourself if you spent three days as a coach potato rather than working on your goals.

You fear all the ways in which you're going to be an asshole to yourself.

Good news: this is something you have the power to change.

You can decide never to treat yourself like crap EVER again, no matter what you do.

If you can't do it from unconditional love no worries, just do it because it makes much more sense; is much more constructive and productive.

So say a hard 'NO' to the idea of self-improvement, and instead, decide that you are utterly delightful as is.

And then set goals and start doing things from that place.

Setting goals without the desire to improve

But then how do you set goals, if not from a desire to improve yourself?

Ha. Thank you for asking.

You set goals from LOVE.

From curiosity.

From desire.

From excitement.

Instead of:

'I need to lose 20 pounds so I can feel good again'

try

'Wouldn't it be fun to lose 20 pounds?'

'Wouldn't it be amazing to feel 20 pounds lighter?'

Do you feel the difference in your body?

Instead of being kicked in the backside, you are being invited, being nudged to move towards your goal.

That makes the whole process so much more fun and sustainable!

Ask yourself:

If I believed that I was completely perfect, delightful, fabulous right now, what goals would I want to set?

Make a list - and notice how these goals make you feel.

Now there's a whole process of going after your goals using feelings instead of beating yourself up, which I explain in **Episode 18**, so you definitely want to revisit that one too.

But the most important takeaway today is:

Stop buying into the idea that you need to be improved and that you can't be trusted to do the right thing.

Instead, work from the assumption that you are perfect, fabulous, delightful right now, in this moment.

Set goals from love, curiosity, desire, delight - and LOVE yourself towards them.

Break that vicious cycle of using self-improvement to beat yourself up, and your life will become so much lighter.

Not to mention that it will become so much more fun and easier to achieve your goals.

Will you still have to do things that don't feel good?

Of course.

You'll still feel like crap sometimes.

But it won't be because you're beating yourself into submission.

Please be kind - to yourself and your smart mind.

Ditch the self-improvement and love yourself towards your goals.

Have a wonderful, kind, compassionate week,

Else a.k.a. Coach Kramer

Would you like some help in managing your inner slavedriver? I can help. DM me on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) to learn how, or send me an email via podcast@elsekramer.com.

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