

# Laziness Lie with Devon Price

**Devon Price:** [00:00:00] If you define your value by your productivity and you see your needs as threatening because they are a threat to that productivity, You can't even tell and honor when you want to say no to something, because you think saying no is inherently worse than saying yes.

**Debbie Sorensen:** That was Dr. Devon Price on psychologists off the clock.

**Diana Hill:** We are

Four clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science-based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships, work and health.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in mile high Denver, Colorado, and coauthor of ACT Daily Journal

**Diana Hill:** I'm Dr. Diana Hill coauthor with Debbie on ACT Daily Journal, and practicing in seaside Santa Barbara, California.

**Yael Schonbrun:** From coast to coast, I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston-based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown University.

**Jill Stoddard:** And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard [00:01:00] author of Be Mighty and The Big Book of ACT Metaphors.

**Debbie Sorensen:** We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

**Diana Hill:** Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off the Clock!

Hi everybody. This is Diana and I am thrilled to share with you something that could really help you become more psychologically flexible in the new year. I have a course for you. Many of you are interested in learning more about acceptance and commitment therapy and how to apply it to your life. And I'm offering a foundations of act course.

That is a virtual self guided. Deep dive into act. This course is for the general public, but also for practitioners who want to learn more about the six core processes of psychological flexibility, you'll gain tools to unhook from

challenging thoughts, cultivate, acceptance, and willingness, and take committed action towards what you care most about

so here's how it works. There are six modules. To the course, and each module offers bite-size teachings, meditations, and visualizations, journal prompts, handouts and [00:02:00] experiential practices. You'll get a chance to take a pre and post self-assessment to check your growth in psychological flexibility and the course launches on January 3rd.

It's a great holiday gift for you or someone you love. And if you pre-register at [Dr. Diana.hill.com/courses](http://Dr.Diana.hill.com/courses) by December 15th, you get \$50. And entered in to win a free act daily journal. So go to [Dr. Diana.hill.com](http://Dr.Diana.hill.com) and register, and I'm so excited to take this journey into ACT with you.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Hi there everyone. This is Debbie and I'm here today with Jill to introduce an episode I did with Dr. Devon Price about their book. Laziness does not exist. And Jill and I were just talking about what we're going to say in our co-hosts intro. And I think the problem we're having is that this episode has so much relevance for both of us.

And we had so many thoughts about this, that we have to reign ourselves in here a little bit, because I know for myself. This is a book that a client recommended [00:03:00] to me, and it had a huge personal impact on me personally. It just blew my mind. And then I have seen themes around this issue of laziness and some of the cultural and systemic issues feeding into this Laziness Lie as Devon calls it or.

This narrative we get into around laziness. I've seen it in clients, you know, early career professionals. I've seen it in, you know, older clients as well, who have just really, uh, this is really embedded in the way that people are, are thinking, Jill, what are your thoughts?

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. I mean, my mind was blown because I went into this expecting that we were going to talk about us as individuals and really it became a, a big piece of the conversation was about systemic issues and that we live in a culture where our sense of worth is dictated by how busy and how productive we are.

And so much of what the two of you talked [00:04:00] about really resonated with me. And it was like, I was thinking about personal example after personal example, after personal example of ways, I've seen this play out in my own life.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah, me too. I completely have had the same experience. Jill, can you tell a few examples from your own life about.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think early in my career, I worked in a healthcare system that is a large employer of mental health professionals. And I saw person after person, after person getting burnt out because of the productivity requirements and the lack of flexibility and, things like having to ask for a vacation day, three months in advance, which is just unreasonable. Um, and so for me in that situation, I ultimately ended up leaving. Many, many of my colleagues have also left, but part of the systemic issue is there were people speaking up, it wasn't that individual staff failed to bring these issues up to the leadership.

It's that everyone who left was just very [00:05:00] quickly replaced by another early career person. Um, and so there was just no motivation for that system to change. And so for me, I left that job. My next job was a more academic position, which I loved, I saw in the name of being a team player, people were saying yes, and taking on far more than what was supposed to be required of them contractually, because nobody wants to be the person who says, well, that's not my job.

I only agreed to do this much. So there was burnout happening there. And I had sort of learned from my first experience where I thought, you know what, I'm just, I'm going to set limits here and I'm going to work. To work. And if that means taking on X number of students, I'm not going to take more. And what I also did was I talked about this with my colleagues and said, Hey, I think you are amazing that you're so willing to take on extra and work, but here's the problem with that.

As long as we pick up the slack, there is no incentive for leadership to provide more [00:06:00] resources. Makes sense. And what I found was my fears was that I would be labeled someone. Who's not a team player, someone who's lazy because I wasn't taking on extra that I would disappoint everyone. It just didn't really happen.

You know, it was, it was fine. And, and certainly there are times where I've set limits. Like for example, I've recently started saying no to taking on unpaid labor. Cause I'm asked to do that a lot as I think many are, especially women. And I've gotten reactions from people like, wait, what? Maybe you don't understand the ask.

I mean, this isn't that much of your time and it's really easy. And I'm like, no, I understand the ask. And my answer is no. So people have been disappointed. They've been surprised that I would dare to set these limits and. It's fine. Like it's a little uncomfortable, but I think, and you and Devon talk a lot about this as like, um, and they say it's a super power to be able to tolerate [00:07:00] disappointing people, the feelings you feel when you disappoint someone or the guilt you feel when you say no.

And that has been so true for me in my life. What about you?

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, it's just such an interesting problem because I think it is so ingrained and expected. It's almost, you know, we all need to pay the bills and we need to have a job. Maybe we even care about our work. And so we just feel like we're always hustling and we have to work with. In our job, home childcare, caregiving, whatever the case may be, that we do start to internalize that.

And I think for myself, I certainly feel it. There are certain areas of my life where I feel very motivated and engaged and I can, you know, no problem. But even in those areas, it's hard sometimes to take a break or to say no. And then there's other areas where I get self-critical because. Something that I neglect or I just don't prioritize and I'm constantly feeling guilty.

And I think just being aware of that tendency is really important. And then, [00:08:00] like you said, we can start to set some boundaries and say no to things, but that's not easy to do. You know? I mean, sometimes I think you're right, Jill, that we do say no and people and it's okay. It's fine. But there's other times when it's a huge act of courage, like if no one in your law firm ever takes a vacation day, And you're like, I'm going to take a week off because I need to recharge.

And I want to go sit on the beach somewhere. There can be some consequences to that, and I think it can be very difficult to do that. It's courageous, but it's also, sometimes there is a bit of a push.

**Jill Stoddard:** You're right. It's a huge act of courage. And maybe if more of us were willing to engage in those acts of courage, it could actually shift the culture a little bit.

You know, if one person at the law firm actually takes their vacation time, then maybe somebody else will be willing to do that. And especially if they're talking about. You know, maybe there can be some shift as long as we just keep doing

what's expected and not talking about it again. There's like [00:09:00] no incentive for the leadership or the system or the organization to change.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, and that's part of the reason I think conversations like this books, like Devon's book, I'm just hearing this. Come out more and more here in the U S lately, where people are starting to speak up about it, starting to notice it really taking a look at this and recognizing this is toxic. We can't keep doing this.

So along those lines, we hope that you enjoy this conversation and that you find it as a mind blowing as Jill and I did.

Dr. Devon Price is a social psychologist, professor, author, and proud autistic person. Their research has appeared in journals, such as the journal of experimental social psychology, personality and social psychology bulletin and the journal of positive psychology Devon's writing has appeared in outlets, such as the financial times, Huffington posts, late business, insider, PBS, and NPR. They live in Chicago where they serve as an assistant professor at Loyola university. [00:10:00] Chicago school of continuing and professional studies. Next year, Devon will be releasing their book, unmasking autism discovering the new faces of neurodiversity, very exciting Devon. And in the meantime, we're here to talk today about their book.

Laziness does not exist. Devon, it's an incredible book, just a goldmine of ideas that kind of blew my mind personally. And I can't wait to talk about it today. Congratulations on both of your books, Devon, and thank you so much for being.

**Devon Price:** Oh, yeah. Thanks for that.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. So your book it's called lazy doesn't laziness does not exist.

And it's about this thing that you call the laziness lie. And so I just thought it'd be nice to start out with some basics. What do you mean by the laziness lie? What is that?

**Devon Price:** Yeah. So the laziness lie is a really deeply embedded cultural belief system. That we're really strongly indoctrinated into, um, in American culture, but really throughout the world. [00:11:00] And, uh, the laziness lie as I, um, talk about it. It has three main tenants. Um, the first is that your worth is defined by your product.

Um, the second is that you can't trust any of your needs or limitations because those things are just a barrier to productivity. So they are threatening to your self-worth. So you have to ignore them. And then the third tenant of the laziness lie is that there is always more that you could be doing. So even if you are one of those rare people who can really sustain working 60 hour work weeks or, or whatever else, um, your house isn't clean enough, you don't exercise enough.

You don't volunteer. Um, you're not, uh, learning enough about the world, um, or developing new enough marketable skills. There's basically an endless litany of things you should be doing. So no matter how busy you are, you're always going to feel lazy and like you're coming up.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Right. You'll never get there. Right. I would love to [00:12:00] unpack a couple of those tenants a little bit more starting with the one around the very first one. And. Appreciate about your book. Something that you highlighted that just hit me like a ton of bricks was about the moral judgment part of that, right?

That there's this sense that if you're worthwhile as a human, you are just very industrious industrious. Could you just talk a little bit more about that? Like sort of how that shows up as a moral framework.

**Devon Price:** Yeah. So to really understand that, I think we have to look back to where it came from and where it really was popularized. The Puritans and kind of puritanical Christianity. Um, so this certainly isn't true of all flavors of Christianity, but certainly the kind of dominant one, um, that has kind of been really deeply entrenched in American culture, the, uh, the Protestant work ethic and things like that.

Um, and the people who really spread it throughout the U S as it was being colonized were the Puritans who believed that if you had a strong work ethic, a [00:13:00] drive to get things done, that was a sign you had already been sick. So it wasn't even about earning your right into heaven. It was that people who are driven are blessed and people who are listless unmotivated, can't get things done, unfocused, whatever it is they're basically damned already.

And so then you don't have to worry about what happens to them. And we don't have to take care of them as a society because they are wicked and lazy. And that was also a really useful justification for instance. And was a very popular, um, bit of the writing and an explanation of why enslavement was kind of quote unquote, okay.

At the time, this idea that there are certain types of people and even certain races of people that are not as driven, uh, not as human and like need the structure of being forced to work, pushed on them. So it's been with us in a really powerful way, culturally, since that time. And it [00:14:00] continues to manifest today in how we talk about what the value of life is, whether someone is quote, unquote, contributing to society, which if you even really take a step back and think about that framework of is someone contributing to society.

What is society other than people? Why wouldn't we ask what society is doing for its members rather than what a person is doing for society, but it's such a third rail. It's such an embedded assumption into how our culture and economic system works, that we don't take that step to look back and question it and think about why are we saying a person needs to earn their right to be alive.

Um, but it's, it's hard to get people to the place that we've been questioned.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah, and I want to talk more a bit later about that. Some of the cultural aspects of this. And also just, I mean, highlight what you're saying about how it comes out across as, as like a judgment, we form about people and also about ourselves. Right. And that when we [00:15:00] really latch on to that, I mean, first of all, we can be so self critical with ourselves.

Like if we loafer around all day where we feel like. Lazy and not, you know, we just get into so much self criticism about it, but it also really does. We can judge other people, you know, that homeless person you pass with no idea what they're actually going through, but it justifies, I think some, I don't know, kind of nasty behavior towards other people.

**Devon Price:** Yeah, laziness as an explanation blocks, systemic critique, or looking at the social context around a person. So many of us from a very young age, we hear this message that you're not supposed to give money to someone who's on the street asking for it, because they're just going to spend it on drugs. And you might even hear the more insidious idea that, you know, they need to, uh, work their way out of it, pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

And, um, and, and the latent message there is that they deserve what [00:16:00] situation they're in. And it's because they didn't work hard enough where they made bad choices and. That explanation is very convenient and comforting because then you don't need to consider whether it's possible. You could end up in the exact same situation or, um, maybe the world isn't fair and isn't a meritocracy and someone ends up in that situation because.



You know, a queer teen whose parents were unaccepting and kicked them out of the house, or there's someone who is self-medicating for PTSD, or, you know, they've been applying to jobs for years, but once you kind of have that Scarlet letter of being unemployed or being houseless, um, on your, on your records, it doesn't matter how hard you work.

Um, so of course, you're going to fill your time with anything that helps blunt the pain. Um, so. Yeah. So laziness is this the shorthand for, I'm not going to worry about the larger cultural and economic [00:17:00] forces that create these problems in the ways that society has failed someone. I'm just going to see myself as fundamentally different from that person.

Or I'm going to tell myself as long as I keep working really, really hard, I'll never have to worry about being in that person's.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Right. Oh my gosh. That's I think what you just said is so important, partly it creates that mental distance, like, oh, that could never happen to me, which is just, you know, almost like it could be a little. Delusional almost right. It gives you this false sense of security, but then it leads to that next piece.

Like, well, if I just work really hard, if I just keep everything going, if I keep doing this overwork thing that I've been doing, and that just feeds the laziness lie, Right. This sense of like doing, doing, doing, we can never do enough. And that's, that becomes like a security blanket almost then I don't have to worry about.

**Devon Price:** Right. Yeah, it is this self-perpetuating cycle where if you think, or you have been convinced to think that the world is just, and that [00:18:00] working very hard, is that your only way to. Earn any stability in society and working hard as is your way out. And people who suffer are lazy. People who didn't work hard.

Um, that is a very, cruel, worldview. When it comes to being applied to other people. I'm not gonna worry about this person who's suffering. I'm not going to worry about our social safety nets, not taking care of disabled people, um, or traumatize people. Um, but it is also a worldview that then tells you that you are on the.

For yourself and you can't count on any other people either, right? Like you, that you need to constantly work hard forever and never be vulnerable, because if you did, you would be no different from that person who, you know, has been



unemployed for years and is sleeping on the street. Um, so it's both uncompassionate to other people and towards yourself, um, because it's just purely, you know, evaluating you in terms of what your output is and saying that you should live and die by how much you can.

Even though, if we look at the span of human life, most of our [00:19:00] lives, we are not productive. We all become unproductive eventually. So it is a dead end path. Um, no matter what, even if we are some of the people who are privileged enough to be able to work hard, um, and be financially stable for some period of.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Can we go a little bit of a detour into the capitalist piece of this, the capitalism I, man, I just keep seeing critiques of capitalism everywhere. I look in terms of, I do a lot of work with burnout and just how. I don't know, toxic. Our culture has gotten around work and overwork. And I think that there's a really important piece of.

that cultural element there

**Devon Price:** Yeah. I mean, I, I would say everything that I've said so far is a critique of capitalism. Right? Um, these, these belief systems came under colonialism and capitalism and, um, particularly an economy that was dependent. Uh, enslaved people who, how do you, how do you get people to work hard when they have nothing to gain from it?

Um, and, uh, indentured servants [00:20:00] and poor working class, people who have been fed, you know, for, for centuries at this point in this country, this mythology that, um, they shouldn't question why the person above them make so much more money off of their labor than they do instead, they should be judgmental of people who are.

You know, their coworker who isn't working as hard or, you know, the person who isn't working and is getting a handout, quote, unquote from the government. Um, it's all really a capitalists indoctrination, um, to get people on board with being exploited as badly as workers are today. Because of course we're working far longer for far less wages than, than people in decades past.

Um, the only way you get people on board with that as you kind of tantalize them with this whole. This is how you prove you're a good person. This is how you prove you're a good worker someday. You're going to ascend the ranks of the corporate ladder and whatever else, and finally be comfortable and finally

earn the [00:21:00] right to rest rather than seeing that as just a basic human need that everybody has.

Um, no matter what.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah, it's so interesting to me, how there's such a social justice component to your work and others. I mean, there's a movement happening around this. I don't know if you're familiar. I follow the nap ministry on Instagram, uh, Trisha Hersey and her. You know, people that she's working with have this idea of rest, not just being a privilege, but a human right.

But one that's sort of been taken away from people. And so it's really what your work. And I think others who are doing similar work, it really is like a form of social resistance.

**Devon Price:** Yeah, absolutely. Um, and that was something that was really important to me that even though this book is categorized as self. It's kind of a little bit of a Trojan horse in a way where I'm trying to kind of reach people who are really overworked and burnt out and might typically only reach for one of those books.

That's like, here's how to set better boundaries at [00:22:00] work. Here's how to stand up for yourself better. So often we talk about these things as if they're individual neurosis, right? Like you're a workaholic and you need to learn to say no, or you're burnt out. And so you need to find a different job. But that's really not the answer because almost every job is going to be hardwired, to extract as much productivity out of you as they can get away with for as little pay, because that's how the economic system we're in works and is designed to work.

And so, you know, yeah, there are some tools in the book for setting better boundaries in your life and surviving this awful system. But systemic problems really require a systemic solutions. And so we all need to get into this together. And I think that's a really powerful thing about Trisha Hershey's work that, um, we can't approach rest and setting boundaries and all of [00:23:00] these things as something that you do, if you have the power to at work, if you're someone who has a high enough status position or high enough status in society, let's say as a white person to get away with, you know, using your vacation.

We all need to together say, and we're starting to see this now with like the great resignation. Uh, we need people to just kind of, as a collective, say, this can't go on anymore. We're not going to do this. We're going to refuse. And that's, I think a really important part of rest as resistance that sometimes people miss,

um, that, you know, it may begin with individual steps, but if we need to all kind of do it together.

Okay. To change what the norm is and kind of build any culture from the ground up.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, I appreciate that. You're speaking out about this very much, and that's part of why I really wanted to have you on the podcast, even though, you know, I'm a clinical psychologist, I care about the level of the individual and we'll get into that. But it's really important to acknowledge that upfront that this [00:24:00] is really as a systemic and it's a cultural issue and that it's not going to change unless we take a head on look and people start speaking up.

about it.

**Devon Price:** Yeah. And I think that's a really important thing for clinicians to be mindful of because I've heard from so many people who they go to a therapist and they're suffering under these pressures, the pressures of capitalism. And there are a lot of clinicians who are not comfortable, even acknowledging and finding a way to hold space for the fact that the world is unfair.

And there are things that. I don't have control over as an individual. And of course you want to give your clients tools to help them individually survive this stuff and, and stand up for themselves and build resilience and all those things. But, um, it's, it's just really dismaying. How many clinicians are comfortable alongside that also saying like, Hey, if you're struggling, that's not actually your fault.

And there are there's things you can do, but there's a limit to how much you can do. And so don't beat yourself up or think that you're crazy. For [00:25:00] continually getting into these workaholic patterns because it's the system around you. That's making almost everybody do that. Um, and, and I think I can, there's a way to speak to that stuff that is incredibly validating and can help empower.

Yeah. And can help empower people instead of just, you know, being kind of, uh, uh, all doom and gloom kind of learned helplessness, kind of Uber, anything.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Right. It's validating, empowering and compassionate in the sense that like, Hey, you're not to blame for this, right. We don't need to be blaming the victim here. So another tenant of the laziness lie that I wanted to

highlight is about, um, just not being able to trust your own feelings and limits, right.

Almost this sense that we're all. You know, lazy, slothful full people deep down inside. And we have to just override that by working all the time and like working when we're tired and taking on too much and then exercising and cleaning the house at the end of the day and that kind of thing. And one of the things I like to do in my practice is to look at. At emotions [00:26:00] with curiosity and sort of see what they're telling us, like the wisdom emotion. So I'm wondering if you could just talk a little bit about, you know, if we were to look at it that way, instead of like, we have to override this, what do you think that we can learn from those moments when we're tired, we're unproductive, or I don't know, having trouble focusing.

**Devon Price:** Yeah, I think, um, taken to its logical end point. It would completely upend how most of us. Just the nature of the Workday for most of us is such that we push through when we're feeling listless and, and focused. We don't make time to sit with our sadness or grief. I mean, just look at the pandemic and how that's affected most of us.

And most of us have just kind of kept going along to work and logging into zoom and trying to not look dead behind the eyes as, as you know, an incredibly traumatic like international mass death event is happening. And. Forest fires and any number of other like [00:27:00] ecological disasters, the amount that we are forced to ignore our feelings, uh, just for the sake of kind of being productive and seeming quote unquote professional is just, it's just massive.

Um, and, and that extends to, you know, it's both macro and micro, so we're ignoring our massive grief. We're ignoring massive societal issues that, um, tackling them would append. The Workday for most of us. And we're also just ignoring the little things like, oh, I'm going to write a couple emails before I get up and go to the bathroom, or I'm going to work through lunch and not really sit with my food and kind of savor it and listen to my body and what it's craving and you know, when I'm hungry and when I'm full with all of those things, um, it really phrase our connection to our body in a really fundamental way.

And, and I would also even argue that. If you define your value by your productivity and you see your needs as threatening because they are [00:28:00] a threat to that productivity, it erodes your whole relationship to consent. You can't even tell and honor when you want to say no to something, because you think saying no is inherently worse than saying yes.

And so. Th there's just so many extensions of that you say yes to expectations at work that you don't have capacity for. You let people kind of take of your time and attention when you're already at your capacity. And you just ignore when your body is getting a little bit sick, tired, hungry, antsy. When you need to take a walk, all of that kind of stuff.

Um, and, and listening to those things would mean. Just having so much more of a connection to our bodies and to physical reality that most of us, especially if you're working some kind of desk job all day, or you just don't have control over your hours, which is most jobs. Um, you know, we're really divorced from our bodies and our emotions.

Most of the.

**Debbie Sorensen:** working very hard on getting better at this and my own life. I [00:29:00] mean, I think as someone who's been high achieving and worked very hard, most of my life, I have really learned how to. Tune that out. And I think that it takes a little, I mean, your book has helped in some other tools just to tune in more.

And I know that, you know, this culture of overwork, it really does take a toll on people. And you have your own personal story around that, which you share in detail in the book. But I was wondering if you could maybe use yourself as an example to talk about the toll that this cycle takes on us. If we do.

Just tune out those signals and just work, work, work all the time.

**Devon Price:** Yeah, absolutely. So, um, so my life is a, um, an illustration of how, even if you play by the rules of this game, It's never going to bring you happiness and it is going to have a real toll at you. Um, so, you know, I was a very like high achieving, um, you know, kid gifted education that whole [00:30:00] complex that many people have talked about.

Um, and for me, it was definitely also related to being both autistic and being trans, where I knew I was separate from kind of society's ideals. From a young age I knew, or I believed that I needed to achieve a lot and make a lot of money and get a lot of impressive credentials because that would protect me from the fact that society wasn't going to accept me for who I really was.

So I took college classes when I was in high school. I finished college early, went straight ahead to grad school. Really just kind of lived a life of the mind or whatever, trying to finish that as quickly as possible. I completed my PhD when

I was 25, went straight on to a post-doc and pretty much right after I defended my dissertation, I got a really, really bad fever.

Um, and it would hit me every single night, um, at around like six or 7:00 PM, just like bone shaking, you know, 103 [00:31:00] degree fever. Um, and it lasted from February. Um, this was 2014, February of 2014, all the way through November of that year. single night, really debilitating fever and chills. I had anemia, I had a heart murmur, got all these medical tests really couldn't figure out what it was, you know, like lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, all of this different stuff.

Um, and the only thing that resolved it ultimately was I had to just slow down and rest because even during many of those months that I was sick, I was still trying to work a full-time job and exercise and like, It's so sick. I was trying to cram as much productivity as possible into those hours of the day that I didn't feel sick knowing that I was going to get sick every evening.

And eventually I just had to realize like, this is absurd, this isn't working. You need to listen to your body and just rest. Um, and it was only after a couple of months of doing that, that my health came back. And that's what really got me on the path of saying, okay, this is not tenable. What academia expects of people, isn't [00:32:00] tenable, what capitalism demands of you.

Isn't healthy. Um, and I need to forge a completely different life. And that's, that's what got me interested in this as a topic.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I'm just really curious. You've made a lot of changes. It sounds like to be able to do that. You've made a conscious effort and I'm just wondering in your life now, it seems like you from reading your book, it seems like you are deliberate about that. Is that hard for you to this day? Do you ever get sucked back into that laziness lie way of thinking yourself?

**Devon Price:** Oh, yeah. Oh my God. I'm horrible at this stuff. Like I'm, I'm, you know, I have, I, my last book is a book that's coming. Well, my first book, when it came out, I was in the process of writing another book while I was doing press for that book. And now, you know, my second book is about to come out and I'm working on a proposal for a third, like.

Um, neurotic. And when I have downtime, I feel guilty and I [00:33:00] don't know what to do with it. And I don't know how to enjoy it. Like you don't unlearn, uh, you know, three decades of cultural programming that dates back, you know, centuries before you were born, um, easily. And it's still constantly



that programming is still coming from me from the outside, in my workplace and in the publishing industry and everyone around me and everybody like, you know, uh, giving me feedback that is still based on, you know, you've done something impressive.

And so that's what we like about you. You know what I mean? Like it's so sick. There's no individual way to like climb yourself out of it, unfortunately. Um, so I'm constantly finding ways that it's still hurting me and hurting the people I care about. Um, and, and people that know me in real life think I'm such a, like, they, they make fun of me in a, in, you know, in that way that only friends can, that I'm just like so full of it because I'm telling other people to do less, but I still have these neuroses, like I think everybody has them and, and I've gotten really good at saying no to things, but that doesn't mean that I don't [00:34:00] still have this like insecure little animal.

Clawing away inside of me. That's always saying like, you're not doing enough. You're a bad person. You'd need to earn your right to live. Like, um, a probably will always be worn with that for sure.

**Debbie Sorensen:** but Hey, you know, awareness is huge and it seems like you are aware that that is a struggle for you and you can write. Make some better choices right around that.

**Devon Price:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Um, I think, you know, behavior and feelings don't have to be perfectly lined up so I can have these insecurities, but I can still know. When I behave in certain ways when I only keep, you know, maybe two meetings maximum on my schedule, um, for any given Workday, I am healthier and I'm nicer to the people that I love.

And I, you know, like I can see the behavior, I can recognize what I need to do. Um, and you can, you can train yourself to have new habits and new limits. Um, especially once you get better at that piece that we were talking about earlier, which is listening to your body and listening to your feelings. I [00:35:00] am at least now in a place where, when I'm really frantic and stressed out, I know that that's a signal that I've been doing way too much and saying yes to way too much.

Instead of that being assigned that I'm lazy and weak.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. So you can kind of adjust course. Well, here's the, I think I, I. Fine tuned point about this that I just want to, I'm curious about your thoughts, because I think as a clinical psychologist, sometimes people get into



some avoidance patterns around certain tasks that might be important to them, but maybe it's because it's uncomfortable.

They don't want to do them. And definitely in your book, you're not advocating that people. Do nothing all day, every day. And they don't engage in some sort of productive, you know, activity. And certainly in your own life, you do, you write books and you teach and you do all these things. So I guess what's where do you find the distinction between having courage and doing something uncomfortable versus where it drifts too far into just [00:36:00] ignoring your body's signals and.

Um, overriding them, like where do you find the happy medium there, I guess, or what's the distinction between the two.

**Devon Price:** Yeah, the way I think about it is that it isn't about drawing a medium, uh, kind of middle ground between working really hard and like being completely listless and doing nothing. I think it's about a completely like a values reorientation and. Our understanding of how human nature works, this idea that people want to be or ever would succumb to just being completely listless and doing nothing, um, that that's some like force inside of yourself.

You need to be afraid of or balance. Um, I would encourage people to let go of that fear. Human beings want to feel like their lives matter. People want to feel connected. People want to do things that matter to them and stimulate them and challenge them. Um, unfortunately a lot of times we are in situations where we don't have access to those things.

So a lot of the people who [00:37:00] look really apathetic or who are really depressed, they are people who have been denied agency time and time again in their lives. Or if someone seems to have no interest in doing any work, is it because most of the professional options we have available to people are jobs that are not fulfilling and don't line up with what a person values.

Right. Um, so Rebecca Solnit is this author. Who's just incredible. A lot of work. Her work is incredible. Um, but a book of hers that I really like to point to is, um, it's called a paradise built in hell and it's about natural disasters and emergencies and how. Society breaks down. Following a big disaster.

Policymakers are usually really a worker worried about the evil forces in human nature. That people are going to start rioting and looting and sleeping on the street. And it's going to be chaos. And what actually happens when there are

natural disasters or terrorist attacks or emergencies is people run [00:38:00] towards the danger.

People want to dig people out of the road. Make food, find other people connect. And she cites all these interviews with people from these natural disasters who they described that period after society broke down, quote unquote, as their, their favorite time of their whole lives, because they actually got to feel useful and connected.

And so many of us are craving getting to do something in our lives that actually matters. And so many of us have jobs that don't matter or that we can't write. Much pride in, you know, um, we'll get, don't get that sense of fulfillment out of. So I would, I would say generally speaking, we need to just like trust in human nature and understand that even if you need a lot of time to rest and recuperate right now, or even if you're depressed, like no human actually wants to just lay on the couch all day.

People want to make art. They want to show up [00:39:00] for their families. They want to be really involved in their faith. People want to do things that matter. It's just that a lot of the things in life that matter to us are not rewarded under capitalism and that's the real issue. So it's not about there being a happy medium between being lazy and being industrious it's that we need to find a way to actually build society in such a fashion that the things that humans are actually motivated to do are rewarded and supported because right now, the only thing that we really facilitate people doing is working.

Um, and working for, you know, like a corporation or doing a lot of things that aren't necessarily fulfilling in those ways. And we could reorient society. So things like raising children, taking care of elders, making food for people, being a supportive ear for people are things you can just choose to do with your life without having to worry about the bottom line as much.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I love that. Yeah. Just a shift in how you think about it. And then that we talk a lot on this podcast about values and [00:40:00] meaning, and I think that's absolutely critical, right? What's meaningful to you and you will have that drive to do that. But maybe part of this trap is that the things that people are filling their lives with are, are, have actually gotten away from that mean.

Um, but it can feel a little scary maybe to let go of that pattern when that's what people have been taught and what people have learned.

**Devon Price:** Yeah, it's, it's really intimidating. And it's a really hard question because let's say you do decide, okay. I'm not someone who wants to constantly churn out productivity all the time in the conventional, like capitalist sense of it. My calling is to be there for people. To foster relationships and things like that.

How do you do that under capitalism? You know, one way that people might do that is by becoming a therapist or a teacher or, um, working in childcare or something like that. But like, it's actually really hard under capitalism to say, here's what my values are. Here's what really matters to me. How am I going to actually live doing that thing?

**Debbie Sorensen:** How am I going to pay [00:41:00] the bills? Right.

**Devon Price:** Right. Yeah. So it is really daunting and it creates this huge disconnect where, you know, it's hard to be a starving artist. It's hard to be someone who the meaning of your life is through the connections you have with the people you love. Um, and we almost treat people like that who are doing really important things for society as if they're like parasites or something.

It's.

**Debbie Sorensen:** It is, it is,

**Jill Stoddard:** Hey listeners. If you've loved learning about acceptance and commitment therapy on the podcast, and you're a clinician who wants to incorporate more act into your clinical work, I have just the training for you. I'm offering my breakthrough act techniques and experiential exercises, a clinical roadmap to help clients overcome psychological distress through PESI.

This is an on-demand training that you can access at my website. Jill starter.com/. Learn. This is an interactive way to really bring your clinical work, especially your work with act to the next level. You will get six CES and I hope to see you there.[00:42:00]

**Debbie Sorensen:** well, there's a lot in your book about just some practical advice for people in different domains of life to get a little bit out of this trap. And I think I would really recommend people take a look at your book. I think it's so worthwhile, but I wanted to just go through maybe a couple of examples from your book that had personal.

Personal resonance for me and some of my clients and that kind of thing, because I think people will be able to relate. Um, I think one I really want to

start with, because I think it's such an important one is around weight and bodies and exercise. And I think there's such a connection between like weight stigma and this laziness lie.

And then also, you know, it's just another piece of that constant. Never feeling good enough. Could you just speak a little bit about that? Cause I think that's a really important one.

**Devon Price:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Um, and I am really informed on all of this from the work of fat liberationists specifically. So I do want to just kind of like name that. So like [00:43:00] people like Aubrey Gordon who writes, um, under the moniker, your fat friend and people like that, highly recommend people look into her.

Um, but basically the idea is under capitalism, a person, most people, unless you're wealthy and kind of own a factory, or like own a way of generating profit. If you're not that person, your main way of getting by in life is what your body is capable of. So we treat bodies like objects, they're objects of, you know, productivity.

They can produce something that then you can sell where you have they're capable of some kind of labor that can earn you. Um, or they're an object of desire. Um, and you're objectified in that way. And that your way of attaining security in society is by how attractive you are and whether or not you can get a wealthy husband, all of these things.

Um, and, and so that's a really. I'm objectifying, obviously kind of way of looking at bodies and it is almost always going to lead to fatphobia and ableism. Basically [00:44:00] anybody that isn't set up to meet kind of the productive ideal is seen as wasteful, extravagant, requiring too many resources and not conforming to what society wants bodies to be.

Um, and this also tracks back to anti-blackness throughout history in a really deep way. Um, our whole conception of what is a healthy body type is based on, uh, just a very narrow range of like, um, kind of skinny European people and anybody whose body kind of deviates from that is also seen as abnormal and animalistic and greedy.

That's also another thing that's really kind of wrapped up in this, um, this idea that if you eat too much or if that you consume too much space with your body, you're greedy, you haven't earned the right. Take up space in that way. And so that manifests in a lot of different, really insidious ways. First of all, if you just

look at like political cartoons and messaging in our media, anytime, um, a creator is trying to [00:45:00] illustrate that someone is lazy or stupid or whatever, they usually draw that character as fat, or they cast that character.

Um, we see it in political cartoons and regular cartoons and things like that all the time and like comedy, you know, films and things like that. Um, and, and the other way we see it is how we talk about exercise and dieting as signs of your virtue and your diligence. So if you, you know, eat these, you know, pristine kind of, um, whatever, uh, salads and goji Berry bowls, you are.

Hardworking industrious, valuable, attractive, appealing person. And if you don't exercise every day, even if it's just because you don't have time, because you have a long commute in a long job, that's still nonetheless as assignment, you're lazy and worthless. And you know, if you get sick, it's your fault and you should have just tried harder to lose weight and all of these things.

Um, so yeah, they're really inextricably linked in my view. Um, fatphobia and diet Coke. And, [00:46:00] um, the lazy must lie.

**Debbie Sorensen:** You know, I saw some that I wish I could remember the source on this, because it was a couple of years ago about how our beauty standards or attractiveness standards are, it takes so much energy. It's like tied to how much, how hard you can work to almost like beat your body into submission, to, you know, look a certain way.

And you have to spend money on certain clothes and you have to exercise and eat in a certain way. Even just thinking about it. It's so exhausting. And then you think about the other meaningful things you could be doing with your time or resting or whatever the case may be. And it's just, yeah. I mean, it's, you can never get there or try so hard.

And it's like for what, you know,

**Devon Price:** Right. And it's just treated as like the baseline, like, and this also connects back to that standards of what it means to look professional, which I'll also just like, want to briefly highlight that, um, that we expect people to corral their [00:47:00] bodies and make them conform to a certain standard. And that's just kind of like, if you want to be respected, you have to meet the standard.

And of course, it's. Fat phobic. It's very white supremacist. There's lots of pressure. If you have curly textured hair to straighten your hair, to, you know, dress in a very bland inoffensive way that isn't sexual, doesn't reflect your home

culture. If your culture isn't European, all of these different things that conforms to a very narrow set of gender standards and, um, and to just, you know, cover up every.

Flaw or what's been deemed a flaw with whether it's with makeup or shapewear or, um, changing your hair, texture, changing your gender presentation, all of those things.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Right. Cover up every ounce of your humanity almost. It feels like.

**Devon Price:** Yeah, absolutely. Individuality. Yeah.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. Well, that's really interesting. Um, another area that I wanted to talk about, I learned a new word, reading your book. Cyberloafing right. And I think you [00:48:00] write about technology in a few ways in the book one day. Around, you know, sometimes we take a break and goof off online.

I do pretty much every day at some point. Um, and on the other hand, there's this pressure. I think this goes back to what you're just talking about, you know, the pressure to be Insta perfect on social media and post your perfect house and your perfect. The bikini picture or whatever the case may be. Um, and also just that information overload that we're bombarded with.

So how do you maybe even in your own life, or just generally recommend that people manage media consumption in a healthy way?

**Devon Price:** Yeah, it's really hard. Um, so, so the first piece I guess, to touch on is all the ways in which technology has made the laziness lie, even worse. Um, so in the industrial organizational psych literature, we had this idea of work-life interference, um, which is just, uh, basically a, a way of referring to the [00:49:00] fact that as technology has consumed more and more of our lives and made us more and more accessible, 24 6.

The line between when you're on the clock and when you're off the clock has eroded into almost nothing. So you're always on call. Slack notifications could come at any time. You know, you can be emailed at any time, but then in some ways, now we're on an even faster paced schedule where you're supposed to reply to messages, just instantaneously.

You can schedule a zoom meeting from anywhere. And so how do you know when to set a limit and especially during the pandemic and work from home, for many of us, there has been no limit and no line between here's my workspace. And here's where I was. And that, um, that means people never get to kind of psychologically just like check in with themselves and play and goof off and do things that are restorative and just have a life.

Um, and so that's incredibly destructive, um, and stressful. And [00:50:00] at the same time, we also demonize people for using the internet in any way that isn't a work approved. Which is that cyberloafing piece that you mentioned? Um, so things like checking Facebook while you're at work or online shopping or whatever.

Um, even though we actually know from the literature that that's just a natural part of the Workday, people are going to seek out some novelty, seek out some social contact. People need a break from repetitive, boring tasks, and it can actually be beneficial for us to do so. Um, so in terms of how do we balance all of these.

I wish I knew, you know, um, the nature

**Debbie Sorensen:** right.

**Devon Price:** mean the nature of my work too, is that I'm on social media a lot. Um, and I try to think about it in terms of I do what I want. Like what do I actually want to do? So I am someone who I like being heard. I like ranting about the things that I'm passionate about. So I do like actually being on social media a lot, but I have to be really clear with myself about, I [00:51:00] don't have any obligation to respond to notifications, to read all this.

To respond to every message that I get, I'm doing this for free because I like it. Um, and I'm not going to do the things that I don't like or feel that, you know, and the expectations that people project on me are, are valid. Like they just aren't, you know, like those things are going to happen. Um, but that's easy for me to say, because I can decide to do that.

That's not the same thing as like, you know, you can't choose to just ignore emails from your boss. Right. So. It really depends on the situation that a person's in and what they can get away with, but we really desperately need a shift in the cultural norms away from this expectation that you're going to respond to every notification instantly.



**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. I feel like we could have a whole nother hour conversation on that. So we'll leave it here. But I do think, yeah, there is sometimes the sense of like, we have to be constantly responding to everything. We have to read every article we have to it's like that's too much pressure. And on the other hand, sometimes we're just gonna, you know, I [00:52:00] like to watch Saturday night, live skits sometimes on YouTube.

There's no crime in that. That's a nice way to relax. I'm sure when I'm like trying to work on something hard and I'm mentally fatigued, like, you know, it's okay.

**Devon Price:** Right. Yeah. Yeah. And also like with this topic, I think with digital boundaries, there's a lot of scripts floating around for like, here's how you say in an email. Oh, don't expect a response within 24 hours or here's how you tell someone that you don't answer the phone after 6:00 PM and all of this stuff.

And I tend to say. Don't worry about ma like you show people how to, what to expect from you, from how you act and you know, your boundaries about your behavior, you know, more than they're about

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah.

**Devon Price:** forcing other people. So just like when you can get away with it, just like, don't answer the email until you're ready to answer the email.

They'll figure out what your timeframe is from how you interact. You know what I mean? Like, I think the only way we're going to break out of this pattern as much, just again, refusing the oversight. expectations people have of constant access. It's just not humane. That's [00:53:00] pretty ridiculous.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, speaking of that, that's a perfect segue because I think my favorite chapter in your whole book, it's titled your relationships should not leave you exhausted. And I'm a bit of a people, pleaser people, pleaser in recovery myself. I'm trying really hard to get out of that trap. I want to, if it's okay with you, I want to read a quote because I actually read this to a client recently.

It's from your book. The laziness lie has fundamentally warped our sense of boundaries, making many out bus believe that other people's problems are ours to solve. It tells us that if we care for someone, we have to S we have to suffer to help them. Unfortunately, we can't actually fix another person's problems.

So we end up frustrated and run down, realizing we've been pouring energy into helping someone who can't or won't meet us halfway. The laziness like gilts us into taking on responsibilities that aren't ours to carry before we get wrapped up in yet another dramatic ill-fated attempt to save someone. [00:54:00] We ought to ask ourselves if another person's problems truly warrant our involvement.

And if so, which kind of, which kinds of involvement from there, we can begin breaking out of the insecure approval seeking patterns that make us throw away hours of effort, trying to help a person who isn't receptive to. I mean, can I just say how much that chapter hit me? Like a ton of bricks, because I think that is a part for people who try to gain the approval of others and to always be there for everyone.

It does get, I think, to this really unhelpful place where it's just exhausting and it's too much, and it doesn't really get us anywhere.

**Devon Price:** Yeah. And it often makes you resent people who you're pouring all this energy into when they like didn't even ask, you know, like we, we set ourselves up for so much frustration and failure. Thank you. You know, all I have to solve this person's problem for them. I have to manage their emotions. Um, and maybe, you [00:55:00] know, and sometimes of course, people do come to us with that expectation directly.

And it's just, I've just seen so many people, you know, it's just an unhealthy dynamic and their families and their romantic relationships, uh, just really enmeshed friendships and yeah, it's.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. Well, any people pleasers out there who are listening, I think you should check it out because you have, you actually have some things to say to people. And I found that really helpful. I'm going to like, I dunno, photocopy it and pin it on the wall or something like that to say to people to just, you know, it's not uncaring, but it's like a way to just kind of say, you know, I support you, but I'm not going to take this on as my problem, basically.

**Devon Price:** Right. And getting comfortable with disappointing people. Like if you're a people pleaser, and then you think that you always need to say yes, because saying no is less productive and less virtuous and less caring. Like you're initially going to feel really freaked out when you say no to someone and they have an emotional reaction to it.

So just getting used to weathering [00:56:00] those initial bad feelings. And realizing it actually, isn't your job to keep everyone satisfied and it's okay for

people to be disappointed because then they're getting useful information that lets them recalibrate their expectations. And that will be helpful for them in the long run and for the relationship.

Uh, it's such a challenging skill, but oh my gosh, it, once you start building up some of those relational skills and distress tolerance, it's so worth it. It's, it's incredible. It's such a super powered to be able to be like, no, I'm not available for that. And to not have to explain it like, oh, it's like, it's addictive.

Really? Like it's, it's like a rush once you feel comfortable doing it.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. even though it has that initial pain, sometimes of people being a little miffed by it, it feels really good to, you know, save yourself right.

**Devon Price:** Yeah. Yeah. Once you just like start living in a way where you're not constantly. Feeling dread and resentment and about, oh, I need to go do this thing because I said yes. And you know, I really didn't want to, but I need to, because otherwise this person will be mad at me. And one time [00:57:00] they did this thing for me, like once you just like, let go of all that and actually listen to your gut for the most part, it's you, it, it just makes your relationships so much better and frees up so much brain space.

It's

**Debbie Sorensen:** yeah. Liberating. Well to, to sort of end the interview here in a moment. I just there's one final, I guess, topic or question I want to throw out there because you've done activism. And in your book, one of the things you write about is activism, fatigue, and clearly, I mean, there was just such a Social justice component to this line of work.

So to just think culturally and systemically, if there was something you could change in the world, whether it's like, I don't know some part of this that's really ingrained or some cultural messaging or something like, what would you like to see change? If you could be in charge of the universe and change something.

**Devon Price:** Oh, gosh, you know, um, a lot of people step away from the book saying that it's an argument for universal basic [00:58:00] income or something like that. I think in terms of policy matters, I think things like that, like building up more of a social. Support system that isn't based on proving that you deserve it or that you need it badly enough that it's okay for you to get assistance.

Um, I think is kind of the, the first, uh, point in terms of like, if I could wave a magic wand and just change one thing about the world, um, having some kind of universal, basic income where anybody could live, no matter how productive they are or aren't, I think would really free us up to think about, okay, how do I actually want to live?

How do I actually want to spend my. And can I actually believe that all lives are valuable no matter what a person is doing or not doing what that life? Um, that would really be the thing. Cause I don't know how to like wave my hand and undo history and undo the culture, um, when it is as deep seated as it is.

But I think if we got rid of how coercive [00:59:00] capitalism is, um, and gave people some autonomy to decide what they wanted to do with their lives. That would change the locks.

**Debbie Sorensen:** That would go a long way. Well, I appreciate you being here because I think conversations like this are happening and I think that they are a step, so I appreciate your work. And I was just wondering Devin, how can people find you on social media or keep track? I know you have your next book coming out.

How can people learn more or find you on.

**Devon Price:** sure. Yeah. So I post writing regularly on Devin price dot medium dot. So that's D E V O N P R I C e.medium.com. And so those are like essays and blog posts, and those are all free to read, um, on social media. So Twitter and Instagram, um, I'm at Dr. Devin price. So just Dr. Um, Devin price. Um, and then my, my books are pretty much everywhere.

You can get laziness does not exist anywhere books are sold and, um, unmasking autism comes [01:00:00] out in April of 2022. Um, and that's preorderable anywhere that books are sold. Uh, subject that's interesting to you as well.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, we can't wait for your next book and thank you again so much for joining us today.

**Devon Price:** Yeah. Thank you so much for having me.

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