

Conjuring Up Courage

#88

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi & Dr. Devon Price

Shohreh Davoodi: You are listening to episode #88 of Conjuring Up Courage. For today's episode, I had the joy of speaking with Dr. Devon Price about their brand new book, Laziness Does Not Exist. The book details a belief system that Devon likes to call "the Laziness Lie," which teaches us that hard work is morally superior to relaxation and that people who aren't productive have less innate value than productive people. We chatted about the historical roots of the Laziness Lie, how to start believing in your own inherent worth outside of what you produce or achieve, and steps you can take to live a life that isn't built on constantly overextending yourself. To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/88. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/88.

As a reminder, the show has officially changed names and will no longer be known as the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. With this name change comes an expansion of scope that will allow me to speak with even more amazing people doing impactful work in the world. While things may look and sound a little different around here, this is the same show, and I'm bringing the same style that you have come to know and love through over 80 episodes thus far. So, let's get to it.

[Music plays]

This is Conjuring Up Courage, and I'm your host, Shohreh Davoodi. As a self-trust coach, I help people come home to themselves so they can be more of who they are and less haunted by who they think they're supposed to be. I created this podcast to celebrate what's possible when you commit to being brave. You'll hear from diverse guests who

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are refusing to let fear and self-doubt stop them from building fulfilling lives and creating a better world for everyone. I'll also teach you my favorite tools, strategies, and mindset shifts so you can do the same. Consider this your invitation to stop living according to "shoulds" and to step into your motherfucking magic instead. Stay open, get curious, and let's grow together.

Hi Devon! Thank you so much for coming on the show today. I am delighted to get this chance to talk to you.

Dr. Devon Price: Thank you so much for having me.

Shohreh: Yeah, so I read your Medium article, Laziness Does Not Exist, some time back in 2018 after it was published, and it really resonated with me. So much so that I've continued to share it with coaching clients ever since. Then, a few months ago, I asked my followers for suggestions for people to interview on the podcast, and someone recommended you. So, I went to your profile and saw that you were releasing a new book called Laziness Does Not Exist, and at first, I assumed it must just be a coincidence, and then I realized you were the same person who wrote that essay. So, I immediately knew I had to have you on the podcast to talk about this book.

Devon: Oh yeah, awesome. That essay reached so many people that it's like so cool to keep seeing it popping up and connecting with people in like all these indirect ways. It's like really surreal.

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Shohreh: Yeah, I just had not committed your name to memory, and then I was so excited to be like, oh, you are the person who wrote the essay, and now you've expanded into a book, even better.

Devon: Yeah, and when the essay first came out, I was already out as non-binary, but I had a different name. So that's also where the disjoint is, maybe, for a lot of people too.

Shohreh: Oh, that makes sense as well. So, first, why don't you just tell me a little bit more about who you are and the path that led you to write that article and then to eventually expand it into an entire book.

Devon: So, I'm a social psychologist by training. So, in theory what we're supposed to look at as social psychologists is how the situation a person is in and their broader social context influences their behavior. So instead of looking at things like mental illness or personality traits, things inside of the person, we apply a lens of what is pushing a person downstream towards particular behavior or away from a particular behavior. So that's the lens that I look at mostly through, is I'm thinking about them with my kind of academic brain.

And I noticed, after I finished grad school and when I was teaching as an adjunct, that despite a lot of psychologists having this kind of training, we don't necessarily apply that thinking when we're talking about our students or other people that we actually deal with in our real lives in general. So, I would be teaching at these places where there were a lot of working adult students, students who were juggling full-time jobs or elder care while taking a full course load, and I would hear

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fellow psychologists say, like, "Oh, these students are so lazy." Or, you know, "This student isn't graduate school material. Don't even get their hopes up." Like this really dismissive stuff that was locating their struggle inside of them as a person instead of looking at the context around them.

And myself had this big struggle of, right after I finished grad school, getting really, really sick, needing to really just slow down after years of just really pushing myself really hard and working myself to the point of sickness so that I could finish grad school on an impressive timeline. I was very, you know, achievement-motivated and oriented and all those things.

So I kind of started putting these pieces together and realizing, okay, I am someone who has succeeded by a lot of society's benchmarks, and I'm miserable and it made me sick, and I've been trained to think about why the situation a person is in and their broader context influences their behavior. And yet, I still see all these people around me, people who were trained the exact same way, making all these really individualistic, moral judgments of people who are clearly victims of circumstance. This is not adding up.

So I wrote an essay called Laziness Does Not Exist that was kind of about all of these things, and it reached a lot of people because I think a lot of people have had that experience of a parent, or a professor, or a teacher looking at you in bad faith and blaming you for your own struggles. And since it connected with so many people I realized, okay,

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this is not the end of it. I could actually write a whole book about the many different areas of life where this presents itself.

Shohreh: And I also have to say, as an aside, that from following you on social media, I saw that you have an adorable pet chinchilla named Dump Truck, and I had made a mental note to ask you about Dump Truck in our interview. And then I was delighted to see that Dump Truck actually gets a shout-out at the very end of the book.

Devon: [Laughs] Yeah! Ooh, I love when people ask about Dump Truck, and I love that my editor allowed me to be self-indulgent enough to talk about [laughter] my chinchilla, and like, Mad Men, and just like, you know, TV shows that I like and YouTube channels I like. But yeah, I actually think like, having a pet is a really great way to practice not moralizing laziness as much as we've been trained to. Because it's like, you look at your pet and you just have just as much love for them, like in my case when Dump Truck is literally ruining the floorboards and sleeping in a lump in the corner. He's not productive, and he has just as much value when he's destructive or when he's just sleeping. So, like, practicing remembering that is really helpful to really thinking like, oh, maybe actually I have worth even when I'm not producing things.

Shohreh: [Laughs] I have two dogs, so reading that resonated with me because one of my dogs is getting older, and she loves to sleep all day and just move a little bit to get some belly scratches or something and then go back to bed. And I'm like, I think she's the hottest shit in the world, and I don't judge her for that at all.

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Devon: Right, yeah. She's got her priorities. I mean, some dogs are neurotic, but animals generally are un-neurotic about their needs and their feelings. We question every little feeling that we have, like am I really hungry? Have I worked enough to justify taking a break, you know? Whereas an animal is such a good model of like, oh, I'm tired, I'm gonna sleep in the middle of the day.

Shohreh: Damn you higher consciousness.

Devon: Right? [laughter]

Shohreh: So, the core of the book is a societal belief system that you call the Laziness Lie. So, I think let's have you start by explaining what the Laziness Lie is.

Devon: Sure, yeah. So the Laziness Lie is my, kind of, term for something that's an outgrowth of puritanism, and Protestant work ethic, and the logic of white supremacy in our culture. And it has three main tenets. The first is that your worth is determined by your productivity. The second is that you can't trust your needs and limits. So kind of that stuff I was just talking about of, oh, am I really tired or do I need to just beat myself up into having more willpower? And then the third tenet of the Laziness Lie is that there's always more that you could be doing. So, you could be taking on a side hustle. You could be learning a new language on your phone on Duolingo. You could be volunteering more. There's an endless array of things to beat yourself up about. And no matter how much you're doing, you can always feel like you're not enough.

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Shohreh: And I really want people to understand what you said about where the Laziness Lie comes from, because you discuss in the book how this isn't a new belief system. Like, it's actually deeply wrapped up in historical and ongoing systems of oppression.

Devon: Right. The puritans really believed that if someone had a drive to succeed, that was a sign they were blessed. And if someone was unmotivated, it was a sign they were already damned. It wasn't even like a work your way into heaven kind of thing, it was like, if somebody is depressed, they're already fucked, you know? You don't have to worry about helping them. Kind of justification for not helping people and looking down on them kind of thing.

Shohreh: [sarcastically] Amazing!

Devon: Yeah [laughter]. Which is even worse than the way that people think of it, 'cause I think people normally think it's like, you earn your worth through working really hard. And there it's kind of like, oh, actually if you don't have a drive, you're screwed, we don't even care. And that ideology was very, very politically useful when you are colonizing a country, enslaving all of these people, and you're trying to find ways to manipulate and exploit people's labor by really moralizing hard work and telling people that, okay, we've enslaved you, and you don't have any rights, you don't have anything to look forward to, but working is moral, working is good. And so, you can take gratification out of that.

And so that was really drilled down hard, that that was like a productivity-obsessed form of Christianity was really indoctrinated into

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enslaved Black people in the U.S. And then after abolition, those same kinds of stereotypes and ideas were really used to keep workers from joining forces. So after enslaved Black Americans were freed, or after slavery ended I guess would be the more accurate way to say it, there were all these political cartoons that would portray Black people as lazy. And that was really propaganda to get poor whites, who were also being exploited to not the same extent, to kind of say, oh, okay, these are the people I should be suspicious of. I shouldn't be suspicious of the bosses that are taking advantage of me. I shouldn't join forces with these people who I have a lot in common with. They're lazy. They're taking advantage of the system.

It changes a little bit how it presents itself over time. But we're really still stuck with those same stereotypes. We still blame people on disability benefits for being lazy. We're still taught to view homeless people as lazy, to see fat people as lazy. Almost anyone that society kind of pushes to the side, it's those same old messages of, you can't trust them, they're taking advantage of the system, they're lazy. And if you don't want to be like them, you should just work really, really hard.

Shohreh: Yeah, I think it's so important to unpack that when we see something as being moral or good, who decided that? Because most often it was white men.

Devon: Right, and white men with like the capital who were trying to get a way to, if you're not paying people a fair wage, how do you get them to keep working really hard for you? And that's by making them proud of

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how hard they're working and feeling like that makes them better than other people. All of that stuff.

Shohreh: 'Cause all of this historical context here then leads to the capitalism that we have now. Because when I read the Laziness Lie, I'm just like, ah yes, capitalism.

Devon: Yes, I don't always name it as explicitly because I'm trying to like, kind of Trojan horse the self-help book readers into realizing, oh hey [laughter], this isn't just a problem of like, I need to have better work/life boundaries, it's the whole system for centuries has been trying to make it impossible for me to have boundaries. But I think that is something that's really important to emphasize that like, this is because of capitalism. It's because of slavery. All of that stuff. It's not just like, oh, you're neurotic and you say yes too much and you need to learn how to say no. Like that stuff's great, but we have to get to a place where we can make it so that everybody is free to have work/life boundaries.

Shohreh: Right, there's the balance between there are systems that really need changing, and there are some things that we can do to help us not get so caught up in those systems.

Devon: Right, yeah. Because unfortunately right now the people that do have more freedom to walk away from a bad job, set limits at work, that's a relatively privileged position. And a lot of people don't have as much of that freedom as someone like me. As a professor, it's very easy for me to say, oh, I'm so busy, I can't take on this thing. And I can even lie and

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do that [laughs] to make sure that I have enough free time. And I wish that people didn't have to lie and say they were busy and overwhelmed to get out of doing something they didn't want to do, but also, I wish everybody had the freedom to be sneaky, and let people down, and wiggle out of obligations the way that I can.

Shohreh: In your research for the book, did you find anything that may help people who do have less power and autonomy, who feel sort of trapped in the cycle of overwork but don't have as much privilege to get out of it?

Devon: Yeah. Malicious compliance is a thing. I talk about it a little bit in the book, but there's a subreddit called Malicious Compliance, there's a Tumblr blog, a bunch of different social media sites that different workers, usually service industry, food service workers, things like that, submit stories to where basically, you follow the rules in such a rigid way that you're kind of getting away with something. It's kind of like rules lawyering in a way. [Laughter]

If you know that you're legally entitled to having a break every four hours and your boss is really not allowing you to have that, just literally walking off at the four-hour mark and clocking out. Which sometimes you can't get away with that, but some places, because of how their clocking-out system works, you can. Or just doing a process the way you were originally trained how to do that task in this really slow, meticulous way that kind of slows down the grind of the job that you're at.

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There's dozens of examples of that on the subreddit that people should check out because it's a little bit different if you're working in a grocery store versus if you're working on a construction site or something like that. But that kind of thing can work. Documenting problems repeatedly and going to HR can kind of help.

And then like, when all else fails, it comes down to joining forces with the other people that you work with and talking about, like, okay, we're all really getting screwed here, can we unionize? Can we go on strike? What are the things we can do if we all recognize that we're all getting screwed in the same way to build up some kind of power to push against this? 'Cause unfortunately, I think individual level tips and tricks won't always be enough, especially in industries where you've been really disempowered over time.

Shohreh: I like this idea of trying to band together with other people you're working with because I do think that a lot of the lack of agency in certain positions comes from deliberate secrecy from management of not talking about salaries, not talking about what other people are doing, because they want you to be in the dark. They don't want you to be able to share with each other.

Devon: Right, yeah. And even though it's completely legal to talk about how much you're getting paid and to be really open about a lot of that stuff, it's really discouraged. And so, just knowing that you have a legal right to do that is something that lets you have a little bit more confidence asserting it. And I think remembering that the powers that be kind of want you to have an antagonistic relationship with other people. Where

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I want to look like I'm the one who's working the hardest because then I'll be the most secure in the workplace, and I'm going to resent the people around me 'cause it looks like they're not working as hard. Which that's exactly how they want you to feel. They want us to be atomized and working really hard. It's like this arms race of coming in early, staying late, working really fast, all of this stuff.

So the second you break out of it, you free up everyone around you to start doing the same. And it's really, really scary, especially the less power you have. But when you can do it, you actually are swimming against the current, and establishing a new social norm, and giving other people the freedom to do the same thing.

Shohreh: Right, it's moving from this dog-eat-dog situation that the Laziness Lie perpetuates, to looking at other people and saying, well, if I'm struggling, maybe they're struggling too. And we're all on the same level, maybe we can come together and we can work on this. I think any time we can find those possibilities of community and not have to face this by ourselves—'cause again, they definitely want us to think that we're alone in our thoughts and our feelings—the more it also can help just with processing the emotions of it too and finding out that you're not alone.

Devon: Yeah, exactly. I've heard from so many people who are super overworked that the first thing that they express is resentment, and often it looks like resentment of other people around them. Like, oh, I'm always having to pick up the slack for this person. Or like, oh, this person called in sick, so now I have to stay late.

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And it's natural to emotionally respond to the person who's right there, who you initially are like, this is the source of my problem. But if you just take a step back and look at it, it's like, oh, well why are we so short-staffed that one person getting sick left us in an impossible situation? Or why does this person have so much work on their lap that they can't handle that then flows over to me? We need a third person here. Fight the real enemy. [Laughs] Use those emotions to take care of yourself and cut back instead of working really hard and then resenting other people for not working as hard as you are.

Shohreh:

And, of course, this is how the Laziness Lie works because the conditioning is so deep that it becomes self-perpetuating, where it's like, we keep holding up the system because we feel like we have to and that's how we're gonna benefit as well. And you actually write in the book that, "When we don't have work to do, it can feel like we don't have a reason to live." And that maybe sounds super stark, but I have seen this with a lot of my clients who are burned out, yet hate the idea of not being busy.

Devon:

Yeah, and I suffer from it too. Like, it sucks. If you just always define who you are by your job, and you spend all of your time and energy working, when you do take a break you feel really guilty because you know that you have more that you could be doing, or you imagine your inbox filling up with emails and you're just getting really anxious that you're not doing anything to tackle it. And you're so tired that you can't even really enjoy any of the things that you thought you were gonna do during your down time. You might just be catching up on sleep, not

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really doing anything that's more gratifying than that, that's more fun, and creative, and social.

And so, you just get into this pattern where even your time off does not feel restorative and doesn't feel like anything to look forward to. And so, what do you do? You pour all of that anxious energy back into work, and it's such a trap. So, usually I think what that signals is we actually need way, way, way more time off to first rest, and then once you're a little bit more rejuvenated physically, think about okay, what do I actually enjoy in life? What's something I could actually put energy towards that isn't work? That does take some energy, but is like stimulating. But it's so hard to get back in touch with that side of ourselves with the system we're in.

Shohreh: I've talked with multiple clients this week about taking some vacation days because one, we're in a pandemic right now, so people can't actually travel anywhere, so there's kind of this feeling of like, is it even worth it if I can't go anywhere? And then I've had multiple people express, they're like, but I'm already so busy at work, so if I take the time off, it's just going to make it worse. And I'm like, that is exactly the sign that you need to take the time off. [Laughs]

Devon: Yes! And what can you let fall through the cracks? And I know so many people like this. Like, they have to do a bunch of extra work in advance of a vacation, and then when they get back they have to work to make up for the vacation, whether it's answering emails or whatever. And that means that your company is understaffed, or you have too many clients, you're freelancing for too many people, whatever it is. You're drowning,

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if you have to work extra to be able to take a vacation. To the extent you're capable of it, going like, okay, what can I actually just let happen late? Or what emails can I just archive and if it really matters the person will come back to me in a week? That kind of thing.

Shohreh: But Devon, that would mean actually caring about our needs and putting them first, and the Laziness Lie does such an incredible job of teaching us that having needs is a bad thing, especially if you're a woman or a marginalized person. With women in particular, I am thinking of high-maintenance and dramatic being insults that get used to teach women that they need to be more agreeable and low-key and to just not have any needs at all.

Devon: Yeah, and I talk a little bit in the book about how self-care has gotten this really frivolous, feminine stereotype associated with it. This idea that resting and taking a bubble bath, that that's what taking care of yourself is and that it's kind of a bourgeois, almost like white lady extravagance thing. It's so weird that we consider taking a break or having a life outside of work to be non-essential and frivolous, and to feminize that. But it does make sense in the legacy of just never valuing women's labor, whether it's reproductive labor, caregiving, maintaining a home, all of that stuff.

Shohreh: It's being constantly asked to do more and more labor, whether it's, like you said, taking care of children, you have a household maybe to take care of, and then a lot of people are also working full-time jobs on top of that, doing maybe the emotional labor of taking care of their partner who's not as in touch with their feelings or something like that, and

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then it's like, how could you possibly have needs? Where would the time for those needs go?

I see so many people who just feel trapped in that, like but how can this possibly change? I'm getting it from every angle. And I think what you said about being willing to let things go is a key part of that. And if we continue to hold ourselves to these standards we've been told our whole lives that we have to have, right? Like, this impeccable, clean house and these perfectly groomed children, it's like, yeah, you're not gonna have time for your needs because everybody else is getting elevated before you.

Devon:

And it's just unending when it comes to something like parenting. There's so many things that you're expected to do and so many different competing viewpoints of what being a good parent looks like, that you're gonna get a message that you're screwing up no matter what, probably from a bunch of people with opposing viewpoints. You're screwing up in all directions somehow.

And just on a basic labor standpoint, maintaining a home to a particular, like, pristine, ridiculous standard was something that was hard for people to do when people were nuclear family households where one person, that was their job, was to stay at home and handle those things. Whether they liked it or not often, unfortunately.

So, the idea that people that are working full-time jobs or trying to find a way to feed their families, but then also have to worry about all of that stuff, the math does not add up. It's not possible. So finding the

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areas in your life that you can get comfortable with getting a little sloppy. And, of course, it's not actually sloppy, it's just you're setting priorities. You're trying to survive. We're going to eat nothing but chicken tenders this week, and there's going to be a lot of dust in the corners. There's no shame in that. That's like a great sign of somebody setting priorities.

Shohreh: And it's hard because like you said, these messages are happening and they're coming at us, and I think we do have to reach a point of, is it more important to us to meet these expectations knowing that we can never possibly meet everyone's expectations? Or is it more important to us to live a life that feels good to us and not constantly feel like garbage?

Devon: Yeah, and there is a weird, I think, element of it, of like building up a distress tolerance for letting other people down. If you've always said yes and taken on all these responsibilities that shouldn't be yours or shouldn't be yours alone, the first time you let something drop, or don't get back to someone, or say no to something, you're gonna feel like shit. Like, you're gonna be really panicked that you're gonna get fired, or that the person's gonna break up with you, or that somebody won't be your friend anymore. And sometimes people will be upset, but being able to just weather that emotional storm and slowly develop your own internal sense of, here's what I can show up for, here's my actual values of what's the most important things in my life, and I'm going to live by those values. And people are not going to agree with me sometimes, and that's okay.

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It's so much easier to say than to actually feel [laughter], but practice helps make it feel less painful. I can't say that it makes it totally go away, but it gets easier.

Shohreh: I can concur. It definitely does get easier. And the people around you get more used to it, even if they don't like it.

Devon: Yeah, there's one person I talk to in the book, Kathy Labriola, who's a therapist who talked about, you're putting people on a new ramp or on a new path, so you kind of have to retrain people's expectations. Especially if it's like a family member who is always falling back on you, or a partner, or someone where you have a years-long pattern where they really have come to expect you to say yes to everything. You have to slowly get them used to, like, there's a new sheriff in town, buddy. [Laughter] And that may take them a few years, so you have to really be a broken record.

Shohreh: I think this also gets to one of the really important themes in the book, which is that we all have inherent worth and value just by virtue of being humans, which is the precise reason we need to extend more compassion to ourselves and others and we need to put our needs first. But we also live in a world that explicitly teaches us the opposite. So, the world is like, fat people aren't as valuable as thin people. Queer people aren't as valuable as straight and cis people. And that's such a heavy weight for people to carry. So, my question is: How can people actually start to believe they are worthy in a world that is constantly telling them otherwise?

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Devon:

Yeah, it's hard! I think often the place to start is to really, as much as you can, start living like the lives of all the people around you in your community are all kind of equally valid and worthwhile, no matter how someone is living or what they're doing or not doing. Whether that's giving someone on the corner money who's asking for it without kind of policing in your head whether they deserve it or what they're going to do with it. Whether it's something like fighting for universal basic income or healthcare. You know, policies that really show that everyone in society deserves to have their needs met, no matter what, without any testing of their means or their needs. I think that's a really important thing, both in terms of material money going towards people, and also symbolically, just really changing up the culture.

And having these conversations with people because we have these conversations every single day where we're complaining about some way that some person let us down, or we're dismayed at people for not being perfect at staying home to fight Covid, for example, and just blaming individuals for having this moral failure. So, whenever you hear someone saying something like that, just kind of taking a step back and saying, well, okay, let's think about why someone might not be adhering to quarantine as rigidly as they were a year ago. What might they be going through that might make them do that? Or how might they feel if they've been doing this for a year and they're totally alone? And thinking about, okay, is this really an individual person being a failure, or is it society having failed them?

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We have these conversations about so many issues, like climate change, your coworker disappointing you, your student disappointing you, whatever it is. There's always opportunities when you hear somebody saying that kind of stuff to challenge them gently to think about, okay, is this person actually trying the hardest they can and they just don't have enough support?

Shohreh:

It is surprising how well this works. There's a small example I can give where I used to run this challenge that was called Season of Self-Care, and it was basically all these little things that you can do to just take better care of yourself. And one of the challenge items was that when you're driving—this was pre-Covid and people were actually driving to work on their commutes—to let someone in who's got their blinker on and trying to get in, and instead of raging about it, try to think about, why might this person need me to let them do this today? Maybe they are running late to an interview because their kid threw up on their suit or just whatever silly thing. And everyone hated the idea of doing it, and then everyone reported back that they were like, wow, this actually made me feel a lot calmer and kinder than I would have been if I had just raged about it.

Devon:

Oh my gosh, that's a really good one. I love that one too because there's that research by Tom Vanderbilt, I think it is, who does traffic psychology basically, that found that people merging late actually is the most efficient way to get the most people moving forward and not consuming too much time or too much space in the road. So it's like

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systematically the right thing to do for some of the people on the road, to merge at the last possible moment [laughter]—

Shohreh: But we hate it!

Devon: —but we hate it because we're focused on the individual. This person, this one person right in front of me is so selfish. And maybe they are, I don't know. Or maybe they're really stressed trying to get to work, whatever it is. But actually, if you zoom out and look at the whole system, people are doing what makes sense.

And that's kind of my message about pretty much every social problem. People do what makes sense from where they're at, and if a bunch of people are all acting the same way, maybe complaining and screaming at the sky about how horrible all those people are is not the solution and is not getting to the core of why the thing is happening.

Shohreh: There's also that great research that shows that when it's other people doing questionable things in their vehicles that we get really angry, we scream at them, we think that it's ridiculous. But if we do it, we immediately excuse ourselves, and like, [laughs] we'll be in our car and we'll be like, whoa whoa whoa, why are you honking at me? I'm fine, I didn't do anything wrong. And it's like, we have such different standards 'cause it's our own selves, right? We have the whole picture. So, we're like, well I know why I did this. But we have a hard time extending that same, like, other people might have reasons too.

Devon: Right. We just have this knee-jerk reaction at first, like the fundamental attribution error thing in social psychology, that if somebody else does

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something it's because of who they are as a person, if I do something, it's because of the situation that I did it. It's all very specific and unique to my circumstances, and why can't people understand that?

Shohreh: It is a fascinating phenomenon, but it's one that I feel like when you have more awareness of it, it does help you to get to this point of trying to extend that same thing to them. Or even just humanizing the other person. Like another thing people can do is the same example, like, imagine that's your sister or your friend, right? Probably gonna have different feelings about it than just a random stranger who is cutting you off.

Devon: I think a lot of the research shows that even just taking an extra moment to kind of question that reaction is often enough to get people to go, oh, wait, I've kind of forgotten the whole of their humanity. Like, nobody's a bad person for having that initial reaction. It's very common and natural. But if you just slow down for a second and think about the bigger picture, sometimes that is all it takes to go, oh, yeah, maybe I'm still inconvenienced, but it's actually not this person's fault and I don't hate them. At least not as much.

Shohreh: [Laughter] Pausing is so powerful, and I think especially with all of these ideas you're talking about in the book, that it's really difficult and probably a lifelong process to undo a lot of the Laziness Lie and stop having a lot of these thoughts. Because the reality is, you're gonna still have the thoughts, but can you pause long enough to say, "I see this thought, I know where it comes from, and that's not my personal belief. That's not my personal value. So I'm not gonna fuck with that."

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Devon: Right, yeah. I don't want anybody to take the perfectionism and urgency that comes from the Laziness Lie and then, like, apply that to, am I fighting the Laziness Lie in myself perfectly and have I gotten rid of it yet? [Laughter] It's decades of conditioning, and it's still something you're gonna bump up against at work, and when you watch anything on TV, or have conversations with people. So, of course you're still gonna feel this stuff all the time. It's just kind of developing tools for, like you said, slowing down, thinking about it in a different way, getting in touch with what your values are and being able to go, okay, society says I should do this, I actually find this other thing more important, and having the tools to fight against that. Because that pressure will always be there.

Shohreh: And for the record, the book is chock-full of tools. There's tons of different things in there that people can try. I personally really enjoyed the chapter in the book about getting out of an achievement-based mindset because I am someone who grew up with the message from my family that accomplishments were the path to love and acceptance. So, it's definitely taken a lot of personal healing to get out of that. And you give some awesome recommendations that would have been wonderful for me when I was trying to do that. One of my favorites is making an effort to do something you're bad at because as soon as I read it, I could just hear my clients in my head groaning at the idea of doing that. So why is this so beneficial?

Devon: So, when you do something that you're bad at and get more comfortable with being bad at things, it's a really great way to break

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out of that achievement-oriented mindset and this thing that's also really common among gifted education kids of like, the only things worth spending my time on are things that I'm good at that other people derive value from. A lot of us get that really drilled into us. So, then we're really scared by anything that we're not naturally good at.

One way that doing something you're bad at helps is it just gets you more comfortable with not being successful at something right out the gate. It really helps you build resilience because if you are naturally good at some things, or you were gifted, or whatever, you might not actually know how to comfortably persist through something if it's confusing. Or if you're just too physically weak or uncoordinated to do it, which was often the case for me with any kind of physical pursuit. And so that's great just on an emotional regulation, developing resilience kind of level.

And also, if you do something that you truly are not good at, if you can find something like that that you also enjoy, then you can enjoy it for its own sake, instead of getting into this pattern of, oh, I'm making these paintings, maybe I can sell them on Etsy. Or, oh, I wrote this song and it's really good, I'm going to put it on YouTube and see how many views it gets. When you're still only ever trying things that you're good at it becomes another benchmark, another thing to perform for other people, another thing to see how many likes you can get or if you can win any awards. Whereas if it's something you truly are unexceptional about, you can actually just enjoy the thing for the sake of doing the thing, which is really freeing.

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Shohreh: Right, because currently we're living in this time where it's like, if you can't turn it into a side hustle or become an influencer because of it, a lot of people just are like, well then what is exactly the point? Because we've lost the worth in just having intrinsic value in doing things. Like we've lost the worth in the actual process versus here's the outcome, here's the thing that I have to perfectly put out into the world.

Devon: I think there's something that's really revolutionary, and anti-capitalist, and just like self-worth building to say, I'm gonna do this thing that I really like, that maybe is super weird and not many people are ever gonna be a fan of it, and it's just this cute little creative project or just this weird interest I have that's super niche that nobody around me understands, and I'm gonna just really revel in doing my own thing and seeing doing that thing as worth it, just by itself. There are so few opportunities in life to really get to do that, and we really deny ourselves them more and more because social media, productivity pressures, all that other stuff. Side hustle culture, all that stuff that tells you to be good at everything you do, find a way to monetize it, find a way to get clout out of it, so on and so forth.

Shohreh: It's this like, wasting your time aspect where if every minute of our day isn't spent either doing our work or pushing us forward in some way, then what is the point? And yeah, it makes me really sad. I think it absolutely leads to burnout when it's like, if you can't even enjoy your free time and you already have all this work going on, that's just really distressing. It's so hard how we don't let ourselves just be a lot of the time.

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You know, I am literally a self-trust coach. Like, I help people do a lot of deep inner work, but I also talk a lot about the importance of integration. And you can't just constantly be taking in new information. You also have to have time to integrate that stuff into your life and see how it feels, and compare, and experiment. And I think this self-improvement culture that we're in is very much like, no, you just reach the level, you can't even stop and celebrate and enjoy it, and then it's the next thing, it's the next thing, it's the next thing.

Devon:

We don't have a lot of time in our lives to be playful. To move ideas around and explore them, to just kind of do something that feels totally silly and doesn't have a goal. Like, our bodies and minds can really tell the difference between when we're stressing out about something and trying to do it really well or achieve something with it versus when we're just kind of like doodling around with a thought, or like coloring in a coloring book, or just settling in and thinking about an idea, just like daydreaming.

And we really need that for our health, and also, just like, when you're consuming a lot of information, to really make sense of it in a deep way and do something useful with it. You have to do what in social psychology we call "elaboration," which is just thinking about an idea and moving it around, combining it with other things that you know, questioning it. Just kind of playing around with ideas. And we just don't take that time, especially now, to just kind of, [big exhale] settle in with things.

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Shohreh: We also don't have unlimited output ability as humans, even though we're very much told that we do. Because I know for me, for instance, like, if I have a period of time where I'm putting out a lot of content for my work, I eventually reach a point where I just feel completely uninspired, like no creative, I don't wanna say anything. And the only thing that fixes it is stepping away, and having some downtime, and not putting out new content. And then inevitably, my creativity has time to build back up and I'll be struck with a great idea and I know exactly what I want to talk about. And there's so much value in doing that, and not enough of us allow that time.

Devon: Yeah, the Laziness Lie really trains us to not trust ourselves, that's kind of what that second tenet is all about, that like deep down you're horrible and lazy and if you don't really push yourself really hard all the time, nothing's gonna happen. You're not actually capable of all these great things you're doing, it's only because you're really busting your ass that you're capable of doing it.

And we really can trust ourselves. Like, resting, I don't want people to think of it as a means to an end. Rest is good because you need it. It's morally neutral. We need to waste time, and it's worthwhile even if it doesn't lead to some kind of creative output. But also, if there are creative things that you value, or activism that you wanna do, or writing you wanna do, you can really trust yourself to get inspired after you've had time to rest and to self-motivate by listening to your body, listening to your mind, and knowing that there's periods of dormancy and then periods of generation, just like in nature. We can't just go-go-go all the

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time, and it's not a threat to our potential to have a period of rest and not churning out a bunch of stuff.

Shohreh:

In the book you describe how these traits that we see as lazy are actually alarm systems from our body. That if we trusted them and listened to them, then that is sort of the blueprint for how to take better care of ourselves. But most of us just ignore those because we've been told to write it off as being lazy.

Devon:

Yeah, and I'm really inspired in that aspect of the book by the intuitive eating movement and a lot of eating-disorder recovery writing because it's such a parallel. People with eating disorders, they've really stopped trusting their body and really disregulated their hunger cues by ignoring them for so long. And so, just having a period of, I'm going to eat when I'm hungry, I'm going to eat what I want, I'm not going to judge that. I'm going to just trust my body and rebuild this relationship of listening to it.

And I think we basically have to do the exact same thing. Rest, finding time to zone out, letting yourself waste time screwing around online, playing video games, doodling in a notebook, whatever it is, until we get to the point when we have a feeling that we used to just go, "Oh, I'm being so lazy, I need to ignore it, we actually just accept it and take a cue from it. Which is really hard. A lot of work places and work days don't make it easy to listen to that. When you barely have the opportunity to take a bathroom break when you need it, it's really hard to retrain that relationship to your body, but I think it's really essential.

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Shohreh: It's so hard, and that part of the book really resonated with me. I'm actually a certified intuitive eating counselor, and I used to do exclusively intuitive eating coaching before pivoting to what I'm doing now. But all of my work is based in this idea of being able to trust yourself and how we can take steps to build up that trust. And one of the central pillars that I talk about is doing that through care practices. Through believing that your body deserves care and learning to listen to your body so you can give it that care.

All of this stuff comes together and it's so important, and we're taught in all different ways that our bodies just cannot be trusted. It's the Laziness Lie. It's all these different systems of oppression. And the more we can get away from that and realize that no, our bodies are actually super fucking wise, like, the happier we will be.

Devon: Yeah, it's so wild how much work it is just to get people on board with stop working so hard [laughter] and listen to your body. It takes so much mental work to drop the filter 'cause we just have this software installed in us that's constantly scanning and disregarding all of these feelings. It's so weird how like getting to a place of being intuitive means, like, taking all of this stuff apart and working really hard to make things easy in the long run.

Shohreh: I've definitely had clients say things like, "I feel bad that this isn't coming easily to me. Isn't this stuff really rudimentary? Shouldn't I be able to feed myself? Shouldn't I be able to do this?" And I'm like, in theory, but with the world we live in, absolutely not. There's nothing wrong with you that this is a struggle because you can't just unlearn

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decades worth of conditioning overnight. It really does take time to learn to trust yourself again and to elevate those needs over all this other crap that you've been told. And you talk about in the book how one of the ways to do this is we have to leave behind the "shoulds" and define our life in the way that we want it to be.

Devon: Yeah, really articulating for yourself what do I value the most in life? And if my life is like a burning building and I have to grab three things on the way out, what are the pursuits in my life, what are the aspects of my life that I'm going to face?

Shohreh: You've gotta take Dump Truck with you too.

Devon: And Dump Truck. Yes, Dump Truck is number one! [Laughter] Then maybe my laptop, and then who knows. I guess I need to put pants on too 'cause I might not be dressed if I'm asleep. [Laughter] So, you know, and that necessarily means what are you gonna leave behind? And maybe the "house on fire" metaphor is way too dramatic, [laughs] but what are you gonna let drop? [Laughs] Because we can't do everything that we have to do, you know? So we do have to find something to let drop or people to disappoint and develop the self-advocacy skills to do that too.

Shohreh: I do a lot of values work with people, and when I tell them, we want to pick like three to five tops of our most core values at this moment in our life, the people are like, what? How can I possibly choose that? And I'm like, look, it doesn't mean that you don't value the other things, it just means that you can only prioritize so much stuff. You only have so much

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time, you have only so much brain space. So you can still value the other things, but we want to focus around the things that are *most* important to you.

Devon: Right, and this is kind of a spoiler for the book that I'm working on right now—

Shohreh: [Audible gasp] A new book!

Devon: Yes!

Shohreh: Exciting!

Devon: One tool for clarifying this that I've found is by, Heather Morgan is her name, and she is a coach and works a lot with autistic people in unmasking autism. So, a lot of us who are autistic, we really try to hide everything that makes us seem weird to other people so that we can fit in, right? And so, this exercise that Heather Morgan came up with is about listing five times in your life where you felt really alive. Where you were just really present, really excited, and when you think of these moments in life, it's like, wow, if all of life was like this, life would be amazing. And then really describing those moments and trying to pick out moments from a variety of different spaces and ages in your life so that you get some nice variety. And then as you're looking at how you would describe those moments, seeing if there are any values words that pop up.

So, is it like you're in a beautiful piece of nature and you're really experiencing awe? Is it a moment where you really connected with

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someone else? Is it an achievement that you're especially proud of? Is it a moment when you really helped someone or saved someone else? And kind of using these peak life experiences to infer, okay, this is what I actually want my life to look like. These are the things that I really do value the most. And then you can kind of ask, how do I make more moments like this in my life?

Shohreh: And the figuring it out is tricky because I've also found that the "should" will leak into this where when people first start looking at their values, they often have to contend with, is this my value or is this a value that I think I should have and I've been told that I should have? So I like that exercise a lot 'cause I think that's a good way of getting to what has felt good to you outside of other people's opinions.

Devon: Right, yeah. And really thinking about different moments in your life really helps break it apart. Because if I did that, if I tried to list my values just right off the top of my head, I think I would be in job interview mode, you know, [laughter] where you say the things that are very sanitized. And, oh it was so cool when I got this award. Oh, it was so cool when I did this thing. Like no. Well, maybe. It's okay. It's okay if achievement is one of your motivations. Let's drill down and see what else there is. Like what people do you feel good around? What physical spaces feel comfortable to you? And how can you get to be in those environments more often?

Shohreh: And remembering that values are not on a hierarchy. Even though the world is gonna say some values are more important than others, they're not. Like, they're individual to you, so it doesn't have to be like, oh, my

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values aren't good enough, I should choose other ones. Like, the whole goal is to figure out what you like.

Devon: Yeah, and it's really tricky in practice to kind of pivot and resist all of these blows coming from other people. I just finished reading, *Recovering from Emotionally Immature Parents* by Lindsay Gibson.

Shohreh: I have that on my shelf, and I've been meaning to read it 'cause it would be very useful for my life! [Laughter]

Devon: Yeah, I read her first book about that topic, and it was really great and affirming. And there were a few little nuggets in this book that were great, of just like, if someone says something disapproving to you, it seems so simple, but just being like, "Oh, I'm the right amount of sensitive for me." Like somebody telling you that you're over-sensitive, just saying, "Actually I like how sensitive I am, it tells me what I need to be doing," or just like, "Yeah, maybe I am making the wrong decision, but it's my call to make." Just really simple reactions to when somebody comes at you, and in that case in the book, a parent says you're making the wrong decision. Just like reminding yourself and the other person in that moment that we're both free to have different values and that there isn't an objective answer can be so powerful.

Shohreh: Mm. Yeah, it's kind of encouraging you to stand in your power, and if it's gonna be a mistake, it's your mistake to make.

Devon: Yeah, and also, you're not in control of how somebody else feels. So sometimes it's actually really great to just acknowledge like, okay, I can see that you think this is a bad idea. I'm gonna go do it! [Laughter] And

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both of those reactions, like, they're fine. They are what they are. You can just kind of accept it and move forward.

Shohreh: Yeah, for sure. Thank you for being here Devon, I imagine it has been hard to not get to do a proper book tour in releasing a book in this pandemic, but I'm so grateful for the opportunity to chat with you.

Devon: Yeah, thanks so much for having me. If it had to happen during a pandemic, I'm glad it happened to me because I haven't had to get on a bunch of flights, like, run around meeting people, so it actually was probably more relaxing and easier than it would have been otherwise. So, in a bizarre, kind of sick way, it worked out.

Shohreh: This is your dream book tour situation.

Devon: Right, I can do it from my house, and I can still, whatever, play Call of Duty and pet Dump Truck afterwards. [Laughter]

Shohreh: I love it. How can people find you and where can they get a copy of Laziness Does Not Exist?

Devon: Yeah, so Laziness Does Not Exist is at every bookstore. It's in eBook, hardcover, or audio book format, so you should be able to get it pretty much anywhere. And then for more of my writing, I post regularly at devonprice.medium.com, and then on social media stuff, I'm @drdevonprice. On like Twitter, Instagram, all that stuff.

Shohreh: Awesome. Cool, I will put all of that in the show notes so it is very easy to find. Everyone should go pick up a copy of this book, I highly recommend it. And thank you again, this was so much fun.

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Devon: Yeah, thanks so much for having me.

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