

# Conjuring Up Courage #107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

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**Shohreh Davoodi:** You are listening to episode #107 of Conjuring Up Courage. Today's episode is a short and sweet solo episode about why focusing so much on destinations, like happiness, or health, or a balanced life, may be to your detriment.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to [shohrehdavoodi.com/107](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/107). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/107](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/107).

This episode is brought to you in part by Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that provides an affirming and welcoming home for diverse individuals to reclaim their inherent worth. The folks at Ample + Rooted created a guided meditation on cultivating self-trust just for listeners, and it's available in the show notes for this episode.

[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 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.

# Conjuring Up Courage #107

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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.

[Music fades]

Hey y’all. I am back again with another solo episode because you know, I just felt like y’all could use a little more Shohreh quality time in your lives. So, you’re welcome. That’s what we’re gonna do today.

Okay, so to set the stage for this episode, we are gonna be talking about extreme makeover shows. Whether you love them or hate them, extreme makeover shows are everywhere, and I know that you have seen them.

Right, so think about all the shows on HGTV that are about taking a home from horrible, unlivable, disgusting, peeling wallpaper to beautiful, fancy modern house. Or, shows like The Home Edit that are about transforming people’s spaces from cluttered to more organized. There are, of course, the horrid physical makeover shows, like The Biggest Loser, where people are expected to lose a ton of weight over the course of the show. And then there are the fashion makeover shows like Queer Eye or What Not To Wear, where we take people from ugly, frumpy wardrobes to sharp, polished wardrobes that “flatter their figure.” Please know that I put that in quotes dripping in sarcasm.

The reason these kinds of shows are so popular is because it can be really satisfying to see something or someone go from drab to fab. There’s magic in witnessing a transformation from Point A to Point B,

## Conjuring Up Courage #107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

---

where Point B is so different from Point A that it's practically unrecognizable.

As viewers, we're primed to see a predictable narrative arc in these shows, meaning we always know how the episodes will end. Yes, there will be a couple of setbacks depicted in the storyline for the drama, but everyone knows that the transformation will succeed.

In a way, these shows are selling hope of a before-and-after transformation not only in the lives of those on the screen, but also in the lives of those who are watching. They're saying, "Hey, look, if this person could do it, so can you! Work hard, reach your destination, and voila! You will be happy. Everything will be perfect."

Now, if we take a step back from that, it's pretty clear that what these shows are peddling is actually a carefully constructed fantasy, not real life. Just think about all the things you don't get to see in a TV makeover show, right? There's the production crew that's working hard behind the scenes to keep everything running. There is a big network budget that's paying for all of the shit. There is a team of writers that's crafting the script for maximum audience impact and emotion. There is all the effort and energy that is being exerted to pull off the transformation in real time by lots of people. There are video editors who are removing the boring parts and boosting the most exciting ones. And they're scoring it to music to really make you feel something.

## Conjuring Up Courage

#107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

---

And most importantly, what you do not see in these shows is what happens after the makeover show is over when the camera crews pack up and the shine starts to dull.

And not only do people rarely think about that stuff while watching these shows, the extreme makeover narrative isn't contained to just TV. It's also found its way into our culture more generally. For example, diet and wellness culture have absolutely tried to capitalize on this idea that if you eat the right things and exercise in the right way and take the right supplements, you will arrive and remain at a place of hotness and happiness and healthiness.

And in my years as a coach working with clients, I've seen this narrative over and over again, where clients come in with this expectation that their lives should look like before-and-afters. That they just need to figure out the problem, put in the work to fix it, and then everything will be fine and dandy.

And this narrative truly doesn't discriminate and crops up in a lot of different areas, but the places I see it most often are probably around bodies, happiness, healing, achieving balance, and then self-trust generally. So let me explain what I mean for all of those.

So with bodies, I kind of already alluded to this when I was talking about diet and wellness culture, but most people have a long list of expectations for what they think their body should look like and how it should perform. And there's a multi-billion-dollar industry marketing the idea to us that those expectations are normal and that the body we're

## Conjuring Up Courage

#107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

---

dreaming of is achievable. And that industry also cleverly avoids ever talking about what happens when we reach the supposed body utopia.

This mirrors the extreme makeover shows, right? You see the house when the remodel is done and it's all shiny and new, but you don't see things like how the fast construction they did is actually pretty shoddy, or when the refrigerator goes out after a month and needs to be replaced, or when the family who moved in and looked so happy decide to have another kid, and now the house is no longer a good fit for them.

If you destroy your relationship with food and your body in the process of getting down to a certain size and stop going to social functions because you're so focused on your weight loss goal, then what's next when you reach that size? What comes after? Are you okay with everything you'll have to continue to give up to maintain that size? Are you fine with your friends no longer calling you to hang out because you always say no? Did changing your body actually make you happy? And if it didn't, then now what are you gonna try instead to feel happiness?

And speaking of happiness, the pursuit of happiness was the second thing I said people tend to apply this extreme makeover narrative to. "Now I'm not happy, but if I do this, or buy this, or change this, *then* I'll be happy." Happiness gets painted as a destination instead of an emotional state that you will naturally go in and out of like all other emotional states.

## Conjuring Up Courage

#107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

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Then there's healing. We have this idea that the goal should be to be fully healed from all of our trauma, all of our grief, all of our pain. And it's so natural to want this because dealing with trauma, grief, and pain isn't super fun, and there's hope in envisioning a future where it's gone completely. Where we are stable and we're not struggling with these things anymore.

But I think healing is so much more complicated than that, and it's also an ever-evolving process. It is not a place that we get to where we just say, "I am healed." What if it's the case that hard things actually stay with us and we just grow around them, and learn to be with them, and give ourselves the tools and strategies that we need to show up the way we want to, even with all of the difficult things that we have from our past and the tendencies and habits that we picked up from those?

Then there's achieving balance, whether that's work-life balance or other iterations, like balancing media consumption or eating a balanced diet. And this is one I have personally struggled with a lot in terms of running my own business. I really had this idea in my head that if I just kept hustling, kept giving it my all, kept working 60-80 hour weeks, then I would be successful. And once I was successful, it would finally be safe to pull it back and make time for me again.

But it finally occurred to me that balance is kind of like a carrot being dangled on a stick. The more I tried to get to it, the more rabid I felt that it remained out of reach. I realized that my work would always have hard seasons and that I would always be busy if I let myself. So it was

## Conjuring Up Courage

#107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

---

up to me to redefine success. To make time for other things and come back to taking time of current me, not some future, more successful me.

And lastly, as a self-trust coach, I see how badly my clients want to trust themselves and how they mistake deepening self-trust with eventually getting to a point where they trust every decision that they make and have no self-doubts. And damn, that would be nice, but that's not how self-trust works.

Self-trust is in constant flux as you grow and change as a person and learn new things about yourself. You may have a high level of self-trust in some areas of your life and a lower level of self-trust in other areas. Maybe a big event or change happens that strengthens or weakens your self-trust in one area or all of them. There is unfortunately no self-trust arrival point.

And I suppose that's what I'm getting at in general: people like structure and certainty. They like making plans, having clear timelines, and getting concrete answers to their questions. We all kind of have this inner desire to check the boxes and get the gold star, damn it. And I am sure that's why my clients get oh so annoyed with me when I respond to their questions with answers like, "I'm not sure," and "It depends," or by asking them more questions—my favorite!

But I respond in those ways because I know all too well that our obsession with arriving places is far less helpful than we think it is. When we fixate on a destination, it is often to the detriment of everything else that is happening on the path to get there. Our desire to reach these

## Conjuring Up Courage

#107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

---

destinations is often about control and how we want to believe we have way more control over things in our lives than we actually do. Life can be uncertain and unpredictable with a lot of unknowns. Even with the best of intentions, we will find ourselves in unexpected places.

So if we have a one-track mind about how we want things to look or where we expect to end up, a lot of times that's going to lead to disappointment and frustration. When we have a singular focus on where we're trying to get to without leaving any wiggle room for ourselves, we may feel so invested in everything we've already done that we don't realize that the destination we're working so hard to arrive at isn't even where we want to go anymore. Or, we might miss completely the other paths and possibilities being presented to us along the way that have the potential to be a better fit.

That is one of the unfortunate consequences of only engaging with the life you want instead of engaging with the life you actually have. If you're in a constant pursuit of more, better, happier, it's easy to feel a sense of lack and completely lose sight of all of the positives that are a natural part of the journey that you're on. If we only care about the fact that we're not there yet, then we inevitably forget to celebrate the milestones we've reached to get to this point. That tunnel vision keeps us from looking back and realizing, oh shit, I've actually come so far.

Y'all, we are not meant to be trying to improve ourselves at literally all times. I love learning and growing more than the average person. and I also know the power of making time to let things simmer. If we're

## Conjuring Up Courage

#107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

---

taking in new information constantly and fielding all of this change, then our bodies and brains can't actually integrate what we're learning and experiencing.

Having dreams and goals that you're actively pursuing is great. I am not suggesting getting complacent or anything like that. But you have to understand that there's also so much value in living and being in the present moment. What would it be like to have dreams and goals, yes, but also accept that to be human is to be in an ever-evolving state of becoming? I'm wondering if allowing things to flow in and out might relieve you of some of the pressure that you've been putting on yourself.

Because if happiness is not a permanent state, then that gives you permission to lean into happiness in all the big and small places where you find it. If being a "good person" is not a final form that you can morph into, then that means the good you put out into the world can coexist with the harm you'll inevitably cause. If the goal isn't to find balance but to embrace seasonality and the cyclical nature of things, then it's easier to detach from linear progress. And, if self-trust is not something to be achieved, but something to practice and explore, then there's room for fear and doubts too.

Life is just like a grab bag of stuff. Of emotions. Triumphs and challenges. Peaks and valleys. Wins and losses. And even more so, all of the in between stuff that makes up our days when we're not having a

## Conjuring Up Courage

#107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

---

high or a low. Life is marked by change. We don't just get somewhere and stay there, and oh my god, how boring would it be if we did?

You're not an extreme makeover. You're not a before-and-after. You are a fluid human who will try and fail and try again, and make mistakes and learn from them. Or maybe not learn from those mistakes the first time and have to give it another go.

I really believe you will hold so much more self-compassion and kindness and understanding for yourself if you ease up on some of these destinations you've been chasing and bring your focus to what's right in front of you.

Alright, y'all. This was a short one, but I think a powerful one. I've said what I had to say, and I hope it resonates.

[Music plays]

Hey y'all. Let me take a moment to tell you a little bit more about Ample + Rooted, an inclusive therapy practice that is directed by my dear friend and colleague, Neathery Falchuk. The awesome practitioners at Ample + Rooted not only serve folks locally here in Austin, they also serve folks online all over the globe. Through therapy, mindfulness practices, courses, trainings, and events, they support, guide, and hold space for folks to feel valued and nourished.

We talk a lot about systems of oppression on the show and how they can disconnect you from your inner knowing. And the Ample + Rooted

# Conjuring Up Courage #107

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

---

group believes it is your birthright to both inhabit and trust your physical and emotional self without shame.

Luckily for y'all, the kind folks at Ample + Rooted created an exclusive guided meditation on cultivating self-trust for listeners of Conjuring Up Courage. You can access the free guided meditation and learn more about Ample + Rooted in the show notes for this episode.

[Music plays]

And that's our show for today. If you're enjoying Conjuring Up Courage, don't forget to subscribe through your podcast provider of choice so you never miss an episode. Additionally, if you haven't left a rating and review in the Apple Podcasts app yet, you can do so from any Apple device to help more people find and benefit from the show. I also love hearing from listeners, so feel free to take a screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me. My username is @ShohrehDavoodi on all platforms. Finally, you can sign up for my email newsletter, The Sunday Share, and get more details about how to work with me by going to [ShohrehDavoodi.com](http://ShohrehDavoodi.com). Thank you so much for listening, and I hope you'll join me for the next episode.

[Music fades]