

Ep 10: Stop “Shoulding” Yourself



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

SaraEllen Hutchison

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Ep 10: Stop "Shoulding" Yourself

Welcome back to feminine energy feminist, episode number 11.

Welcome to feminine energy feminist, a podcast for professional women who are ready to tap into their feminine energy so they can be happier at work and in their personal lives. It's time to redefine what a professional woman is in those historically male dominated fields that don't always embrace the needs and talents of women.

I'm your host, SaraEllen. I'm a life coach and a practicing lawyer. I'll help you learn how to embrace who you are as a woman, body, mind, and spirit. So you can be more powerful in your career and fulfilled in your life. So if you're ready not just to be a high achiever, but get what your soul wants too, let's proceed.

Welcome back to Feminine Energy Feminist. This is podcast episode number 11. Stop Shoulding Yourself.

Get ready to "rock out with your blocks out," because this episode is short and sweet.

Today, it is about *not* "fixing" what "needs improvement." It's about obsessing *less* about what's "wrong" with you or trying for the umpteenth time to dismantle your "blocks" to all the good in your life. It's about strengthening your lifelong friendship with yourself. It's about assuming – and really knowing – that you are good enough, and "ready," just as you are.

From that vantage point, you can more easily create anything you want, not limited by your past, what you believe others expect of you, or your frustration with the gap between you and the realization of your goals.

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When you stop shoulding yourself, you open yourself up to the truth that you are worthy just because you exist. Have you heard the expression, “God doesn't make junk and didn't start with you?” Why else would you exist if you didn't deserve to be here on the planet?

How many times do you catch yourself thinking things like,

“I should eat healthier.”

“I should work out more.”

“I should be working on this deadline instead of scrolling through my phone.”

“I should have more money saved up for retirement by now.”

“I should wash my makeup brushes more often and sleep with a fresh pillowcase every single night.”

These thoughts all sound good and noble on the surface, but they don't feel good when we say them. Underneath, there is some barely conscious thought that goes something like...“and therefore, I suck because I'm not doing what I know I should do, and I don't stop doing what I know I shouldn't do.”

And often it is followed by a huge dose of compare and despair – you think of a sibling, or a friend, or a colleague who seems to be nobly doing what they “should” do, and you wonder why they lucked out and were born with more willpower than you, or why their parents loved them more, or consider that they didn't have to move out of their

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apartment the week before the LSAT or the GRE and that’s why they got into a better school than you.

I used to struggle with this too. I believed that the God/the Universe, had special extra hurdles that I had to go through, or an impossible heightened standard for *me*. Where everybody else could get love, money and fulfillment by winning over the Universe on a preponderance standard, well, mine was more like clear, cogent and convincing. I was so focused on the ways I was imperfect or had "blocks" that I actually manifested more tests, challenges, and problems. It makes perfect sense when you look at this in Brooke Castillo's Self-Coaching Model:

Circumstance: Your life, or some specific aspect of your life. It’s best to be specific. And your thought about it is: I should do XYZ. I shouldn’t do XYZ. Of course the feeling, if you give yourself time to actually be aware of it rather than stuffing it down with food, overwork, social media or whatnot, is bad (shame, embarrassment, self-pity, pressure, etc.). And the actions you are going to take out of that bad feeling are going to be bad for you in the moment like overeating, or bad for you long term, like chronically overworking. You might go to great lengths to prove you’re good enough. Overwork to appear to be good enough. Second-guess yourself and act awkward around people. Use personal growth against yourself, constantly on a scavenger hunt to find things that are wrong with you.

As a result, naturally you create more tests, challenges and problems that affirm the "truth" of the belief that you’re not good enough and that life is harder for you. Losses, breakups, expensive repairs, coming in second

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place, etc.

If it feels so bad to tell ourselves that we “should,” and it drives us batty with counterproductive behavior, why the hell do we do it? It’s pretty simple. We do it because we get off on it.

Dr. Candace Pert in the book *Molecules of Emotion* explained that we can become addicted to the jolt of brain chemicals that are released when we repeatedly push the button with a bad-feeling thought. Our nervous systems become habituated to running on that kind of crappy fuel.

Another great explanation for why we love it when life sucks can be found in the book *Existential Kink* by Carolyn Elliot, PhD. I highly recommend this book to anyone who seems to repeatedly manifest unwanted circumstances in their lives. Elliot makes several convincing arguments for why perfectly intelligent people do this, and it is because some part of them enjoys it.

I will put links to both books in the show notes.

And finally, here’s how I like to explain this. Fundamentally, high-achieving women want to be RIGHT. We are rewarded for being RIGHT on tests and right in meetings. People express disappointment in us when we are wrong. So we grow up, from the time we are good little students to even our 40s and beyond, wanting to be right and fearing being wrong. Being wrong is embarrassing. Someone might think we are stupid or unlovable. We have got to be right or else.

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And we have internalized this so well, that we whip ourselves for our transgressions before the other people can punish us. We do this by telling ourselves that we “should” do XYZ or “shouldn’t” do XYZ. By speaking to ourselves in that authoritative manner quickly after we become aware of something that we are doing or not doing that we would like to be different, we have restored order. Even though the part of us that is engaged in the unwanted behavior is wrong and that’s scary, part of us has just stepped in to save the day by saying “SHOULD.” It gets to save the day because it is right. And then by extension, we are at least partly right, while we are partly wrong.

And we derive a feeling of peace or certainty out of knowing that we are at least partly right. And over time, we can even become a little bit addicted to the shame of being partly wrong, because we get to give ourselves a jolt of feeling how smug and right we are after we’ve shoulded ourselves.

A few years ago I was working with a coach and I was sharing how I thought the universe was extra quick to bite me in the ass every time I fell out of compliance with one of my shoulds.

And that coach asked me a powerful question: "What if you could look at the Universe as a lover who wanted to shower you with gifts?"

I was like, "uh, I kind of think the Universe is like that blunt, honest friend who will tell me if I look bad in that outfit before I leave the house."

No wonder I was creating an uphill climb in life. I *believed* life was an

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uphill climb. My concept of God/Universe was definitely ripe for a major shift.

Things started to shift for me when I just decided to *like* myself. All parts of myself, even the supposed "blocks" and flaws.

Personal growth teachers often invite us to "love" ourselves, but if you've been a high achiever or perfectionist most of your life and sincerely have goals you haven't yet met, that can seem very abstract and squishy.

I always did *love* myself. I never let anything stop me from honoring myself and my values when really tested by life. I just often was frustrated and impatient with myself, because I was treating myself like that relative that you undoubtedly love but don't always like. Know what I mean?

Liking yourself, and being a friend to yourself, is powerful, because it allows you to create results with more ease. It allows you to be available to receive what you want faster. And when you are a friend to yourself, that's when the "love" part starts to finally click.

You like yourself so much that you fall in love with your life, faults and wrongness and all.

And then naturally, it seems that God/Universe is blessing you more and testing you less. I believe that's what God/Universe wants for us all along; we're the ones who make it hard.

So in summary, when you catch yourself thinking about something you should or shouldn't do, I'm not suggesting that you abandon the goal, personal standard, or protocol. I'm merely offering that making an effort

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remove the judgy word “should” from your personal improvement efforts is a kinder, more efficient way to go where you want to go.

Thanks for listening to feminine energy feminist. If you want more information or the resources from the podcast, visit lawyergoddess.com/podcast.

See you next week.

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