



Episode 5: The One Word You Need to Stop Using

Welcome to *In the Right Direction* podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi, everyone, it's Deb, and today we are going to talk about one single word because as you know, I take words seriously. I am always listening to the words my clients say, both to themselves and out loud. Our words create a reality, and over and over with my clients, there's one word that I hear that almost always makes me stop a coaching session in its tracks because this one word carries so much negative weight associated with it. It keeps us stuck. When my clients learn to catch themselves and reframe this word, they immediately open up their thinking, and they see more possibility and opportunity.

So, what's the word? The word is "struggle." Now first, I want to say that I recognize there are true struggles in this world. Some people struggle emotionally, financially, or physically. That is the truth, and yet, I find that a lot of my clients have adopted this word to mean any situation that's even a little bit challenging. Like, "I'm struggling with what to tell my colleague," or "I'm struggling to delegate more," or "I'm applying for a job, and I'm struggling to come up with a story that illustrates how I can work cross functionally," and when I hear that word coming out of my clients' mouths to describe situations like those, here's what I say: "We need to talk about the word struggle." That word carries so much heaviness and negativity, and we know that words have power. They have a life of their own. Using certain words helps us decide the direction of our thinking.

For example, take this conversation I had recently with a client. I'm working with this amazing client who manages a team. She's very heart-centered, she cares deeply about others, and she wants to solve everyone's problem, and because she manages a team, she's often in the position where she needs to give tough feedback or tell someone something that she doesn't think they want to hear. So, the other day, one of her team members was giving my client a hard time. She was not following protocol, and my client needed to call her on it. She needed to have a tough conversation. But she didn't want to be seen as mean. "Deb," she said, "I'm struggling with this."

Now, if you've ever heard anyone use that word, or if you've used that word yourself, you know that the word "struggle" ends all conversation. If it's a struggle, it's a struggle. That's the way it is. That word has the power to shut down your problem solving, shut down hope, shut down possibility. It keeps you stuck. It keeps you in the struggle, and that's why reframing this word, changing it both in your mind and in your spoken language can change your life. So, I said to my client, "Hold on a second. Let's reframe. I get that you are anticipating a difficult conversation. I get that you are not quite clear what you are going to say and what you are going to ask for, and this conversation is not truly a struggle."

When we choose to reframe and use other words besides struggle, we take charge of the situation. We start moving toward clarity. With my client, we explored different ways that she could reframe the situation to call it something else. In talking about it, she realized she could have called it a conversation

she was nervous about, or an opportunity for clarifying her boundaries, or an opportunity to work on a new leadership quality.

My client decided to reframe and call it a conversation she wanted more clarity on, and when she did, she immediately moved into problem solving mode. Within a few minutes of talking it through, she decided on the main points she wanted to convey in the conversation. The ask that she wanted to make to her direct report, and we practiced how she would open the conversation confidently. All it took for her to move from stuck to action, from hopeless to feeling in control, was changing one simple word. What my client realized in that conversation, and what all my clients realize, is that the word struggle takes away their confidence and power. It undermines their ability to think clearly and to see a way out.

So, let's bring this to you because I want you to feel in control. I want you to feel hopeful and find your way out. Next time you hear yourself using the word struggle in a way that's not truly a struggle, I'd ask you to stop yourself and ask yourself this question: "What do I want to call the situation instead?" Just like my client, you'll then have an opportunity to problem solve, to move forward, and to know that you've got this.

So, please remember it's probably not a true struggle. It is a situation that you're figuring out, and you are really good at figuring things out. Thank you so much for listening and for joining my community. If you found today's podcast helpful, please click the like or the subscribe button. And I'd love to hear a message from you with your thoughts. How are you moving your problems and shifting your struggles into solutions?

Have a great rest of your day!