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OTHER PEOPLE'S BAD DECISIONS

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Hello, my friends. How is everyone holding up? We're dealing with so much stuff. If you need half an hour to get your mind refocused on showing up as your most productive, effective, supportive, value-driven self, then go ahead to melsavage.com/chat. That is normally the link that I use to have strategy sessions with people who are interested in long-term coaching. Don't worry about that. Just sign up for the session. I'm not going to try and sell you coaching. This is just a free session to help you get your mind sorted.

If it's really hard for you to believe that someone is just trying to give you a free session and help you get your mind focused during this time, and doesn't want anything in return, then you can feel free to write me a testimonial or some kind of review after the fact, that's fine. My intention is simply to help you get through this time and manage your mind effectively so that you can show up as your best self for the people around you, your job, and everything that you need to do over the next little while.

We know that Coronavirus is really creating ever-changing circumstances that we need to consistently dissect and decide how we want to manage. And the idea that our circumstances are changing is not a new thing. They change all the time. Every day, we're dealing with stuff that we didn't expect to happen. The only difference here is that there is a lot of change happening at the same time. And we don't have a lot of experience managing changes like this, on this kind of scale.

So we're learning a lot of new skills on top of changing our habits and our routines and what we're used to. So it's one thing. Let's say you were going to change a job. It's one thing to change jobs. There are new people you have to meet. That's uncomfortable. There are new routines at that particular job. Maybe it's a new building, maybe it's a new commute, you got to find where the washroom is, who to eat lunch with, all of that stuff that needs to happen. But you know how to do this stuff. It's just a new way of doing this stuff.

Now, during the Coronavirus, the changes we're experiencing are a little bit bigger. We're learning to work from home, we are completely changing how our routine works, we're not commuting, we're trying to find a space in our house to work, and we can't go to the gym. So we're exercising and our whole exercise regimen might be different. We're dealing with different types of distractions because everybody's at home.

The kids are in school. They need you more for different kinds of things. Maybe you've never coached your kids this much with their homework before. You can't leave your house so you're finding new things to do to entertain

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yourself and your family in your house. You have to even play with your dogs more. They need more attention from you because they can't go out as often. There may be new tech that you're dealing with because you've never used Zoom before.

I've been using Zoom for three years. It's like people are saying, *Oh, what is this internet thing all about? It's so bizarre that people haven't heard about Zoom before.* But you know, it's new tech. People haven't used it. How do I even conduct myself in a virtual meeting? How do I see my friends? I'm having coffee with my girlfriends on Friday, virtually. Now I work remotely so I've actually done this before with my different girlfriends. We've had dinners, we've had wine, we've had cocktails. I'm having coffee with different friends.

It's just a new behavior. How do you do that? How do you socialize and communicate and get things done effectively remotely? All of this stuff is new to so many people. And it's not just yourselves you're dealing with, you're dealing with the people around you who are also dealing with new things and how they're reacting, and how that's impacting you as well.

Here's why the thing that's happening that I'm really, actually excited about. There are so many people out there who are trying to help and who are trying to add value to others. And I appreciate that so much. I have seen so many tools and how-tos, and helpful hints and all this stuff that people are just putting out there, to try and help others, to try and inspire others, to help people get through all the changes that you're dealing with. I think that's really great.

While you're learning all of these new skills, it would be really easy for you to just focus on the how. How do I start a Zoom meeting? How do I help my kids? Where should I be doing my work? How do I communicate effectively with people during this time? Those are all actions and technical, tactical things that you are rightly trying to figure out.

But I also encourage you to spend some time managing your mind. Lots of people forget to do that part of the work. They focus so much on the house, and the actions, and doing that they forget to focus on their mental and emotional health. Your stress levels, how kind you're being to yourself, how you're dealing with things like fear and anxiety, seeing the opportunities and focusing on what's working versus what's not working, looking for ways to leverage what's going on for yourself or your kids.

You could look at trying to find fun things to do with your kids as a pain in the butt, something that sucks up your time. Or you can look at it as great quality time with your family for bonding. Both of those things can be true for you. You can decide which one it is. A lot of the time, we don't spend time managing our minds. We just go with whatever unintentional thoughts and feelings come into our bodies in our minds. But the more intentional you can get with how you are thinking with how you are feeling, the more effective, more productive, and happier you are going to be with your current situation.

As I said in the beginning, please come get some coaching to reset your thinking. I am a life coach first. Yes, I'm a career coach because I focus my life coaching, my technical coaching, and my tactical coaching on helping people not only manage their minds and their emotions for their careers but also how they tactically put their career management strategies together. But I'm a life coach first. So come and help get your mind sorted because that's what life coaches do.

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Some people think life coaches are all about happiness and sunshine, everything being perfect all the time, spirituality, etc. There might be coaches out there like that. But really, life coaches are about helping you manage your mindset and how you're showing up in your life right now. That's what people really need support with.

Over the last couple of weeks, I've been trying to send out different types of mindset management ideas to help you reflect on how you're showing up. Today, I want to talk about something that everyone deals with all the time. It is certainly amplified right now during this whole Coronavirus pandemic. And that is how you are dealing with other people's 'bad' decisions. I'm putting the word 'bad' in air quotes if you will, because the decisions themselves aren't anything. They aren't bad, they aren't good.

It's when we take those decisions, and we measure them against our own values and what we think is right and wrong. That's when we decide to give those decisions some meaning and we say, Oh, that's a good decision, or that's a bad decision. That's a smart decision. That's a stupid decision. And again, you deal with this all the time.

Let's say your boss makes a bad decision, one of your reports makes a bad decision, your company makes a bad decision, your spouse or your kids make a bad decision. These are things that you're dealing with all the time, the impact of what other people are doing and the decisions that they are making. Like I said, right now all of this is really amplified for you because a lot of people are making decisions that we don't agree with, especially during this pandemic, where people are going out. They're not self-isolating.

We've all seen pictures on the news of people going to beaches and going to parties and young people saying, *Hey, it's my 21st birthday. I'm going to party.* All of these people are having fun and not self-isolating. There are even people out there at high risk, older people who aren't taking it seriously, and people with Coronavirus who are going outside. And politicians, they're either too controlling or not controlling enough, depending on how we think about it.

So basically, there's a lot of anxiety out there right now around how other people are behaving and the 'bad' decisions that those people are making. Even if you're someone who knows that you cannot control other people, which by the way is the case, it never works. But even if you're someone who knows that you can't control other people, in the case of this pandemic, we are justifying it to ourselves. We are saying it's about other people's safety so we have to do something. We have to control other people. But that's not our role. It's potentially the government's role to set laws.

But even still, people break laws all the time. And we have so much evidence that controlling other people's behavior never works. People don't like it, even if they have to do it. Like your boss tells you to do something that you don't want to do, or they're trying to control you. You get resentful or your reports get resentful when you do that to them. People will rebel. If you try to control someone who doesn't know you, they might even tell you to f*** off. But the truth is, that controlling other people's behavior never works. It never works.

Think about when your boss tries to control your behavior, you might do it because they're your boss, and you think you have no choice. But how do you feel about it? You get resentful and you complain about it. Same thing if you are controlling other people. Maybe you're the boss, and you're controlling your reports' behavior. They get resentful, they complain about you, they rebel.

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I was riding my bike a couple of weeks ago and I was coming up to an intersection where I had the right of way. There was no stop sign and this person, a young guy just ran through the stop sign. I said, *Hey, buddy, I have the right of way.* And he basically told me to f*** off because he didn't want me to control him. He was going to do whatever he wanted. Who the heck am I?

Sometimes when you try to control people, they stop talking to you. Or they complain about you, maybe it shows up in your review, maybe you get fired, or maybe you get moved off a team. In relationships, people will 'break up' with you. Whether that's in a work relationship, or in a personal relationship, when you try to control them for too long. Maybe you won't get reelected, if the kinds of decisions you're making as a politician are controlling people or making people behave in a way that they don't agree with.

We've seen this in history, civil wars, and revolutions. Look at what's happening in the US right now. There is such a divide between people. There is so much anger because people don't like what other people are doing. So controlling people's behavior doesn't work. But we think this is a pandemic. This is a different situation. But honestly, it's not that different.

You might think it's because people are risking other people's lives. But you know what, people make decisions to kill people all the time. We don't have to like it. Big people make decisions to hurt people all the time, whether that's physically or emotionally. We don't have to like it. But people do it all the time. It's just really top of mind right now. We see it with people that we wouldn't expect to see it with. And so it's freaking us out.

I was listening to a story the other day, about a woman whose elderly mother is with her elderly aunt. They are down south in the US somewhere. The aunt is actually, not 100%, she's dealing with cancer treatment and is taking a lot of chances. She's going out, she's going to the pharmacy, she's going to the grocery store, and she's going for walks. And the lady is worried about her mother. She's worried about her aunt, but she's also worried about her mother because of course, the aunt comes home and the mother is exposed. And the woman is really mad at her aunt and she feels justified.

It makes sense because, as I said, even if you agree that you can't control other people, we think, Now someone's life is at stake, someone I really care about. I need to do something about this. But the fact is, bitching to the person or about the person or at the person isn't actually going to change anything. It's not adding any value to the situation. And it actually just makes you feel more terrible and more powerless about the situation. So the aunt is risking her own life, which is her choice. The aunt is risking her sister's life, which is also her choice. Whether she realizes it or not. She is risking the life of someone she loves.

Like I said, that's the way the world always was. Coronavirus is not that different. We've always had the option to kill somebody, regardless of the fact that it's against the law. We've always had the option to hurt other people. That hasn't changed. But we really want to control the situation and it's making us crazy. It's making us act crazy and creates stress in our lives. It's making us yell at televisions and yell out the window at people and yell at people who we see on the street. But that's not going to change anything. That anger isn't going to change anything.

So what should the daughter do? Pointing and blaming don't work. Judging doesn't work. If it did, that would be awesome because I love pointing my fingers and judging people. That's one of my favorite things to do if I could, but it never works. And it just makes us feel worse. So in this case, the daughter first needs to manage herself.

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Next, she needs to figure out how she can help manage her mother, and how her mother is protecting herself. Then, she needs to figure out how she can support her aunt and her aunt's decisions.

I know that is like, what are you saying? I'm going to give you some concepts that actually speak to what I'm talking about. How do you manage yourself? How can you be there for others? How can you help people and communicate with people who are doing things that traditionally you wouldn't agree with? This is the same at work. I'm going through this because this is the same type of approach and the same concepts that you will use at work if your boss makes a decision that you don't like, and you have to execute against a strategy that you never supported.

Let's make it even scarier. Let's say it's a strategy that you think is going to sink the company, or people will lose their jobs or something that you feel is really big jeopardy. What do you do? Now, if you walked into your boss's office, and told them every day how stupid their idea and their decision are, how wrong it is, and all the terrible things that are going to happen because they made this terrible, awful decision, what do you think is going to happen?

They're going to get frustrated with you, they're going to stop talking to you, they're going to cut you out of the process. Maybe they'll take you off the team and move you off the team. Maybe you'll get fired? Who knows? It depends on how the situation escalates. But what won't happen is, you likely won't change your boss's mind. Likely, they're just going to dig their heels in and say, *Look, I've considered all the options. This is the decision I've made. Are you in or are you out?* People don't respond well to fear and anxiety.

Those people on the street who are partying and having a great time, they're not operating from fear. So when you come at them with fear, they're going to have some choice words for you. You're not going to be able to convince them through fear that what they're doing is wrong. So what can you do? I've got three concepts for you to explore, to see what works for you. You've probably heard of these concepts before, they are not new, and I did not invent them. But I'm going to bring them to you to explore how you can make them work for you in this situation.

The first one is *Equal Airtime*. The second one is *Be the Change*. And the third one, I'm calling *Lean In*. Let's talk about equal airtime. Equal airtime is really about every negative, judgy, unproductive, angry thought that you have about someone or something or some decision. Find a positive, productive, constructive judgment on that same situation, on that same circumstance.

Let's take the boss example. So your boss makes a decision that you think is going to sink the company. And every time you think that this is a stupid decision, this is going to sink the company, that you don't want to do this, also think about some positive judgments that would serve you better. *My boss has a reason for doing this. I can see it working in this way. I understand why they made this decision.* You can have different types of thoughts. Just give equal airtime to both the negative, judgy, and unproductive thoughts. Find positive, constructive, productive judgments that will equal it out and you will see that there are so many different ways to look at the same situation.

Let's take those people on the street partying. You could think that they are idiots. They're putting people's lives in jeopardy. *Who do they think they are? Someone should arrest them.* Those are thoughts you can have. So for

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those people on that side, what are the constructive thoughts that you could have? It's almost like saying, How can you think positively or constructively about someone who is attempting murder?

If you think about a murderer, it's really hard to have productive thoughts about those people. And all you can do really, in this circumstance with these people is try to understand their point of view. That's why in this case, what's working for me right now is, that it's not just the young kids, sometimes it's older people as well.

My sister doesn't always make the best decisions. We don't live in the same place. But I worry about her as well. The thing is, I can't control her. And the more I push against her, the more she gets angry and doesn't want to talk to me. So all I think now is, that she hasn't been able to really wrap her head around the reality of what's going on. Everyone gets there in their own time. So it's really normal for people to avoid and not believe a really scary situation. We all do it all the time.

We all try to hide from things that we think are hard to accept. I can be in a relationship, I can be sticking it out in a job I don't like. And that's what's happening to a lot of people. They're having trouble accepting the circumstance because they think it's scary, or they don't want to believe it's real.

Let's be honest, when you were young, you didn't always think about everyone else. You were really focused on having fun and having a good time. It's normal for these young people to feel that way. It's normal for people to want to enjoy themselves and escape from some of the realities that maybe they don't like. So it's easy to understand why some of these people are acting that way.

Sometimes, understanding is the best way to start compassion, be open, and start a dialogue with people, especially at work. It's really hard to have dialogues with people because you're sequestered in your home. But having a sense of understanding is at least going to manage all the craziness in your head right now. All the anger, all the stress, all of the complaining that you have for people who are out and about right now. They should not be out and about.

There are people working on the house across the street from me right now. All of these workers in this house, building this guy's house, I'm like, should they really be doing that right now? Not my pig, not my farm. I hope they're okay. I know, they probably have reasons if people have to pay rent. People have to eat, I get it. I'm not going to go near them, I'm going to stay in my own space.

This brings me to the second concept, which is Be the Change. Obviously, I did not create this one. I believe it was Gandhi who said, Be the Change, which really, in his essence right now means, be the example. Not with your words, but with your actions, with your thoughts, with how you're showing up. You can make choices to stay in, you can make choices to wash your hands, you can social distance, you can choose all those things. Though you don't have to go hang out with those people partying in the streets.

I get up in the morning at 5:30 to walk my dogs. I'm having virtual coffees with my friends. I'm finding new ways to do things that I want to do, safe ways to do things that I want to do, or what I consider safe ways to do them. You can be the change and you can model the change. And that's true during this pandemic. It's true at the office and it's true at work. You can make choices.

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With your boss who's made that 'scary' decision that could risk the whole company, you get to decide how you want to show up. Do you want to show up as the dissenting voice that is creating complications and complaining and only seeing the problems? Do you want to be that person? How motivating is that going to be for everyone around you? Or do you want to be the person who helps people solve problems and feel comfortable managing their mindsets and adding value to how people are working?

You can figure out how you want to show up in that circumstance. It doesn't always have to be coming from a place of anger and dissension because that again, never works. It's not productive. So one, *Equal Airtime*. Equal airtime to the productive and unproductive judgments that you have on people in the situation. Number two is *Be the Change*.

Number three is *Lean In*. Sheryl Sandberg wrote that book about leaning in. This is more about leaning into your confidence and leaning into who you are. I'm using that terminology right now, to lean into understanding, leaning into compassion. The more you lean into compassion and understanding, the more you're actually… One – going to have stronger mental health and two – the more you can actually impact, influence, and inspire others.

That might sound like manipulation but it's not manipulation, because manipulation is really about not changing what you think and feel about the situation, but pretending to act in a certain way to get people to do what we want them to do. That's manipulation. You can't lean into compassion and understanding without changing your mindset.

First, if you are really angry, and have all these unproductive, negative judgments on people, but you pretend to understand them, that's never going to work. People see through that. You actually have to do the first two things in whatever way works for you like equal airtime. Try to see both sides of the situation of every situation and every circumstance, and focus on managing yourself. Be the change and focus on managing yourself.

Once you get those two things done, you can actually find it so much easier to lean into compassion and lean into understanding. You can find it so much easier to be light and make it fun. You can make it a game with your kids to wash their hands. It's the same with your boss, too. They made a decision.

If you can give equal airtime to positive, productive judgments; if you can take all of your concerns and all of your anxiety, all of your frustration with that decision and give equal airtime to positive productive thoughts about that decision, and decide to show up in a more productive way, then you're going to have better results. You're actually going to be able to maybe understand your boss's decision.

Maybe you can amplify and add value to your boss's decision. Maybe you can say, *Okay, here's how we're going to do it. Here's how we can make this happen. I also thought this concern might pop up. What do you think? Should we manage that now or ahead of time? She would just be aware of it?* You can actually become a solutions-oriented supporter of the decision to make it work to be the kind of leader that you want to be at this time.

But the more you spend your energy, your precious energy stressing and worrying and contemplating how to change other people's behavior; whether it's during Coronavirus or in your everyday work life, the more ineffective, frustrated, and stressed out you are going to be. So one, choose your own behavior. Be the change. Two, manage

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your mind. Give equal airtime. Every time you have a negative thought or an unproductive judgment, give equal airtime to something that's positive and productive.

Every time you spend an hour watching CNN or Fox News or some sort of the-world-is-ending-type-of-message, spend some time with something inspirational. Spend the same amount of time with something inspirational – a podcast, a book coaching. Do something, give equal airtime to help manage your mind during this time so that you can have compassion and lean into understanding people and showing up in a way that is solutions-oriented, supportive, fun, and light. Because the heavier you are, it's not only going to impact your stress level, but it's not going to change anything with other people.

So bottom line, don't invest your precious energy trying to change other people's bad decisions. It never works. And if you need help working through it at this time, please come to melsavage.com/chat. Book a 45-minute session with me. Let's help get you refocused. No strings attached.

That's it, my friends. I will talk to you again next week. All the best. Bye.

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