



*a podcast about
how we learn,
how we teach,
and how they overlap*

Episode 19 - Why We Judge Ourselves

Adam: Hi, I'm Adam Sanford. I'm an academic life coach and a professor in Los Angeles.

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Adam: And this is Learning Made Easier, the podcast where we discuss how we learn, and how we teach, and how they overlap.

Dinur: Welcome back to Learning Made Easier! This is Episode 19 where we'll talk about why we judge ourselves, when it's appropriate, when we are overdoing it, and how to stop when that happens.

Adam: So, we all judge ourselves sometimes. That's normal. Human beings - we are always on the lookout for what other people think about us, how well we're doing, and so forth. But how much of this judgment is actually helpful, and how much of it is unnecessary, or even harmful? Sometimes it's necessary to criticize ourselves. We need to be able to evaluate our work with a critical eye towards improvement. But when are we going too far? When does self-criticism turn into just beating ourselves up?

Dinur: According to psychologist Barbara Markway, we generally think that harsh punishment will bring improvement, but research shows that this isn't true. We also think that we don't really deserve self-acceptance. We're not okay with that. Many of us put off being kind to ourselves until we meet a standard that's somewhere in the future. Like, "I'm going to pass this test and **then** I'll be something." Or "I'll lose a certain amount of weight and **then** I'll be nice to myself."

Well, the problem is that that standard is a moving goal post. We get to it; we still don't feel like we've earned self-acceptance; so we set a newer, harder standard to reach. We're always striving but we never feel like we reach that finish line.

Adam: And I have an example about this - actually a couple of examples about this, one from my own coaching and one from Brooke Castillo's podcast. And I'll start with Brooke Castillo. In a recent podcast she talked about how, if we set restrictions on ourselves, and we do it with the mindset that we're going to beat ourselves up with it, we're going to fail.

So, she's a weight-loss coach. She talks a lot about weight, and she says, if you set the restriction that "I'm so horribly fat that I'm not allowed to eat that thing I like," well, willpower will only take you so far, and then it'll fall apart, and then you'll wind up bingeing on that thing. But if you approach it from a place of care for the self, where, "I'm going to take care of myself and eating that thing will harm me," then it's much easier to stick to your goal, because you're doing it from a place of self-care rather than a place of self-abuse.

And in the same way, we often believe that talking dirt to ourselves, that talking trash on ourselves, somehow motivates us. That there's a lot of movies where you've got, for example, the drill sergeant is a classic example - screaming at the recruits, and telling them horrible things, and calling them names, and just lots and lots of invective, and "we're going to break you down and build you up" and "we're going to beat you up until you break down."

Well, that's not appropriate when you're not a drill sergeant. And even the Army is beginning to recognize that that method of approaching the recruits is really not a good way of having a good, organized force. When you are your own drill sergeant, all you're doing is hurting yourself.

And an example from my own coaching: I had a couple of students this past semester who had severe test anxiety. I actually sat them down in office hours one time, and at lunch another time, and gave them a coaching - gave them a Brooke-Castillo-and-Byron-Katie coaching - and the thought they were fighting was "I'm going to fail the exam."

And they kept hitting themselves with this: "I'm going to fail, I'm going to fail, I am a failure, I am the worst student in the world." They had all these related thoughts.

And I said, "Okay, this thought that 'I'm going to fail,' that 'I'm a failure' - is that helping you in any way? Is there any stress-free reason to hold on to that thought?" (which is part of Byron Katie's protocol).

And one student said, "Well, it's supposed to motivate me."

“Okay, it doesn't motivate you, does it? All it does is make you feel awful. All it does this make you feel like you're the worst person in the world.”

So being hard on yourself is not the same thing as having self-discipline. Being hard on yourself, being mean to yourself, being overly-judgmental of yourself - all of these things are basically abusing yourself. And for what point? What purpose are you serving by doing this?

But if you come at it saying, “Okay, I need to study more so that I can pass this exam, because passing this exam will make me feel good” - all right, now we're focused on a positive reason for studying, not a terrifying negative reason for studying. Not a “I'm the worst person in the world” feeling, but “hey, I'm going to do this, I'm going to be confident at this, this is going to feel good to get this test done and get it out of the way.”

Dinur: And I actually had an example that I think dovetails with this. It actually comes out of the world of sports. Shocking, I know...

Adam: Oh, wait, you? Sports? What are we talking about here, now, Dinur? (laughter)

Dinur: Right. (laughs) Now, there is an argument that people crave disrespect, right? It's a very common mantra. And people are hard on themselves, right? “People don't think I can do this, people didn't think we could do this, but we proved them wrong.”

And we tend to kind of emphasize this, and it can be useful but only in a limited extent. You can use that if you say, “Man, people think I can't pass this test. I'm going to show them wrong, and here's what I'm going to do.” It's taking that motivation, it's taking that anger - but it's channeling it into positive steps that you're taking.

Adam: It also sounds like this is - if the criticism or the harshness of the judgment is coming from **outside** you, that your reaction is “oh yeah? watch me!” or “I'll show you!”

But if it's coming from **inside**...

Dinur: Ah - but what will happen is a lot of the time athletes, and I think non-athletes too, will start inventing people who have disrespected themselves. They might be well paid; they might be playing on a

team that's favored to win, but they'll say "We heard people talking about us and we wanted to show them." So it might be something that comes from inside that gets projected as an outside as well.

Adam: That's interesting.

Dinur: Yeah, and so I was thinking, you can take that feeling, but only in small amounts, and only to the extent that you're actually using it to reach your goal.

Adam: Mm-hm. So, how do we know when we're being too hard on ourselves? Because I've had students ask me that, you know. "How am I supposed to know that - I'm supposed to motivate myself and it always comes across as "you're not good enough, you have to do better." And so, how do we know when we've gone past what's called constructive criticism to destructive and damaging criticism?

Well, first, I want to give you kind of an idea of what constructive criticism should look like. So when I tell my students that they're going to be doing a paper in my class, I require them - if they're turning in the research paper, which is the big capstone on the end of this research project - that they have to let one of their peers review it first. They have to give that paper to a peer, and have the peer go through it and mark down things that are mistakes, things that are not making sense, places where they're not clear, places where they've made a claim with no backup for it, places where they need a citation - you know, all those mistakes that a lot of students miss when they write the paper the night before turning it in on the date that it is due.

And I've had some students say "I don't want anybody to criticize me, because that's me, I'm being criticized, it's **me** being criticized."

No, it's your work being looked at, and I'm going to offer this to counteract that idea (that it's you personally who's being criticized): that paper you're turning in is like a 5-year-old on their way to their first day of kindergarten. Now, before they go to their first day of kindergarten, if you were their older sister or their mom or their dad, you're going to look them over and make sure that they're wearing clean clothes, that they have their hair combed, that they're not picking their nose. And I tell my students, "Your job as a peer reviewer is not to say that this is stupid. If you do that, I'm going to take points off your grade as a reviewer. But if you say, "look, your child, he needs his hair combed, he needs his nose wiped, he needs to be told 'Don't pick your nose,' and he needs to zip up his fly, because all of those are going to make you, as the parent or the older sibling who has prepared this child for the first class, to look bad and you don't want that."

So think of constructive criticism as someone telling you, "OK. Your work is OK, but it needs to tie its shoes, and it needs to brush its teeth because it's got spinach in its teeth when it smiles." That's all constructive criticism is.

Damaging criticism, on the other hand, is: "How stupid are you? How could you not tell that this is totally stupid run-on sentence? I mean, anybody would see that!" Okay, that's not constructive. That's damaging and destructive. And too often, we find our mistakes and we start beating ourselves up.

So how do we know when we're actually being too hard on ourselves?

Well, according to Alice Boyes, who is another psychologist, there are several red flags that will wave and say, "Hi, you're being too hard on yourself!"

And the first one is: we tend to judge our errors totally out of proportion to their consequences. Like, we see a 97 on the test as the worst thing in the world because we didn't get 100 percent. Okay, how big of a deal is it to your grade that you didn't get 100 percent? Is that a big deal, is it a small deal, is it a nothing deal? And her suggestion is to set a threshold for small mistakes. So, she's talking to business people mostly, so: it's an error that cost you less than five bucks? Let it go. It's an error that you spent less than 10 minutes making? It wasted 10 minutes? Let it go. And so, students might set a threshold for, maybe, a certain number of points, where, "OK, this is a 100 question test and I missed 3 questions. Big freaking deal! I still got an A. Let's move on."

Dinur: I was also going to say, set yourself - give yourself a goal to reach, but be happy if you've reached a certain threshold, even if it's not quite that goal. So, let's say your goal is to reach 95 percent on an exam, and you study, and you study, and you get 88, 89 percent. Damned respectable, not quite where you wanted to go.

Don't start fretting and beating yourself up, because you're talking about a difference of 6 or 7 points. Set that bar at whatever your goal is, but also give yourself some wiggle room. Give yourself a threshold and say, "You know what? If I get above this score, I'm going to be happy about this. I'm going to feel OK." Because we very often look at the high bar that we set, and if we haven't cleared it, then we feel like we haven't accomplished anything. Give yourself a lower bar, give yourself some wiggle room. So, that way you can actually see just how well you're doing relative to the expectations you have for yourself.

Adam: Well, and thinking of this in the sports context, the guy who goes up to bat? Yeah, his ultimate goal

is to hit a home run, but if he hits the ball and gets on first base that's good enough. He made progress towards home base, right? So when you are going in for the test, you might set, like, the stretch goal, like "what I really hope I can get," and then the acceptable goal, so, for Dinur this would have been, you know, in your example, it would have been, "OK, 95 is what I want. 88 is what I'll accept. As long as I hit at least 88, I'm cool."

Dinur: Yeah, or at least as long as I hit 85, right? I didn't quite hit my 95 reach, but I cleared 85 and I'm good with that. But I cleared 80, if that was the goal.

Adam: So that's the first thing, is that we tend to judge our errors out of proportion to the consequences. So when it comes to points, for example, set a threshold. Like the example that Dinur just gave us: 95 is what I want, 85 is good enough. So set the "high bar" goal and a "good enough" goal, and as long as you get a good enough goal, don't beat yourself up! You hit the good enough goal. Move on.

Dinur: That means you did good enough by your standards. Keep in mind what Adam said, that we judge the errors out of proportion. We judge ourselves, even after we've rectified our mistakes. So, I can tell you from my own experience, from having works rejected by journals, that I will beat myself up, and I'll go "wow, I can't believe I didn't think of this critique, I didn't think of how this phrase sounded," and it stinks, but you take those words into consideration, you start working on it, right? You try to improve the paper, because ultimately you hope to submit it somewhere else and see if it gains traction.

But let's say you're a student, and you've been marked off on a couple paragraphs, like, "hey, you didn't really support this very well," or "hey, you've got some run-on sentences," and let's say that's in the rough draft. If you correct it, don't keep beating yourself up over it! Learning is built on making mistakes, and we have a very hard time accepting that. We assume that we have to be perfect from the get go, and once we've worked on correcting mistakes, we're improving.

But we still feel guilty even though, one, there's nothing to feel guilty for, and guilt only works if it actually motivates us. Kind of like the idea of disrespect, or with trash talk, you can use it, but it's got to be used I'd say in very, very small amounts and in a very, very specific way. But once we've done what we can to correct our mistakes, we have to where to let the mistakes go and to move on, there's always another paper and another tests to worry about.

Adam: And a third issue that Boyes brings up is we keep putting self-care at the bottom of our priority list. So, OK, I've got my work shift and I've got a class and I've got a paper to work on, and I would really

like to just take some time to go for a run - maybe you're the kind of person where going for a run clears your head. It makes you feel better, but you don't get around to it. You keep putting off exercise. You keep not doing it. Well, maybe that needs to be on the top of the priority list, not the bottom of the priority list.

One of my methods of self-care that I don't often allow myself to have - and I should do it more - is artwork. I do a craft called cross-stitch beadwork, and it's one of those things where I can do it and I just sort of relax my mind. It's just very repetitive, very, very low stress, and it allows me to relax, but I never allow myself to relax.

Now the other thing about self-care is that a lot of people think self-care is very fluffy. You know, "get a bubble bath, have some chocolate," but self-care is also: "Are you getting enough exercise? Are you getting enough sleep? Are you getting enough time away from the work, so that your brain can function and work well on what you need it to work on, instead of being completely stressed out and strained?"

You know, if you like to read a book, take an hour and read your book. Just spend some time doing that. If there's a TV show that you love, watching that show is self-care. Doing things for yourself that allow you to relax, that allow you to de-stress - these are important things you need to be doing for yourself, and if you have stacked the day with 35 hours of work that won't fit into your 24 hour box, self-care needs to be one of the first things on that list.

So Boyes' suggestion is to pick a domain of self-care that you don't usually put on the top of the priority list, and allow yourself the time or the money or the mental space to do that for a while.

So if you don't normally exercise, and you love exercise, put "going to the gym 3 times a week" at the top of your priority list. Make sure that it's something you absolutely get done.

I didn't use to meditate, and I used to meditate when I when I thought about it, like, "Oh, I'll sit down and meditate, I will turn on the app and meditate for 10 minutes," but now that I am meditating every morning, I make that a priority - even in my mornings where I'm getting up at 6:30 and I have to be a campus by 8, I take 10 minutes. That is my time for meditation, and I never skip it. That's my self-care.

Dinur: You can think of self-care as you hitting that reset button. And we all have times that we absolutely need to do that, where, if we don't, we're going to risk burning ourselves out. We're going to feel frustrated. So think of self-care as hitting that reset button to get refreshed, and to be able to tackle whatever challenges come your way, you know.

Adam: Think of self-care as your body, your psyche is a car. It needs an oil change every now and then, it needs gasoline every now and then, it needs, you know, a tune up every now and then. Self-care is doing the tune up. Self-care is doing the oil change.

Dinur: Absolutely, another way that Boyes says we harm ourselves is that we automatically interpret someone else's poor treatment of us as our fault. Think of this as "it's not me, it's you," and it's taken to an extreme. And she suggests that you critically look at how much responsibility you're taking, and trying to take no more than 50 percent, because it takes at least 2 people for this relationship. And so that means that any one person should take no more than 50 percent of the responsibility. It should be an equal thing. What we suggest is to remember what other people think about you is not your business. You can't do anything about that, you can only focus on being yourself.

One of the things I tell my students is, I teach them that gossip is one way that keeps people's behavior in line, because we hate it when other people talk badly about us. And one of the things I tell them is, you want to behave in a way so that, if someone does try talking about you, no one is going to believe them, because that's not who you are.

Adam: And the thing about taking no more than 50 percent, this is hard for a lot of us. I mean, I call it a "responsibility complex." I was raised to believe that I had to take care of everything, and that everything was my fault. But now I kind of lean on Alanis Morissette, her song It's Not All Me. She says, "I'll take some of the responsibility, but it's not all me. Some of this is you."

So if you are in a group project, and your entire group is saying, "it's all your fault that we failed," but you did your part, that's not just you. They must have done some things that didn't work either.

Another thing is when we see the teacher, and they snap at us. Okay, maybe we come into class and the teacher's just in a really bad mood. That bad mood has probably nothing to do with you. It might be that, for example, once I had to tell my students, "I'm having a really rough pain day, if I seem a little bit out of sorts, it's totally not you, it's me."

And I had one student come up to me after class, almost in tears, and she said, "I'm so glad you told me that, because I had to remind myself several times, 'Dr. Sanford is in pain, it's not about me,' when you called on me, because I thought that - because I my brain automatically went to 'he's mad at me,' and then I had to remind myself, 'No he's in pain that's why he's not sounding as good as he usually does.'"

And the thing, is she was trying to take responsibility for my bad mood. And that wasn't her problem! What was going on in my head was not her business. And what I think about you is not your business, and what you think about me is not my business, unless you choose to make it my business. And that's hard to do too. But this is something where, if you look at what the other person is saying, ask yourself "how much of it is stuff I'm really responsible for?" It shouldn't be more than 50 percent.

Dinur: And I think part of the reason this happens is, we tend to think of ourselves as being more powerful than we are, and I think it's also because we assume that there's a constant spotlight on us. So we assume that someone else's judgment must mean that we're not playing the role well enough, we're not acting powerfully enough for them to like us, or for them to treat us well. And there is no constant spotlight on any of us at any given point in time. Generally, we're all living our own lives, no one's focused on you specifically, and two, we can only control things about ourselves. And it takes a while to be able to accept that but our selves are not other people. We can control our behavior. We can't control other people's thoughts.

Adam: And I think that your point about the spotlight is a good one. The way that I put it to my students sometimes is: "you will remember the mistake you made in my class three weeks from now. Nobody else will."

And I've had students say, "You mean the teacher doesn't keep track of how many mistakes I make?"

"No, because don't I make mistakes in class too?"

I mean, there have been some terrible blunders I've done in classrooms, and I still cringe about them, and it's been 10 years since I made those mistakes. But it made sure that I never made that mistake again, and in the meantime, does anybody else remember that mistake? No.

Think of this as: what you see other people showing you, whether it's in person or on their Facebooks or on their Instagram feed, is a very carefully curated "best shots" reel. You, on the other hand, are seeing your blooper reel. You're not seeing their blooper reel - you're only seeing your blooper reel.

Well, if you can't see their blooper reels, they can't see yours either. And that has really helped, to realize most people don't remember that screwup that I made in class last week. Most people were too worried about what other people are thinking of them to pay attention to the fact that I screwed up.

So it's hard to realize that we're not the center of attention, but it's also a big relief to realize that we're not usually the center of attention. Even if you're the teacher, you're not always the center of attention.

The next thing that Boyes talks about is that we always try to go the extra mile. We always try to be perfect, no matter what, and the thing is - we've had already some episodes about this, we've talked about, you know, "improvement not perfection" in Episode 8, and we've talked about this in other episodes - where we say, you know, trying to be perfect is not going to be possible. And so Boyes' suggestion is actually try being less than perfect, make that your goal to not be perfect. Go less than the extra mile. Strive for "good enough." Brooke Castillo's way of putting this is, do B-minus work and accept that it's good enough. The goal is to get it done, not to get it perfect.

In grad school I was told once there are two kinds of dissertations: there's a perfect dissertation, and there's a finished dissertation, and they're never going to be the same dissertation. So I gave up trying to make my dissertation perfect. And yes, there are several places in my dissertation where I just cringe, because I could have - I think now, "I could have caught that." Well, no, actually. I probably couldn't've caught it at the time. And I passed; I had no revisions, I got my PhD the day that I defended - so why am I trying to make it perfect? What's the point of trying to make it perfect?

Brooke Castillo's suggestion of "do B-minus work and accept that it's good enough" - it is really a mantra I wish that more students would adopt, because that would really lower your stress levels like crazy.

Dinur: Absolutely. Boyes also says that we look for every single reason that we're not perfect, and then we beat ourselves up for that. And Adam and I've given a few examples from our own lives when we're writing or when we're teaching, and we cringe at the mistakes. And it's taken a while to learn that, okay, you make the mistake, you learn from it, you move on, you stop beating yourself up for it. And Boyes suggests that for everything that you find that you're not perfect at, find something that you're really, really good at.

And also, ask people that you know how they see you. Trust their judgment. Right? You're not going to ask a random stranger how they see you, because you don't know who they are.

Adam: And they don't know who you are, either.

Dinur: Exactly! So you find someone that you know, ask them how they see you, trust their judgment. We

suggest looking at the suggestions for one and two, that you set a threshold for your grade, and you stop judging that after the mistake has been corrected, and you follow those guidelines. It's setting that "good enough" bar, and it's learning from mistakes that are made.

Adam: And it may not be easy to do that at first, because we're so used to judging ourselves, and judging ourselves, and judging ourselves. Part of what you might want to do is just have a conversation with yourself and say, "why are you doing this?"

And your brain might say, "Well, because if I don't, then how am I going to succeed?"

Well, you'll find new ways to succeed, you know. Listening to this podcast will give you lots to succeed and just, you know, just putting that little pitch out there. But the thing is that if you keep on beating yourself up, you're going to stay where you are, which is stuck, frustrated and anxiety-ridden. And that's not helpful. That's not going to help you.

So the last thing the Boyes points out is that we see other people's mistakes and errors as totally understandable, but we never allow ourselves the same consideration. So, for example, your friend got a 92 on the test - which means they got an A-minus - and they're all torn up about it. And you tell them, "hey, 92's a great grade, you only missed 8 points out of 100, that's awesome!"

But you look at your own 92, and you're like, "oh, how did I miss those 8 points? How can I be so stupid?"

Okay, that's a - double standard much? You can't do that, all right? If your friend's errors are understandable, then your errors are also understandable, because neither of you are perfect.

And I think that everyone can think of examples of this. I don't think we even need to go into examples, Boyes' suggestion here - and this is a suggestion that's made by lots of different folks in the coaching fields and the therapy fields - when you make a mistake, think about how you would respond to a friend or a loved one who made the same mistake, and treat yourself the way you would treat that friend or loved one. Be compassionate with yourself. Say, all right, "so, you know, the section on world systems, I really didn't study, but I still got an 88 percent on the test. That's above average."

Look at what you've done, not at what you screwed up on, all right? So you should also - for every time you criticize yourself also (this is our suggestion), every time you make a mistake, find something good about what you did too, and pat yourself on the back for that. Say "Okay, yeah. I blew it on the section of

the test that was on world systems, but on all the other parts of the test - on the exchange theory and on the feminist theory and on the postmodernists - I understood all of that, and I pulled an 88, so I didn't do too bad! I did pretty well," okay?

You'd do the same thing for a friend or a loved one, wouldn't you? You'd say, "Okay, so you screwed up and didn't do well on world systems, big deal! you know all that stuff about feminism and exchange theory and postmodernism, you got an 88 percent - no big! You're OK, it's fine!"

Dinur: Now, so, we've been gearing this a lot toward students, but teachers can also use these guidelines that we've been suggesting. And we suggest that teachers use these principles both for themselves and for their students.

One, as a teacher, you've got to support yourself, you are in front of a lot of students. And you've got to remember that you need to put self-care near the top of your priorities, in order to avoid burnout.

If you make a mistake, or rather, when you make a mistake, use the mistake as a teaching tool, and model this process of learning from the mistake and moving on, and going, "I made the mistake, I own it, here's how I'm handling it, here's how I'm going to let it go."

So, what I like to do is when I teach my students - I teach them about research - not only that I've done well, but I teach them about mistakes I've made, the obstacles I've encountered. I've showed them papers where I've gotten rejected from journals, because I want to show them that one, their teachers aren't perfect (but just because we're not perfect doesn't mean we don't know a lot and have ideas), and two, you have to show how to learn, how to channel that disappointment and how to learn from these mistakes and how to move on. And that way students can say that learning is a process. It's not "you didn't know anything one day, all of a sudden you knew everything in the field and all of a sudden you were perfect." It's not even when you're reaching that top or you're climbing that mountain, you're making mistakes, and you're learning how to rebound from them, and you're learning how not to beat yourself up for the mistakes.

Adam: And not just in the work you're doing! Also, as a teacher, you're on stage. We all blow our lines every now and then. This happens especially if you aren't just reading your lecture from a script, which does tend to be boring, but when you are riffing, there's always the chance that you could go off into the weeds, and say something that was really inappropriate or really incorrect or really stupid.

And I've had this happen. I'm very good at this. I suffer from terminal foot-in-mouth syndrome. And I've had a couple of times where I said something in class and then, right after it came out of my mouth, I realized "oh-oh, uh... I **so** should not have said that."

There was an incident this past semester where I said a word in class that should not have been said in class. I came back the next day to other classes where this was not happening in that class, and said "okay, this is a mistake I made yesterday." I described it to the students. I said "I own that I made this mistake. I screwed up. How I'm handling it is I'm being open about having made it. I'm telling all of my students about it, to use it as an example of how to handle making a big mistake." And then I talked about "here's how I'm handling it, and here's how I'm going to let it go," and I did that with all of my classes in that, about that week-and-a-half period after this mistake in one class.

I've had students come back to me and say, "you are so brave."

And I'm like, "No, I just needed to make sure that you understood that I screwed up and that I understood that I screwed up, and that I understood here's how I'm owning it: here's how I'm handling it, and here's how I'm going to let it go."

Now to support your students: try making sure that you're structuring your classes so that the classes support mistake-making, so that the classes support recovery and so that they discourage beating yourself up. You can have an exercise, early in the term, where you have the student set the thresholds for acceptable mistakes - where you can have them reflect on what "good enough" looks like for them. And list ways to treat themselves with compassion when they do inevitably make mistakes, remind students often that you do not expect it to be perfect, that you do not expect everyone to get straight A's, that the goal is not perfection - it is learning and continuous improvement.

And again I've had students say, "Wait, you don't expect us all to get straight A's?"

I'm like "Are you kidding? I expect you to get C's, I expect you to get at least C's, I expect you to put in enough effort and learn enough that you will pull a passing score in my class. If you get a B, I'll be happy for you. If you get an A, I'll be ecstatic for you - but I do not demand that you get straight A's, because that's not the goal of this class. The points are not the point; the grade is not the point; the learning is the point."

Now the way that students can use this and we talked a lot about it, follow Boyes' suggestions. Remember,

you are seeing your blooper reel and everyone else has their final cut. Also remember, nobody remembers your mistakes after a few days, except you. And remember too, mistakes are how we learn. Being too critical of yourself is really going to hamstring your ability to learn, because you're going to be so afraid of making a mistake that you will not approach learning as learning, but as, I don't know, kind of a gauntlet or a, you know, an endurance test. That's not productive. That's not helpful for learning.

Dinur: And related to that is: we know our own backstage, right? We know our own doubts, our own fears, we know how we prepare for tests, we know how we study, but other people don't know that. Other people aren't constantly around us. They're not constantly asking us what we're doing. They only see what we outwardly project, they see our front stage - what we're choosing to show to them as an audience.

Well, similarly, we only know other people's front stages, right? Adam said you see other people's Facebook or Instagram feeds. That's what they're choosing to portray and that's choosing how they show their lives, but they likely face their own sets of doubts and fears, they're just not going to outwardly project them. And so, because of that, we assume that they don't have these - even though everyone has doubts, everyone has fears, everyone has a part of themselves that they don't want other people to see.

Adam: So I remember reading an article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, which is a newspaper/magazine kind of thing for people who work in higher ed, and it was a graduate student who had found out that one of her most beloved professors, who had tons of publications to his name, he'd had tenure for like 30 years, he was a known name in the field - apparently thought that everyone saw all of his mistakes and felt he was a failure.

So think about that. He was only seeing other people's front stage. Nobody ever saw his backstage, until he was willing to talk about it. And it shocked people, because they're like: "How can you possibly think that you're a failure? You have 37 publications! You've got textbooks, you've got talks out the wazoo, you know? You've got tenure!"

And he felt like he was a failure. So if someone that successful can be judgmental, of course you're going to be judgmental of yourself. But the goal is to move away from that. The goal is to realize you are not seeing the blooper reels of everyone around you. You're only seeing their final cut, but that means they're not seeing your blooper reel either.

So that's what we've got for you in Episode 19! If you're finding this podcast helpful, please share it with

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Dinur: Be sure to join us next week for Episode 20, when Gretchen Wegner of the Anti-Boring Approach Coaching Method will join us and talk about how to study effectively.

Adam: You've been listening to Learning Made Easier, a podcast about how we learn, how we teach, and how they overlap.

Dinur: We wanted to say thank you to all of our supporters on Patreon who make this podcast possible.

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Dinur: We look forward to seeing you next week!