

## Ep #12: Perception: Finding the Peace in Neutrality



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Lori A. Harris**

## Ep #12: Perception: Finding the Peace in Neutrality

Welcome back to the *Unlock Your Life* podcast. This is episode number 12. Today we're talking about perception. Do you see what I see? Do we see at all? Can we see? Are we seeing accurately? Let's get it going.

Welcome to the *Unlock Your Life* podcast, a podcast for highly successful visionary women who want more out of life. If you feel that ache of unfulfillment in your soul, you're in the right place sis. Join life mastery consultant Lori A. Harris as she teaches you how to stop living for others and finally put yourself first. Let's dive into today's show.

Hey fam, hey. How's it going? So if you spent any extended period of time with me, you would learn I love to sing. I love music, and I sing all the time. I sing coming and going. Sometimes I wake up singing. I didn't say I was good at it. I just love to sing. It's really fun, and it truly lifts my mood. My sister says that if my mind wasn't clogged with so much useless information such as song lyrics, I might actually be smart.

Sometimes song lyrics can really be kind of thought provoking. So there's that song that says, "And I miss you like the desert missed the rain". I always think, does that mean she really misses this person, or does that mean she doesn't miss them at all? You know the desert is the desert. It doesn't expect to have lots of water. Or does the desert really enjoy and relish and celebrate those moments when it rains? So does she really miss that person or not miss that person at all? Is this person's presence sweet relief or not that big of a deal? That's one thing I've been thinking about.

Another song lyric I was considering is from *Stronger Than Pride* by Sade. She says, "Waiting here for you is like waiting for the sun to rise." Or in another line she says, "Sitting here waiting for you would be like waiting for winter. It's going to be cold. There might even be snow." I just love thinking about that.

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It's like that line from Game of Thrones. Winter is coming. It's not ominous. It's not threatening, but winter is coming. What I love about it is that it reminds me that there is a rhythm, a regulation, a fact of life. That there is good and there is bad. There is up and there is down. There is the sun and there's the moon. There's lightness and there's darkness. There has to be polarity so that you can appreciate the contrast.

So when we talk about perception, we're talking about how we perceive the events, the circumstances, the situations of our lives. As we consider them, sometimes we label them. We can label them good, or we can label them bad. However, there's a sweet surrender in allowing things to be neutral. It can be something you would have preferred not to have happened. However, let's consider the peace that could exist in a place of neutrality where we don't call it good or bad. It just is.

There's great value in noticing the labels that we put on a situation, condition, or circumstance. We spend a great deal of our life labeling and categorizing things. We want to know who are you? Where do you come from? Who are your people? What's your ethnic background? What's your racial background? What's your political background? What's your religious background? What's your spiritual practice? What's your gender? Do you have a gender? What is your sexuality? How do you express yourself sexually?

We love to have a way to organize, categorize, and box things in. There's a beauty in the surrender, a beauty in letting things simply be. What would it be like if you were willing to allow things just to be? So at this moment, I invite you to consider the place of witness. The place where one can notice what we're noticing, notice our observation without judgment free from labels in a place of complete neutrality where we allow things to simply be without judging it. Just allowing it to be.

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Part of developing a mindfulness practice is learning to be quiet and still in a moment. Last time we got together, we talked about the arrow and the second arrow, and avoiding the second arrow of judgement and the meaning that we place on the situation, circumstances, and events that happen in our lives and just letting it be. The reason why it's related to a mindfulness practice is if you can do that inside of a container of a sit.

Let's pretend for a moment that you took the time and contemplated sitting and being quiet and being still and just observing. So one way that we can approach a mindfulness practice is to stop, pause, and with deliberation decide to be concentrated for a given period of time.

In a mindfulness practice, you can decide to direct your mind toward a thought. Perhaps it's a candle. Perhaps it's a mantra. Something that you're going to say over and over again. This moment is a beautiful moment. Or I smile, and this is a beautiful smile. Whatever you want to say. It's your mantra. Or you could count. Count a series of beads. When you get to the end, that's the end of your practice.

Whatever you decided at the outset of the practice. You say I'm going to sit for five minutes and clear my mind, and I'm going to think love. Love, love, love, love. I'm going to bring forward images that remind me of love. I'm going to do that for five minutes. Then two minutes in you find that you're thinking about, "I wonder what I'm going to have for lunch." That goes on for maybe seven to ten seconds, and then you notice that you have gotten off track. You are not directing your mind to the place you intended to go.

There's a magical moment right there. Because in that moment, the decision to gently bring yourself back to the original intention, that moment of growth. That is the moment where you get to decide, "Am I going to call this particular sit bad? Am I going to call this particular event bad? Am I going to continue to beat up on myself because of it? Or are you going to bring yourself gently back to center?"

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That is the beauty of developing and building a mindfulness practice. It's a day to day moment to moment lifetime activity of deciding on an intention. Deciding who you're going to be and bringing your awareness to that. When you notice that you've fallen off the path, then you bring yourself gently back to center.

If you can do that, then that is the exercise. It's not being able to sit perfectly still with your mind completely empty. The exercise is what level of kindness can you offer to yourself when you know you've gotten off track? When have you perceived something in a way that isn't pleasing to you? So this is a practice, and I love it. For me, this is what excitement looks like sometimes. When I notice and I can gently bring myself back to center.

I remember years ago a friend from work introduced me to Pema Chödrön. I might be pronouncing her name incorrectly. And her book. I remember reading the book. I hadn't really started my practice at all. I was in the precontemplation when I was thinking about thinking about having a practice. So I'm reading her book, and I remember there was a section in the book where she suggests one stay perfectly still in their meditation. So if you should have an itch, don't scratch it. If you should have some kind of discomfort in the hip, don't adjust but to sit with it.

I remember reading that years ago, and it made me so angry. I was like well clearly this chick is crazy. I'm not doing that. Why shouldn't I? As time goes on, I've learned that I can notice the thought, "Oh, I have an itch." And sit with that for a moment. If I allow it just to be and not label that as something negative that I don't want to be experiencing, that I need to relieve in that moment. If I can just sit with it for a moment, it will go away.

The same is true with some momentary discomfort. If I can sit with that for a moment, it will go away. I've learned that if I can take those lessons from my meditation cushion or learned in my meditation. If I can take those lessons and apply them to my life then that discomfort can be managed. I

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can observe it and I can be a witness to it without the label. I can reduce my own suffering. My own perception of discomfort and pain.

So sometimes one can just observe it. Sometimes you can lean into it and see what it has come to teach you, what this discomfort or pain has come to bring you. Where is the lesson? If we can do that without the label of this is bad and understand that there are things that will happen in life that we will perceive as not our preference but it's not necessarily bad, we can increase our own sense of living and loving and increase our own commentary peace in the moment.

This is the exercise. We get to decide how we're going to show up and how we're going to allow the events of the world to impact our lives, our day to day momentary lives. We can't control the events of the world. There's a Zen saying that says you cannot stop the birds from flying around your head, but you can prevent them from making nests in your hair. So it's upon us to decide who we're going to be and how we're going to manage the events of the world. The things that are going on in the world. We get to decide who we're going to be and empower ourselves to live vibrant, healthy lives.

So as we get to the conclusion of this episode, I will remind you that the events, situations, conditions, the things that happen in our life are fairly neutral. We can entertain that the way we are perceiving things may or may not be accurate. It's based on the meaning that we give to an event. Just leave room for a different interpretation.

Know that there's a possibility of another way of looking at things and watch what happens. It gives you room to have a different experience in your relationship. It gives you room to have a different experience with the events of your life. There's more than one way to look at things. It leaves an opening for perhaps this isn't right or wrong. Stay in a place where you're willing to consider neutrality.

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Then the final thing I want to tell you is when you talk about perception, as a lawyer doing trial work one of my favorite things to do in closing argument was to use these images you often would be introduced to in a psychology 101 class for college. They're images where you can see more than one thing going on in a photograph. It opens the possibility for well maybe there's another way to look at it.

So as an attorney, we often are called upon to show a journey just because opposing counsel has told you this is it and this is what happened, there's a completely other way to look at it. Let me introduce you to another way to interpret these facts. So often times jurors are called into court not just to determine guilt or innocence but sometimes to name an incident and say is it what the prosecution has said it is? So it's an exercise in perception. So I soon learned not to be afraid of cases that involved video tapes because there's always more than one way to look at any situation, circumstance, or condition.

So in the show notes, I will attach a few photographs where you can see what I'm talking about. There's an image where you have an older woman or a younger woman. It just depends on what your eyes see. There's another one that I used to like to use where it's a set of bars. It's like how many bars are there? Is it four or is it five? Those kinds of things. So just really fun. What I've found is it helped people to be open to another way of looking at things? So I invite you to exercise your power of perception. Remember, there's always more than one way to look at things. It will open up an area of peace for you that you might not heretofore ever experienced.

Now we've reached the end of another episode of the *Unlock Your Life* podcast. If you've enjoyed today's show and don't want to worry about missing another episode, you can subscribe, follow, and rate the show wherever you listen to your podcast. If you haven't already, I'd really



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