

BREAKING THE COMPARISON TRAP IN 7 STEPS - EPISODE 184

SHOW OPEN:

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Building influence is something anyone can learn. It's an investment you can make in yourself and it can hold the keys to achieving your dreams and having the life and impact you want to have. I'm Laura Cox Kaplan. I've learned a lot over three decades about building and sustaining influence and how using it and using it effectively can make a big, big difference in your life and career. Here on She Said / She Said podcast, we're digging into the different dimensions that help us build and sustain influence. If you thought being an influencer was just for social media, think again. Whether you're starting a business, raising money for a cause, negotiating a promotion, running your household, or trying to connect with those who don't share your views, understanding and using the different dimensions of influence will increase your chances, success, whatever your goals may be. Listening to She Said / She Said podcast is a smart, efficient investment you can make in you. I'm really glad you're here and I'm excited we're on this journey together.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Hey friend, Welcome.

This week, I struggled a bit. And really debated whether to share this with you. But as I thought about it, I think what I experienced is such a common thing that it was worth sharing my experience. along with how not to let this get you down.

Here's what happened: A couple of weeks ago, I found myself starting to feel those pangs of self doubt. Not the normal every day, garden variety -- yes, we all have that, but the deeper, darker variety. I know many of you feel these as well. So you know what I'm talking about. But then, it got worse. I found myself triggered further by comparison to another person. You know when you fixate on someone else and start comparing yourself to them. Are you as --- Fill in the blank -- Ok i'm really not proud of this.... AND, The self talk that tends to accompany this tendency is undoubtedly negative, maybe even a little mean. Mine often is.

It's a terrible feeling. Because in addition to feeling like crap, you also tend to feel guilty about making those comparisons in the first place. So it's like a double whammy.

I find this tendency does tend to hit me at times when I'm already having some deeper feelings of self doubt.

Maybe I received some negative feedback, or someone made a comment that hit me wrong. It doesn't necessarily have to make sense or be logical.

A lot of people who find themselves feeling this immediately blame Social media. But the reality is, our collective tendency to self compare has existed long before social media. All the way back in the 1950s,

Leon Festinger formulated something called “social comparison theory,” where we evaluate our own worth by comparing ourselves to others.

And, If you are my age, you didn’t have social media when you were growing up. But you sure as heck know how it feels to compare yourself to someone else. Social media can contribute, but only if we allow it to. And if it didn’t exist we’d still be doing this to ourselves to one degree or another.

So It’s important to have some tools to help us pull ourselves back out of this cycle. AND to REMIND ourselves that we HAVE MORE CONTROL OVER THIS TENDENCY THAN IT MAY FEEL LIKE IN THE MOMENT.

So I gave myself a good hard talking to, and thought about the best ways to break this cycle. The tips that I've used in the past that have worked, and also a few that I have learned, including from my conversation with the amazing Dr Samantha Boardman in episode 167. I do find myself going back to the episode with her and to her terrific book “Everyday Vitality.” Both have incredibly helpful, realistic perspective that I think the world really needs more of. If you missed our chat, go back and listen. She’s really great!

But today, now that I’ve pulled myself back up I'm going to share my list of the things that work for me with you

These are simple but effective ways to break out of this tendency -- if and when you find yourself there.

So here goes 7 ways to break the comparison trap:

1. Remember you are in the driver’s seat of your emotions. You have the ability to control your thoughts. If the voice inside your head has run amok with self criticism and is using that external person as her mirror of choice, stop her. Give that nasty voice inside your head a name, tell her you know she’s scared and feels unsure, but that she needs to be quiet. Just acknowledging what’s likely happening in your own head can be really important to regaining control over your thoughts. Be kind to her -- YOU, tell that voice you hear her, but that her criticism isn’t constructive and won’t help you propel forward. By acknowledging the feeling you’ve validated it, but giving it a place -- ideally the passengers’ seat or the back seat.... So that you can RETAKE the wheel.
2. Next, focus on gratitude -- if you don’t do this already, start by making a list each day of a few things you are grateful for. This does not need to be war and peace written in your journal. just jot down a few things Mine today was about the sunrise, my coffee, my children and husband. YOU for listening, and the fact that we’re celebrating our 4th anniversary here at she said/she said podcast this week. And the fact that I get to do this challenging and incredibly inspiring work.
3. Engage your curiosity -- Rather than look at that person as competition, engage your curiosity and look at what you can learn from her. If it’s someone who’s accessible to you, Can you develop a relationship with her and get her to teach you a few things you don’t know in

exchange for a few things you know that she might not. Maybe you can forge a relationship -- or a collaboration -- which most likely will result in your realizing that she suffers the same kind of self doubt comparisons that you do.

- a. Chances are there is a lot of blood, sweat and tears -- not to mention self doubt -- that you don't see on the surface. She might be willing to show you if you ask.
- b. I'm not suggesting mimicry, but instead looking for how you can improve what you are doing. Engaging your curiosity is often the best way to turn a difficult situation around -- not just as it relates to comparisons but also when you're trying to make the best of a difficult situation. It's that concept of a growth mindset, and learning to shift our thinking away from the negative and onto the how can we make this situation better....what can we learn that we can use next time.

4. Keep a running list of your own accomplishments and refer to them regularly. Keep it updated. Just reminding yourself of what you've done and the progress you've made can be a great way to give yourself a positive boost. Another suggestion is to make a "strengths list" -- a list of things that you do that are unique to you...things that you do particularly well. Maybe make a combined list.

5. Keep an "At A Girls" file on your phone or computer or if you're old school in a folder by your desk. "At a Girls" are those little notes and messages -- including the positive ones sent to you on social media potentially -- that you get where someone tells you you had a positive impact on them. That what you are doing is important to others.

6. Make SPACE -- Get centered and Pay attention. Don't overlook little cues that the universe may be sending you when you get still and listen. You'll need to get centered, and to make some space -- as I talk about in Episode 180 -- to allow for reflection. Pull out your running list of accomplishments, pull out your at a girl file, and list a few things you are grateful for in your journal or on a google sheet.

Also take stock of a particular habit that may be causing your self doubt to spiral -- maybe your house is particularly messy and cluttered, maybe you are drinking a little more than you should during the week, maybe you're eating too much junk food and not exercising or taking care of yourself.

Just take a few minutes and reflect --- try to really cue in on what's making you feel bad. And then spend a few minutes on your running list of accomplishments and those "at a girls." And reflect on those

7. Share some positive vibes. Go against what may in the moment feel very unnatural and send a few positive, unsolicited messages or notes to people who might need your encouragement. Do this on social media. Do this in email, hand written notes whatever. And remind her to save your note for her own "at a girl" file.

A funny thing happened as I was pulling myself out of the little emotional ditch I dug for myself. When I pulled back, and prayed about it as well, the universe started to send me more of the positive vibes I needed. I got incredible messages including from several of the new connections I had made at The Southern Coterie --- I've been talking about our collaboration with them and I hope you are enjoying those conversations as much as I am. Be sure to follow both of us on Instagram --- you'll find me @lauracoxkaplan and The southern C @ the southern c

Friend, I hope you find these 7 tips useful. They work for me, and while they may not stop me from falling into a rabbit hole of self doubt or comparison, they most definitely help me pull myself right back out a lot quicker.

I'd love to hear any additional tips you use so that I can add them to my list. Be sure to share with me on social media, or send me a message via the contact me link on our website at she said/she said podcast .com

And remember -- as Dr. Samantha Baordmand says: "comparison steals joy" but only if we let it.

And an aside, if you have kids, especially teen girls, this list can be a great addition to her emotional tool kit as well.

Teaching the next generation how to deal with these feelings is a far better path than playing whack-a-mole with whatever catalyst exists at a particular time. The problem acutely illustrated on TikTok today, may be something else entirely tomorrow.

Next week, I'll be welcoming the talented, innovative jewelry designer Mignonne Gavigan, who will be the next in our collaboration series with The Southern C. You will love not only Mignonne's incredibly down to earth style and perspective, but also hearing the inspiring story behind how the scarf necklace came to be the central piece of her company.

Friend, I'm grateful to celebrate four years -- this week -- of she said/she said podcast with you. And I hope you continue to find this investment of your time worthwhile.

Thanks for listening. Take care, and I'll talk to you next week.