

UNCONDITIONALLY WORTHY

The Podcast

Unconditionally Worthy Podcast EP 54: Why the Unconditionally Worthy Group Coaching Program is Powerful with Ebony Ray

Dr. Adia Gooden: (0:00:00) Welcome to the Unconditionally Worthy podcast. In this podcast, I will guide you on your journey to connect with the true source of your self-worth. Each week, we'll discuss barriers to unconditional self-worth, the connection between self-worth and relationships, self-worth practices you can apply to your life and how to use self-worth as a foundation for living courageously. I'm your host, Dr. Adia Gooden, a licensed clinical psychologist, dance enthusiast, and a dark chocolate lover who believes deeply that you are worthy unconditionally.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Hello, Dr. Adia here for another episode of the Unconditionally Worthy podcast, I am really excited to be talking with Ebony Ray, who's a former group coaching program member, student, and she shares about her experience on her self-worth journey, her experience in the program and really talks about the shifts that the program helped her make and why she found it so helpful.

So I'm very excited to share this episode with you today, because I think it's one thing for me to talk about the benefits of the program and it's another thing for you to hear about it from somebody who enrolled in the program, who invested their time, their energy, their money in the program, and really benefited from it. So be sure to listen in, to hear all of the details of how helpful and beneficial Ebony found the group coaching program.

I also wanna let you know that tomorrow, September 28th is the last day to apply for this upcoming cohort of the Unconditionally Worthy group coaching program. So, you know, the application is open today. If you're listening to this the day, the podcast comes out Tuesday, September 27th and tomorrow. So tomorrow at midnight central time, the applications will close for the program. And I ask people to apply because it's really important for me to know that you're ready and willing to do the work that we ask of you in the program, and that you're ready and willing to be sort of an engaged participant in the group coaching program, which is part of the group part is one of the most important aspects of what is helpful in the program.

And so if you are interested in joining this upcoming cohort, we start the first week in October. If you're interested in joining, please be sure to apply, make sure you apply, and then we'll get a consultation call scheduled so we can have a conversation and decide if it seems like the program is gonna be a good fit for you. This is the last cohort of the year. I'll be launching again in January, but if you wanna do it now, if you've been waiting for a while, don't delay, make sure to apply.

You can learn more about the program and apply@unconditionallyworthy.com/program. And you'll learn all the information, the application is there, and I hope to see your application come in and I look forward to speaking with you. Let's get into the show.

Dr. Adia Gooden: I'm really excited to introduce my guest for the podcast today. Ebony was a member of the last cohort of the Unconditionally Worthy group coaching program and so I'm excited to have her on today to talk about her self-worth journey and her experience in the program.

Ebony Ray is a New Jersey native with west Indian roots and an 11-year-old son whom she is focused on loving and nurturing. Ebony is also an attorney, practicing in big law in New York city. Her practice includes litigating complex commercial disputes across industries with focus on litigating discrimination, claims and counseling on highly sensitive employment matters. She attended Cornell university where she majored in industrial and labor relations and minored in Africana studies. She also attended Cornell Law School. She enjoys traveling to new places, reading autobiographies and self-care. And I just heard about her fabulous trip to Mexico, which I wanna copy and go myself and Ebony, welcome to the podcast. I'm so happy to have you here.

Ebony Ray: Thank you, Dr. Adia, it is such a pleasure to be here. I have been listening to your podcast since the beginning of this year and the fact that I'm recording with you right now is like surreal to be honest, so thanks so much for having me and for being incredible.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Thank you. I really appreciate that. Well, I love if you could start by just sharing a bit about your own self-worth journey.

(0:05:00)

Ebony Ray: Sure. So I would say that my self-worth journey began at about a year ago actually. I had at the time just ended a couple of different relationships in my life, one was like probably the longest running non-familiar relationship that I had ever had. It was my best friend. It was super painful. And then the other was another really close friend and it, you know, I sort of found myself like reeling and started to just sort of seek some self exploration as I got went into my next chapter.

And so I went into therapy and therapy was really, really great. Had a lot of breakthroughs. Lot of insight. I started to feel like self awareness was be like it was just so powerful and I felt like I was like waking up in a way to myself and the more I woke up to myself the more I was able to understand the people around me and then I met you at the end of last year at a conference and I heard you speak and I remember going up to you at the end thinking and saying like, I dunno what I need to do to stay connected with you, but I would love to, you know, just get more of this content and think about it more and talk about it more.

You know, I found a lot of overlap with, you know, some of the ideas that you expressed in terms of, you know, being an overachiever and sort of gaining a lot of validation and satisfaction from the things that I did rather than just, you know, who I am, rather than just being, you know, I remember feeling after I graduated from undergrad, like, you know, I thought I was gonna have this like great feeling of just like, you know, having, you know, got some gold medal in the Olympics or something like, it just never came and then I was like, well, I gotta go to law school and then I'll feel good, then I did that.

And then it was just like, no and its so it was just this constant striving and never ending thing like try to obtain something, but I think and I know now it is not obtainable outside of myself and so, you know, it's really the journey sort of, you know, began last year, but it opened to me up to the fact that I've been on this journey for a much longer time and I have just a lot of breakthroughs, particularly in connection with your course.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Hmm. Yeah. Well, thank you for sharing that. I think I really appreciate that you sort of talk about both using therapy and finding therapy to be really helpful and also finding that, the course, the program to be really helpful because I think therapy is such a valuable tool

and resource, and I think that there are things that are offered in the group coaching program that sort of go beyond what people can get in therapy. And I'm wondering if you could just share a little bit about what are some of the differences or why you think the group coaching program was helpful in addition to the therapy that you did?

Ebony Ray: Yeah, of course. So I think, you know, I had never done like a group program like that before I thought that that was extremely helpful to me to once a week, you know, get in community with people who are, you know, trying to do the same thing or similar things as me. You know, and also that we met on Wednesdays, Wednesday evening, which was like a nice sort of like midway point in the week, I felt better, now I am getting to the sessions and just, you know, a sense of like a relief that, you know, and then sharing sort of what I was going through and also just hearing other people and their stories and their journeys and feeling less alone in the world, honestly.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Ebony Ray: So that, I think, you know, that's something that's different and then also, you know, my therapy, it is, you know, the structure is sort of a lack of structure in a sense, like I go to, we do, you know, we talk about whatever comes up, which works for me and I have breakthroughs through that and your program, I think was helpful because of the, you know, it was the opposite, right? It was a lot of structure, there were, you know, weekly lessons and it was oriented around thinking about a particular topic, you know, together. And I thought that that was great you know, to just sort of focus.

So I was doing therapy and doing the group coaching, you know, at the same time and I think, you know, it informed some of my therapy. So some, you know, I would take some of the topics and the lessons and (0:10:00) the thoughts back to my own therapy and think through them and talk through them more.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, that's great. And I think that's exactly kind of how I tend to think about it too. Usually therapy is pretty open ended, right? It's kind of like, where would you like to start today? And what's coming up and sometimes that's something with your boss and sometimes it's something with a partner or your parent or whatever, and that can be so useful to just have this space to kind of process and work through what's going on.

And I think sometimes it is helpful to have us structured and focus, like let's focus in on this specific piece or this specific thing that you may not normally think about, but may be very

relevant to how life is going or how you're feeling. And cause the program is structured and based on a curriculum, it does sort of guide you to say, okay, like, let's talk about how you're treating yourself, like what's going on with that self-criticism or self-compassion or what do you need to forgive yourself for? Or, you know, like it sort of forces you to, maybe guides you, a better way to say it, like guides you to look at some specific things that may come up in therapy, but also may not come up in therapy, even if there are things that would be helpful to focus in on and look at.

You mentioned having a few breakthroughs through the program and I'd love if you'd be willing to share about what those were?

Ebony Ray: Yeah. So I would say that one of the biggest sort of breakthroughs I had was, you know, just more self-awareness about the ways that I was talking to myself. You mentioned earlier, I have an 11 year and he is my bro like, I, you know, I'm always very intentional about loving him and nurturing him and thinking and watching what I say to him, because I know that I have, you know, just so much influence on him as he's developing a sense of self and, you know, and I don't take that approach with myself.

And, you know, you I think made some points about that, right like, imagine like you would you speak this way to animal, small animal, small child, a baby, like, right, and the idea that I was, you know, treating myself really poorly, never occurred to me. And self-compassion really is the upshot of everything I'm trying to sort of summarize. I feel like, you know, the self-critical voice that's in my head, you know, was just something that I thought was just like normal and healthy.

And I thought that I needed that voice to get me, and, you know, guide me to accomplish what I wanna accomplish. And, you know, trying self-compassion was just like transformative for me, being kind to myself. It just sounds very simple as I say it now, but for me that was just never anything that I had ever done before. You know, I've always been, you know, quite just driven, just, you know, unrelenting and, you know, I didn't wanna, I thought that if I gave myself a pass, then I would, you know, take my foot off the gas and fail at life, you know, so yeah, that's not the case.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Mm-Hmm. Yeah. So talk a little bit more even, like, what does it feel like to be kind and compassionate to yourself? Like, how have you noticed, and some of these things may be a little bit tint, like intangible, or like people might not notice from the outside, but like, how is life feeling different now that you've, you know, shifted into offering yourself more compassion and letting go of that, that self criticism?

Ebony Ray: Yeah. So it feels in a sense like, so I took a vacation by myself earlier this year in April 2022, I went to Puerto Rico. It's the first time I've ever traveled alone and I mean, growing up, I wouldn't even go to the bathroom by myself, like, I'd go in groups, like somebody had to go with me, like one of my girlfriend, right, like, you know, or going out like to the movies alone or to a restaurant I've done that, but I've never gone on vacation by myself and so it was a big block for me and it fell absolutely great. I felt, I think, you know, through it feels less lonely, I'm alone, if that makes sense.

I feel present with myself in ways that I didn't before, you know, I feel more confident in who I am and I feel like I got me and like, you know, I think, I probably thought that I was like this before, but like now I really am, you know, and it's not in a way that's like, you know, missed independent. (0:15:00) I don't need anybody. Like, it's not even really like that. Like it is really enjoy my connections. Then I really enjoy, you know, time spent in connection with other people in the community.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Ebony Ray: But I also just feel a stronger sense of self and a sense of safety in myself that I didn't previously feel.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Mm. Yeah. I love that. Right. And I love that you're sort of distinguishing because so often it can look like a hardness, like, I'm good. I don't need you. I don't need anybody. I got, I'm good, right. And it's sort of like a rejection and then often when people are in that space, there is an internal harshness, right. Like that, keep it together because you can't rely on anybody, so you better get it together. Right. Like, and that is very different than, oh, I like myself and I enjoy spending time with myself and this is nice and I also enjoy connections and I know that I can feel good and have a good time on my own.

And I can take care of myself and be there for myself even while I'm also still connecting and reaching out to other people in a healthy way, right. That feels very different than how some people can become hyper independent in a sort of hard way, that's often reactive to, I've been hurt, I've experienced relational trauma, and so I gotta push away and pull away to protect myself, which is very different than I'm gonna be there for myself no matter what happens. I'm gonna be kind and gracious. I'm gonna let myself have fun and experience joy and pleasure and I'm also gonna enjoy the opportunities to do that with other people.

Ebony Ray: Right. Absolutely. That's absolutely a difference, you know, a great distinction. I don't, you know, like it's, I'm not faking it and I'm not like I'm not, you know, it's not like some kind of, like, I know I need people, you know. There's certain relationships and certain connections that I know I need in order to flourish and I'm accepting of that. Right. Like I'm not, you know, I'm embracing a soft life and...

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yes.

Ebony Ray: ...those connections helped me to do so.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Mm-Hmm. Yeah. Well, I appreciate you bringing it back to relationships because you sort of started by saying that you were last year in this space where you were mourning the loss of some friendships. And I think, you know, we don't talk enough about sort of friendship breakups and how they can be even more painful and difficult than romantic relationship breakups. Right? Like losing a best friend or a relationship that felt really important can be really, even if it's kind of the right thing or the thing that we need can be really painful and difficult.

And so I wonder, I guess my first part of the question which I'll start with is did the program help you sort of heal from those relationships ending and kind of make sense of them? Like, was that helpful? Were there parts of the program that helped you to sort of process through and heal from the ending of those friendships?

Ebony Ray: Yeah, absolutely. I think, you know, so I know that I was in a lot of pain over an extended period of time, as I, you know, thought about, reflected on became nostalgic about, you know, got angry about, you know, all of the dynamics in the relationships, but it also helps me to have, you know, the program helps me to have compassion for myself and also compassion for, you know, my friendships, my friends, you know, life is hard and it's long and it's difficult and it's confusing and I do believe that, you know, the people that I have in my life are probably, and I'm too like doing the best with what I can, what I've got.

So it just sort of helps me to see, you know, I think oftentimes when we end relationships, it's like, someone's right, someone's wrong. We think sort of just barely black and white terms, but it's just so much more complicated. Like toxic dynamics are, you know, multifaceted, there are two sides to that dynamic and I know, you know, that there are things that I could have done and should have done and I had the tools to, you know, just show up in those relationships in a better way.

Right now, I think the course helped me to, you know, just embrace like setting boundaries as a form of actually protecting a relationship rather than something that I should be afraid of doing, because I am afraid that a person won't respond to all, that's my boundaries.

Yeah, I think, you know, I think the program helped me just really gain perspective on those relationships, which helped me to heal, (0:20:00) you know, and just feel my way through during the situations and I mean, still you know processing now, either familiar relationships that are ongoing, that are, you know, certain repressed things have come up and still using the tools now, like, as I mentioned, like life is long and it's hard and it's complicated and it's unpredictable and you know, you can, but I really do embrace just like pulling the rug from under myself as many times as possible because why not? I really, I remember when I was a little girl, I used to have gray hairs.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Oh wow.

Ebony Ray: And actually it's weird cause I had more gray hairs than I do now...

Dr. Adia Gooden: Oh wow.

Ebony Ray: ...day before and so older people would always say, oh my goodness, you know, you have gray, I was like five, six years old. And then they would say, it means you're wise. And I remember thinking, I love that. I wanna be wise. Like, I was like, this is my goal in life, like, I want to live up to that and so wisdom is just, you know, I really seek it out and I embrace it and sometimes finding it is difficult and painful and you know, but like there's always a silver lining for me, I always feel better off afterwards. So yeah, I think I answered your question.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah. Yeah. You did. You did. And I, you know, I appreciate that you sort of talked about coming to this place of sort of forgiving yourself, forgiving, you know, the people, your friends, that sort of thing. Because, you know, we do have conversations. Like we did have conversations in the group coaching program. Most people, I think almost everybody talked about challenges with family members, right? Like, or challenges in relationship with someone, whether it was romantic or family.

And there was, I think a really good balance that we were able to strike, which is sort of, you know, is aligned with the program and, you know, my values, which is acknowledging the hurt, right? Like let's not diminish the hurt without demonizing the family member or the person who

might have caused the hurt. Right. And I do think that that's an important part of healing is sort of holding both of those things, holding that like this hurt me deeply. This was deeply difficult and painful. And, you know, you may have, that person may have been doing the best they could given their history, given their experiences, given their challenges...

Ebony Ray: Right.

Dr. Adia Gooden: ...and so we're not giving a pass now. We're not saying like it was okay, what they did or justifying it, but we're also not falling into a space where we're feeling like I was the victim and there was nothing I could do and they're an awful evil monster, and I could never have a relationship with this family member again, because mostly it's complicated, which is...

Ebony Ray: Right.

Dr. Adia Gooden: ...wow, this was my parent and I still wanna be connected to them, but I also have to figure out how to set boundaries because this interaction is really painful and I've gotta take care of myself and so I think that a lot of, a good number of our conversations, right, we were like, how do we do this, right, and how do we show up to ourselves with, grace and compassion? How do we offer some of that to other people, right, and, sort of navigate that.

One of the things that we talk about in the program is toxic relationships and I really like to use toxic relationships versus toxic people, right, versus saying, there are toxic people out there and you gotta just stay away from them versus like, okay, what are relationship dynamics that become toxic and how do we recognize that and then figure out how to set boundaries to either end the relationship, sometimes that's what needs to happen or shift the relationship so that it is, you know, you can navigate through it. And that's when, you know, we spend some time talking about that because it's so relevant to kinda most of our lives.

Ebony Ray: Right. No, absolutely right.

Dr. Adia Gooden: What have you noticed in shift in terms of how your relationships look now? Like have you noticed that you're able to set boundaries in a different way or that you being there for yourself and compassionate with yourself, shifts how you show up with other people, what have you noticed in that realm?

Ebony Ray: So I have noticed that I'm better able to communicate my needs and also have compassion for other people and sort of sense their needs real time, you know, I feel like now I'm able to hold space for, you know, certain actually characteristics that I think like, particularly for family members that I find like, you know, to be problematic for me. I'm able to just sort of, you know, remove myself from situations without you. I thought I saw this quote on Instagram, (0:25:00) which said something like boundaries are the distance with which I can love me and you at the same time.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Hmm. I like that.

Ebony Ray: Then I thought that saying very true, like, into every intention for me is, you know, I want to be able to do both, like which did, then, you know, I'm setting the boundaries and I feel like, you know, the group, you know, helps me to do that, the lessons helped me to do that, but also just talking to the other group members about their particular circumstances and the people which they needed to set boundaries within, they had not, you know, set boundaries before, it was just helpful because it sort of reflected back to me, you know, similar dynamics and similar struggles and similar needs that I, you know, had in myself and it sort gave me, perceiving more perspective, you know, help me to have even more self compassion...

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Ebony Ray: ...because it's like I'm not, I'm going through this and you know, just felt really just affirming to be able to chat on a weekly basis about like really challenging things that like, otherwise, you know, it's kinda hard, like if you have, you know, we all grow up, you know, with a group of friends or you know, that we meet throughout life, but you know, not everyone is on the same page, not everyone is growing at the same pace, not everyone is like really down to like, you know, like talk about emotions and talk about these issues, so it was nice to just like have a default set of people who work like on that same page and really intentionally.

(0:26:50) Are you ready to go deeper and truly do the work to believe that you're unconditionally worthy. So you can finally experience the peace and contentment you've been longing for in your life. If you answered, yes. I want to invite you to apply, to join the next cohort of the Unconditionally Worthy group coaching program. This curriculum-based group coaching program will guide you step by step to heal any trauma that has gotten in the way of you feeling worthy. It will help you to transform your relationship with yourself to one that is loving, compassionate, and authentic. And the program will empower you to use your internal wisdom, to create a life filled with the peace, joy, and contentment, you have been wanting in your life.

If you're ready to do the work and want the transformation, this program offers, I encourage you to apply now. I will personally review your application and invite you to a consultation call with me if it seems like you'll be a good fit for the program, then we'll talk it over and I'll give you the information and details you need to make a decision about whether or not to join.

The next cohort starts on October 3rd. So be sure to apply now, before it's too late, you can go to unconditionallyworthy.com/program to learn more and apply now. Can't wait to see your application.

Dr. Adia Gooden: I think often when people are considering the program, one of the things that they're concerned about is the group part, because I think people sort of imagine I'm gonna be in this group and I'm just gonna tell all of my business and I'm gonna be the only one that tells my business and then other people are gonna know this stuff about and it just feels very threatening because we aren't used to sort of group healing spaces in this way.

And so I love that you're highlighting that, actually hearing other people's experiences and being able to talk through these things with other people, right, not just me was really a wonderful part of the program, right, like it added something, it would've been different if it was like one on one coaching, that's more similar to your individual therapy, right.

But having this sort of community space where you hear other people's experiences, and that gives you insights into your own experiences where you have the space where everybody's being vulnerable and really everybody is like showing up and being vulnerable and you feel less alone. Like, even though everybody doesn't have the same experiences, like it's like, oh, like I see that you are worthy and you're going through this and like, you're seeing this in me and there's this magic that happens in the group space.

And so I think it's really important for people to understand that the group is not like, it's not like, oh, this is just convenient or like a default, like, oh, it's just kind of easier to help more people in a group setting and so we'll do it in a group, right, like it's actually part of the intervention. Like, because having that community support, having feeling people show up for you and share their wisdom and you also get to share your wisdom with them and it's a connection point (0:30:00) and its feeling together that common humanity that actually supports you in feeling more worthy, right. It actually supports you in that journey in a way that you can't experience in the same way in another space.

Because it's different if your therapist or your individual coach says, lots of other people go through this, or I have other people who I know go through this and you're like, yeah, yeah, you're just saying that, right, but when somebody actually shares their story and you think, oh my gosh, you shouldn't have to experience that or like, I have so much compassion for you and then you start to think, well, I shouldn't have to experience it either or, wow, I'm not the only one who struggled with that, it does something different. And so I think it's important for people to know that, especially when they have sort of concerns about being in the group and whether or not that will be helpful.

Ebony Ray: Absolutely, I remember sort of in the beginning, (inaudible) move at all, you know, its timid and unsure about who everyone else would be and how it is gonna work, excuse me, and, you know, I think after that first session, like I think once one person sort of starts to get vulnerable, it just gives everybody permission to do the same and then you're next thing, you know, everyone knows like everyone's thing, you know, what's on their heart, and so it absolutely was great and it, you know, it just felt, I feel the more vulnerable people got, like the better the group got, the more trust that was, you know, we all built with one another and there was like, I think toward the end, like this desire to like, keep it going.

You know, I feel like the strongest connections are the ones where people feel vulnerable with each other.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Ebony Ray: It's very unlike you got like, you know, I don't know like how many people were in my group, but seven or eight or nine.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Ebony Ray: I think people just like totally open, they may not totally, but very open, so yeah, that was great and it made me, now makes me want to, you know, be more vulnerable in my relationships, like in my friendships and I mean, reach those levels with like, you know, more people in my life.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah. That's exactly. It's also practice, right. You sort of get to practice being vulnerable, being more open in this very safe space, right. Where there are boundaries, right. There's time boundaries, there's privacy boundaries, there's all these things that make it more safe, and then it helps to say, okay, well, if I could do that here with people that I don't really

know, then maybe I can test that out with my family and share a little bit more with them about how I'm feeling or my friends, and like, think about how to right, create those connections in a new way, so it also does that truth.

There was something else I was gonna say, and it just slipped outta my mind. I do think one of the biggest complaints about the program is that we ended, right. Cause people wanted to keep going and wanted to keep meeting. I was, you know, close to going on maternity leave and there's lots of reasons why I have started the group contained, but I think people did wanna keep meeting because it did feel like a really special place, space. That's the other thing I was gonna say.

The part of the reason that I have people apply and then I meet with everybody for consultation to make sure they're a good fit is because I feel very responsible for creating a space that is safe, where everybody is committed to showing up to their growth, to kind of engaging in this process and so that's one of the reasons why I think it's so important for people to go through the application process and for me to meet with everyone. So I know like this is going to be a safe space, a supportive group where everybody is committed.

So it's not just somebody who's like, oh, that sounds interesting. Right. I mean, it's an investment of time and money. So I kind of doubt that somebody would just be like, sure, why not, just try it, but you know, wanna make sure that people are on board and someone on the same page. And so that's something that's important for people to know. It's not just like anybody who feels like it could join the group at any time. It's, you know, there's a thoughtful and intentional application process to make sure not to say that only these people can get to a place of believing they're unconditionally worthy, but to say, you know, to figure out whether this group and this particular program is the right fit for people and if they're ready and willing to do the work that's involved in it, you know.

Ebony Ray: Absolutely, I had actually forgot that we did the screening for other group, that's right, we did. I applied and we did the interview.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah. Yeah. Was there anything surprising about your experience in the program?

Ebony Ray: Surprising. I think, you know, I didn't actually think that I was gonna like have that feeling toward the end of like not wanting it to stop and still wanting to be in relation like connected and be in (0:35:00) relationship with the folks in the group. I sort of went into the

group thinking like, you know, we'll see how, you know, just a little bit timid about it and I think, you know, the surprising piece for me was sort of understanding what my baseline was. I didn't necessarily think that I was so unforgiving of myself and so, you know, like lacked as much compassion for myself as I actually did and so I think it sort just enlightened me to like where I was in a way, so I think that, so yeah, the surprise, which is you know how much I needed to work on that.

And then also understanding the benefits, like realizing the benefits. I remember I told the story, I was like I gained like a couple of pounds over COVID and actually I lost a lot of weight and then I gained a little back, and then probably got off out of lockdown and I, you know, I'm like, I've been really hard on myself about it. And I remember like seeing my reflection as I had finished, like a morning walk, I saw my reflection in a car and I saw my face, which is like rounded than it was before and I thought, okay girl, like at your cute self with your round face, like, you know, keep walking, go ahead, you know, and I said that in my head and kinda like, you know, smiled and like, I have never really done that.

Like right before I was like, look at me, you know, my clothes don't fit the way they do, like I just I am going to lose this weight. I just like hating on myself, you know, the feeling that I had after, you know, I did, you know, I had self compassion, I was just like, I wanted to work more and I worked and it was joyful, like, I didn't feel like such a chore, I didn't feel like torture, you know, like I just felt better. So yeah, I was, you know, like the critical voice I thought had been working, you know, for me, but it wasn't.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Well, I love that example. I remember you sharing that story and I think if I'm remembering correctly, you also shared that like you had gotten up that morning and like tuned into your body and tuned into what you needed. And instead of like pushing yourself to do like a HIIT workout and like really intense, like you realized that like...

Ebony Ray: Yeah.

Dr. Adia Gooden: ...that wouldn't feel good for my body today, so I'm gonna go on a walk instead and it was winter in like Chicago area, so it wasn't like, you know, like lovely study walk, right, but like...

Ebony Ray: Right.

Dr. Adia Gooden: ...you listen to what do I need, I wanna move, but how do I wanna move? You honor that, you took the walk and then it was like, on the way back, you saw your reflection, like, okay, like I'm cute and I am just like I love that story and I love the contrast, right, because, and I also love that you say, you know, it made me actually more motivated because often people think the way I have to motivate myself is by sort of beating myself down, like, ugh, I can't believe you don't fit your clothes and ah, da, da, da, you better get in that gym and right. And it's like this punishment, right. Which, you know, maybe lasts for a little while, but then usually we fall off, right. We fall off.

Ebony Ray: Yeah.

Dr. Adia Gooden: We don't wanna do it. It feels like punishment, which is so different than like, you know, what feels like a walk would feel really good and then you do it and you have the endorphins and you feel good. And then you're like, I'm gonna keep doing this. Like, I wanna keep moving. I wanna keep, you know, feeling good in my body. And so that's such a great example of like, yeah, self-compassion works, it actually is helpful and it not only feels better, but it is more effective in helping us reach the goals that we have for ourselves like in any sort of realm of our lives.

Ebony Ray: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. That was right. I did wake up and think like, I'm gonna go crazy. I'm not lose all this weight today, actually, like creep, I'm going to work so hard and then when like smart.

Dr. Adia Gooden: You know, it's just like, it's that way, it's just not sustainable, like, you know, I don't know if it's my age, which I mean, I'm still really young, but it's I'm run out of my gas for like just, you know...

Ebony Ray: Go forward all the time.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah, and I am, you know, it helps me and I am still, you know, relatively, I am a pretty hard worker, I work at a really demanding. My profession is extremely demanding, (inaudible), so like, you know, my foot is on the gas all the time, but like it's not on the floor, like, the pedals are not on the floor, you know, what I mean.

Ebony Ray: Mm-Hmm.

Dr. Adia Gooden: And that's okay. Like, if I'm not, you know, a little word get the self criticisms and you know, those message are just stable, it ain't it? He did. Yeah. And life feels so much better when (0:40:00) you're not doing that to yourself. I imagine you would agree, right?

Ebony Ray: Yeah. And I think I had mentioned to you like, you know, you think about like change and growth and often the growth is like, for me and I would imagine for others just like imperceptible, right. Like a plant, you can't even watch a plant grow, you know, it grows slow, next day you show up and it's like, it look a little different, but like I absolutely foreseen growth in myself over the last year, you know even in the ways that like, you know, challenges come up and you bounce back from them. Like, I feel like my bounce back has been shorter and the challenge is less acute because of the tools that I gain from the course, you know.

So I did like small changes that I have sensed over the course of, you know, even now every day, it's like something different, you know, questioning myself less, believing in myself more, forgiving myself more readily, just having a better perspective, it's like, you know, every day is different and you know, I'm sort of, I'm still on the journey, but I definitely feel like, you know, I feel better, I feel different, you know, not to say everything is perfect, but, you know, I know that I have tools now just to help me and there are tools that I can continue to gain and work on as I like work on myself towards tomorrow, just self-awareness and also a big thing is that, you know, I want my son to perhaps avoid some of the mistakes I've made or some of those same, just like the old way of thinking and, you know, I want him to, you know, embrace himself, feel his feelings, experience joy.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Ebony Ray: Right. Like I want him to know who he is. I don't want him to just think about himself through my lens or his father's lens, right, like, which is something that I, you know, maybe many of us do. But, you know, I want him to hear the sound of his own voice, not be overpowered by mine and, you know, just get to know and love himself sooner.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Ebony Ray: So I think, you know, that I feel really empowered as a mom for, you know, having the level of awareness that I have and being able to share that with him as he is in his formative, he is only 11 and he is, like, you know, in his formative year.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yeah.

Ebony Ray: And it's just going to, you know, and also I've never had a teenager, but he is going to be a teenager and (inaudible).

Dr. Adia Gooden: I may be coming back and you go right, give me the tool because I can't do it.

Ebony Ray: So yeah, I feel empowered as a mom in that way.

Dr. Adia Gooden: I love that. I mean, I think there's a few things that you said, let me see if I can remember them. I'll start with the last, like, I love that you're saying that this has empowered you as a mom like that, just it is so wonderful because it means like this program not only positively impacted you, but it will positively impact your son, right. And it helps you to be the type of parent that you really wanna be. It helps you show up with him and for him in ways that, you know, you want to and helps you to give him tools that he can use in his life's journey and so I think that's so helpful.

I think, especially for moms in particular, who, you know, we often feel a lot of guilt and like, we shouldn't invest in ourselves. We shouldn't spend time on ourselves. We shouldn't spend money on ourselves. Like that's taking away, right. Like that's the narrative is, if we spend money on ourselves or we spend time on ourselves, we're taking it away from our children. And I think what you just said is like, no, actually, if you invest the time and money and energy into yourself, that actually is a blessing to your children. It actually is helpful to your children, both in terms of how you can parent him, how you can teach him some tools and the modeling, right. Our kids learn, do modeling, right.

So we can be, we can say be kind to yourself, be nice to yourself, but if they hear us beating ourselves up, they're gonna be like, oh, that's actually that the way you do it, you beat yourself up, right. And so the modeling is also very powerful. So I love that you drew that out and identified that and I keep forgetting there was like something else I wanted to comment on that you had said that was really helpful, maybe I'll remember it in a second.

I do not remember it in this moment. But yeah, I mean, I love that, you're just, oh, that was it, like, I really like to emphasize that this program and, you know, believing you're unconditionally worthy, it doesn't mean that life is gonna be perfect, right.

(0:45:00) It doesn't mean that nothing challenging will ever happen, like we don't have control over that, like that life is life, right. Life keeps lifeing and often there's some challenges that are

thrown in the mix and it shows you how to show up for yourself and how to show up to your life in a way that is empowering in a way that does allow you to have more resilience and move through life's challenges in a way that does allow you to balance back quicker and doesn't keep you down, it doesn't because the beating yourself up, the self-criticism, the, you know, not having boundaries, the not taking care of yourself, all of those things mean that when you hit a hard bump in the road or a big pothole or something happens, it's gonna be harder to bounce back.

But if you are quick with self-compassion with self-forgiveness, if you know how to get on, call on, you know, support from other people, if you're connected to your values and your intuition, those things help you to navigate life with more grace and more ease and more joy and more peace. So even if you're having a challenge, it doesn't sort of set you back as far, right, and you know how to move through it because you have those tools.

Ebony Ray: Absolutely. Oh, I love how you put that together. Yeah.

Dr. Adia Gooden: It took a me my brain, you know, the mom sleeps and that kind of sleep it's like can we pull it together.

Ebony Ray: Oh, my goodness, yeah.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Thank you.

Ebony Ray: That's absolutely how it is and you know, it's a tool kit, it feels like the lessons are a tool kit. I've gone back to them. I've rewatched some of the videos from some of the course just because like, you know, I feel like sometimes you forget, right, sometimes like, you know, you need a refresher and I think it won't break that leg, you know, you have, I have, I think you make this possible.

Dr. Adia Gooden: The assignment. Mm-Hmm.

Ebony Ray: Yeah. I mean, that's awesome, particularly because, you know, it was challenging for me to keep up every week with every lesson, it's demand of my job, you know, this space didn't feel to me like another, like super challenging thing that I would need to overachieve, right.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Right.

Ebony Ray: So like I was able to get myself grace and say like, yeah, without judgment, I go and do the lesson, I sneak out, try to get by the next time and you know, it is like I didn't feel like stress and I have since gone back and went through, you know, the lessons and so like, I think it's a really great design. I absolutely would do it again and to the extent you too have a part too. Finally, yes.

Dr. Adia Gooden: I will keep you posted. I will keep you posted. I love that you say that, yeah, because I really want to make this not an achievement-oriented, performance-oriented space because so many of the people who come into the program, that's how we live our lives. It's performance, it's achievement, and so people would say like, I didn't get to the lesson this week. That's okay. Right.

Like you're showing up and you were one of the people who were like, I have a lot going on in my work, so what I can do this week is show up and you showed up and you were present and you were engaged and I love that, you said that because you still got so much out of every week, it wasn't like you were like, I have no idea what's being talked about and I can't take from it. It was like this week and this right now, what I can do is come to the sessions and fully engage and when I'm able to get to the lessons and go through all of that, I will do that.

And I love that you used it in a way that worked for you and that you were able to move through without feeling stress or like you were falling behind because that's just not, yes, we have like a 10 week container and we have different topics that we focus on. And it's not meant to be that if you don't do the homework this week, then don't come or like, that's not it at all. It's like, that's our guide. And what you can do is what you can do, show up, be present, you're worthy, you belong here.

And when you're able to access and make time for the lessons, make time for them, you have lifetime access. And so I want people to get to them because I think they're valuable. And I don't want people to feel stress, another level of stress on top of the stress they're experiencing in their life, through the program and so I'm so glad it felt that way for you that it wasn't stressful, that it was like you could use it and engage in the program in a way that worked best for you.

Ebony Ray: Absolutely.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Well, so we're coming up on time and I'd love to know if somebody is considering joining the program and you could give them, you know, your take on it, what would

you say to someone who's like, yeah, I'm thinking about the program, but I'm not sure what might you offer to them?

Ebony Ray: I would tell them that it's worth it. I think, you know, it's an investment in yourself and an investment that pays dividends, not only to you, (0:50:00) but to people that you're in relationships with and so, you know, I absolutely would recommend the program to someone considering it and you know, like it worked for me. You know, it's an investment itself that like, you are your longest running relationship, so like you're gonna keep it forever, right, it will never expire. So, you know, I think it's really worth it. A good investment.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Awesome. Thank you so much, Ebony. I am honored and grateful to have been able to guide you through the program. I am so glad it was helpful for you and I so appreciate you coming onto the podcast to share your experience. It's been a joy.

Ebony Ray: Absolutely.

Dr. Adia Gooden: And I know people find out...

Ebony Ray: Thank you so much.

Dr. Adia Gooden: Yes.

Ebony Ray: Thank you. Thanks for having me. It was a pleasure.

Dr. Adia Gooden: You're very welcome.

Thanks for joining me this week on the Unconditionally Worthy podcast, make sure to visit my website, dradiagooden.com and subscribe to the show on iTunes, so you'll never miss an episode. You can also follow me on social media at Dr. Adia Gooden. If you love the show, please leave a review on iTunes, so we can continue to bring you amazing episodes. Lastly, if you found this episode helpful and know someone who might benefit from hearing it, please share it. Thanks for listening and see you next episode.

This episode was produced by [Crys & Tiana](#) and the music is by Wataboi.

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