



Episode 196: How to Escape the Tyranny of the 'Shoulds'

With Charlotte Housden

“You should do this, you must do that.” These *shoulds*, *musts*, and, *ought tos* govern how we live each day. Too often, you might hear these words not just from people around you but also from yourself. However, it’s time to make a change and break free from this tyranny of shoulds that dictate your life.

Charlotte Housden, an author, coach, and psychologist, joins us today. We discuss the tyranny of the shoulds and how this leads to unhappiness. Charlotte also shares what she learned from people all over the world while writing a book about change. Charlotte’s insight can help you gain clarity and confidence in making the change you need in your life today.

Podcast links

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[Email Rachel](#) or reach her on [LinkedIn](#) or [Twitter](#).

Find out more about the [Shapes Toolkit Training programme](#)

Start thriving with the [Thrive Week Planner](#)

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YNF Episode 180: [What Happens When We’re Really Listened To with Tom Dillon](#)

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[The Happiness Trap](#) by Russ Harris

Guest links

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Quote to remember:

“There’s kind of all sorts of musts and should that we fill our life with... It means that we’re constantly striving and we’re never quite making that leap between who we want to be and who we are.”

What You Will Learn

We’re caged in by all these things that we absolutely have to do in order to be our ideal selves. However, you’ll learn that a life chasing your ideal self and doing what you *should* be doing won’t bring happiness. Instead, to make the change you want, you have to start thinking differently.

This activity is all about navigating change so that you can break free from the tyranny of should that govern your life. Learn how you can make that leap between who you want to be and who you actually are.

You start the activity by acknowledging that there are *shoulds*, *musts*, and *oughts* that fill your life. This helps you to be aware of where you are now and what changes you might have to make. It also helps you learn more about the ideal self you’re striving towards and accept your actual self.

However, making a change definitely isn’t easy. The activity helps you learn how to navigate change. You’ll find that you’re not alone in your journey. Learn to utilize the resources you have, including yourself and the people around you. This activity will also teach you different ways to approach your emotions and thoughts and how you can create sustainable goals as you make changes in your life.

Don’t live your life trapped in the tyranny of the shoulds. Revolutionize your life and make the changes that can help you break free.



Activity: Navigating Change and Escaping the Tyranny of Shoulds

Are you chasing after your ideal self? Be aware and recognize all the *shoulds*, *musts*, and *oughts* in your life because this is what your ideal self would do. As you go through your day, identify each of them and write down how many times you're doing something because it's a should rather than a want.

List of Shoulds

Looking at all this tyranny of shoulds throughout your day, how much of your life is governed by all these things you think you should, must, and ought to do?

Now plot out how you want your week to look. In the space below, what would the week look like if all your plans were things you want to do rather than what you should do? You can also do this in the [Thrive Planner](#).



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Embrace your actual self. Be honest about who you completely are, both the good and bad. Write down all the things that make you up as an individual.

If your life is governed by all these shoulds it may be time to make a change.

Normalize stories of change. This doesn't only include the successful endings but the challenges, thoughts, and feelings that are a part of the story. Talk to your friends, colleagues, and family, or even check out discussions and forums online for people with similar experiences. Share the stories and what stuck with you here.

Who is this story from?	What stuck with you? What did you learn?

As you listen and read these stories, how do they make you feel?

Use your resources to get you through both big and small changes. The first resource is your well-being. What practices do you have to take care of your health and wellness? List them.

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As you're going through a time of stress and change, how often do you still do these things?

Make sure to keep taking care of yourself even at your busiest. Identify the best times of the day that you can insert your wellness activities no matter your schedule.

Best Time	Wellness Activity	Best Time	Wellness Activity

Another important resource is people. Who are the people who can be there through your change and how can they help you? Are they your cheerleader? Mentor? Or someone who can give you critical feedback?

Your person	How they help you through making a change



From this list, identify the select the first few you would choose to tell who can hold you accountable for the change you want to make.

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Changing your life, even small parts of it can be stressful. During stressful and overwhelming moments, make some room to distance yourself from strong thoughts and feelings.

One way you can do this is by using the weather metaphor. See yourself as the constant and unchanging sky while your emotions are the constantly changing weather. What strong negative feelings do you have now? Try to apply the weather metaphor to detach from this emotion and reflect on it.

Another way you can make space to look at your emotions is through focusing. Acknowledge your feelings and distance yourself using the phrase “Something in me feels: _____”

Now that you have some distance, choose how to respond. Is this an emotion or thought that you choose to keep with you or is it time to let it go?



Rewrite your goals in life. Charlotte advises that it's better to have a goal where you are running towards what you want to achieve rather than a goal that focuses on running away from something. List down goals you have right now in your life. Make sure that your goal is focused on running towards it and not away.

Goals:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Another important thing to consider in your goals for change is if it is something within your control. Don't have a goal where you try to change someone else. Look at your list of goals once again and check if they are all within your span of control. If not, rewrite them in a way that what you change isn't other but rather your own behaviour and mindset.

CPD time claimed:

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