

RISE UP AND SHINE – Episode #61: When Comparison Steals Your Joy



FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Ashley

This is Episode 61. Letting go of comparison. You're listening to the rise up and shine podcast with Claudine and Ashley as an empty nester and a mom with young kids, we have both shared very similar and very real struggles. From chaos to coaches, we now help other women live an authentic and meaningful life. So tune in weekly for girl talk and tips on how you too can rise up and let your light shine bright. This is the rise up and shine podcast.

Claudine

Welcome back Friends, today we are talking about comparison. Teddy Roosevelt once said that comparison is the thief of joy. And if your joy is waning, Perhaps it's because you're comparing. So today Ashley and I are going to talk about comparison, why we do it. And practicals to help us overcome it because it does not lead to joy does not lead to peace, it does not lead to security. And we definitely can't rise up and shine when we're comparing ourselves to others. So Ashley, tell me is this something that you struggle with?

Ashley

Yeah, definitely. I would like to say all of us do, right? To some extent, definitely. There's different ways we compare and in different areas we can compare. I do I tend to compare a lot with people around me, I think motherhood is probably the one I'm most susceptible to comparing myself to when I see other moms because if you don't always know the inner struggle that other people go through in any area, right? So we try to put on our happy face when we're out and about and when we see people and yet inwardly, we could be really struggling. And that's probably my biggest one where I can find myself doing that, you know, especially with having the luxury, quote unquote, of social media.

Claudine

We'll be talking about that more.

Ashley

Absolutely. I mean, it could be used for good to keep in contact with family and friends. But it can definitely be tempting to see Oh, look what they're doing. Or look where they're going, you know, trips. That's another thing. What are they doing? So that yeah, that's, I do. I am not immune from comparison, unfortunately.

Claudine

Well, it's so funny on better. We didn't have social media when my children were young. I think it was huge for me, I think it would have been a bad thing for me. I can only look around at my friends around me, you know, or watch television and go Oh, is that what motherhood looks like? Yeah, different. You know, I was raising my kids. We were watching Little House on the Prairie. Really call me mom. Okay, call me out. Right? Wasn't too struggling about living in a cabin with no heat and no indoor plumbing. But anyway, there's so many things that we can compare with others. Right, right. You said mothering parenting. relationships. Yeah, travel. finances, right. We're seeing everybody's home. I was scrolling through Pinterest the other day, getting ideas. And I was like, how did these women a have time to do all these changes in their homes? But secondly, like documented all I'm like, Who's taking all these pictures and who's you know, writing all these blogs, I was shocked by how much time these women have to dedicate not only to making their homes look beautiful, but documenting the whole thing?

Ashley

Oh, yeah, I was gonna say that's, that's a big one, too, especially right now. You know, having the kids doing school from home. There's a lot of things that I've been wanting to do that I had goals for, especially in 20 that I haven't, you know, and still, when you see other people, how are they still balancing that all like they must have a nanny or three,

Claudine

And a maid

Ashley

A maid and a husband who stays home and. Yeah, very true.

Claudine

Well, it's very normal to compare. It's an indirect drive, you know, our brains are wired to compare ourselves to others to evaluate ourselves. So we're always scanning our environment. We're always scanning, you know, our surroundings, making sure we're safe and also evaluating ourselves. Where do we stand? Where do we stand on the social ladder, and, you know, ultimately, we kind of want to be in the middle, or higher to the top, but we don't want to be at the bottom. So our brains are wired to constantly compare and that's what can get us in trouble. It can help us keep us safe and right motivated, but also can lead to depression and anxiety.

Ashley

Oh, yeah. And it can really help us learn from others. You know, like you said, I helped motivate us. It can help inspire us. We can really learn a lot, but it can be used for good and it can definitely be used for the negative, you know,

Claudine

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, when we compare ourselves to others who seemingly have more, we can fall into envy, insecurity, bitterness, discouragement, and overspending, right? It looks like someone else has that we want it to, and maybe we can't afford it. And we spend just to have that feeling. So those are some of the negatives when we compare ourselves to someone who has more. The other flip side of that is when we compare ourselves to others that have less than we do, then it can lead to arrogance, and pride, and just that smug feeling of Oh, I'm, I'm better than you, because I have this and this and this, or I'm doing this and this. So neither one are healthy as Christian women, we try to live a life of love and peace and joy, and neither of these comparisons are going to help us achieve that.

Ashley

Right? Absolutely. And what you were talking about, you know, researchers have given a name to right, it's upward social comparison, or downward social comparison, which I thought was really brilliant, because it was a great way of explaining how we can do this, you know, in a day to day life, or specific situations, if you're at a job, you know, you can look upward to others, and you can in a positive way, you can look up and be like, wow, I'm really inspired. I aspire to do what they're doing, I would love to be in that role, I would love to learn from them. You know, I found myself being drawn to people who are stronger personality, because I want to be more of that, you know, and that's a way to be motivated and inspired in a positive way. Some who may have lower self esteem, which I can tend to fall into have more of a lower self esteem, I can tend to compare and think I'm inferior, they're superior, I'm inferior, I'm not good enough. I'm failing at this. And, you know, I can really self evaluate, like you're saying, but in a negative way. And we do that so often, you know, we can really evaluate ourselves in a negative way. And it's not allowing us to learn and grow. It's causing us to suffer. You know, we're causing a lot of suffering on ourselves and feeling more depressed or feeling down and just feeling unhappy.

Claudine

Yeah. And we don't need any more of that, right. We're living in a stressful situation is it is Oh, yeah, I need to add this. And the funny thing is usually when it when it's focused on social media, let's say usually we're comparing our day to day life, right? We're usually scrolling that when we're in our pajamas, or sweats or we're lounging around at home, most of us aren't scrolling through social media, when we're dressed to the nines and out conquering the day, right? We're doing it in our downtime. But what we're doing is we're seeing someone's highlight reels, right? We don't post that typically, yeah, the highlights of our lives. And here we are, in our day to day, the mundane. And that's when we're scrolling

through and looking at everyone's highlight reel, so to speak. So it's unbound, just from the get go. Like where we're at when we're scrolling. And what we're seeing.

Ashley

Absolutely, I had to really limit social media, I would say probably the last six months, I have rarely been on because I know, I recognize where I was feeling and just overwhelmed. You know, with everything this pandemic brought, I have enough on my plate that I'm trying to survive and you know, do well and do well by my children and their schooling and all that stuff. I got enough on my plate to know when I'm susceptible to that comparison trap. I know if I'm going to go on, um, gosh, I wish I was doing this look at they're doing that, how come they're doing that, and I can't do that and right. And here, and they're doing that and look at how beautiful and clean their houses, all those things. I'm just gonna fall susceptible to that comparison. Yeah, really have to be careful. And really, you know, be aware of where we're at and what we're feeling to say, okay, it might be wise that I limit this source in my life right now.

Claudine

Absolutely. Yeah. It's so true. I mean, we have practicals to help us with comparison, because it is normal. Our brains are wired to do it. We're gonna keep doing it. But we have to limit the comparing that brings us down, or that makes us brings us up in an unhealthy way where we're feeling arrogant or prideful about it. So let's talk about some of those practicals to stop comparing, because it's easy to stay right. stop comparing, but harder to do. So yeah.

Ashley

Let's tell our listeners Claudine. We already talked about one right? Limit social media.

Claudine

And it might not be all in social media. There might be a couple people that you follow that trigger you so like not everyone on social media, right? Because you know, but there are a few people that when I scroll through for some reason, it just triggers me. So those are the people I need to unfollow. No, and it's real simple. So I don't need to get Off social media entirely, but perhaps there's just a few people. Again, for me, just because recently I was scrolling through Pinterest. I'm not going to stop going through Pinterest. But I had to talk myself through it like, okay, I don't really know what's going on in the background here. I mean, they may, it may have taken him a year to do this post. Like, I'm thinking, I see the pictures, and I read the posts. And I'm like, wow, they did this on a weekend, right? Because a lot of them are like, so this weekend, my husband and I renovated the entire kitchen on a \$500 budget. You're like, hey, How'd you do that? In a weekend on \$500? And two, how are you writing this? And taking all that? I know, we have a crew. I'm so confused.

Ashley

We'll see. And you hit it right there. Claudine, when we see those things, we tell ourselves a story. We got this whole scenario of what must be going on? And how often is that really going to be true? Do we really know the inside scoop? No, not so much. I mean, I've seen people where they post their best picture of their family all smiling and dress nice. Meanwhile, you hear the backstory, and you're like, Oh, my gosh, I couldn't get my kids to smile. And we had to bribe them with this and this and this.

Claudine

And I was yelling

Ashley

All of a sudden, 123 cheese cheese. Okay, great. That's very true, we build that story in our head. And then that's that comparison, it's like, then we see them as being more superior and able to do more, because it does kind of tug at those desires in our heart. But right kind of increases that emotional feeling of envy, or jealousy, or bitterness, maybe, or just, you know, just an overall feeling of unhappiness, you know, gosh, I was doing this and then we start focusing on it, and we ruminate on it. And then we just go down a very bad path, the little rabbit hole. So true.

Claudine

And studies have shown that time on social media increases depression and envy, and decreases our well being so just you and me saying it, there are studies that back this up, there's research. The other thing is TV and books if those trigger you like, for me, not so much. But some people can watch TV shows, and then really fall into that like, Well, why don't I have that? Why is my marriage not like that? Like, oh, there's a script, there's light. There's directors.

Ashley

Like Jack and this is us? Can there be any one more perfect?

Claudine

I know. Exactly. Right. So limit TV books, socially, anything that is your trigger. And that right? You know, really to know what triggers you when you feel that, you know, you just don't feel good inside, recognize that something's been triggered, and recognize what it is and then limit that. Another thing with a practical with comparison is that it really does help you see what's important to you. So dig deep about what you really want. Like if something is causing you to feel insecure or envious or bitterness what's what is it that you really want? Right? Is it really the clean house? Is it that people will think more highly

of you, I mean, really get to the root of what it is that that the comparison is triggering within you. Because just limiting social media doesn't get rid of the root, either, because the minute you go back on it, you're gonna feel it again. So get in touch. So root of what you really, really want. Because usually, if you're feeling envious, or or bitter or discouraged about something, it's because there's something that you value that you don't have. So think of ways, get creative and think of ways you can get what it is you want.

Ashley

I have a great example for that Claudine to share. I will, I will. And you probably can relate to this too, especially with your circumstance last year and a half trying to sell your house. And I was thinking about how there are some people that I know and see that are I mean, making their homes beautiful, and buying new furniture and getting work done, or maybe putting in a pool and doing all these things. And I was starting to feel myself get jealous, like, gosh, how can we don't get to do that? And how can we can't buy this? And how can we have all this old furniture that are all scuffed up from you know, living, you know, our living situation with young kids and pets and everything. But it did I think what you were saying it was what is the deeper issue. And as you know, being great counselors for my husband and I, one of my deeper issues is I want to enjoy life a little more by spending a little more I would love to be able to spend a little more money on our home and make it look nice. But then, you know with my husband and I talking more about it well is it a good time because our kids are still pretty young and if we get nice stuff it's gonna get destroyed. And you know, I mean kind of.

Claudine

You will not be enjoying it. You will not enjoy it.

Ashley

Absolutely. But I really paid attention because of all the work we've done right in our own personal life and learning all this stuff that I recognize how I was feeling and what those thoughts that was being brought up, you know, so for our listeners, just when you do get triggered, really pay attention to those thoughts that are coming up in your mind is very important, because that will tell you what you're really feeling about the situation and, and you know, what you do really value, you know, do I value having this home that looks immaculate and have all this nice stuff? Not really, the issue was, I would like to be able to spend a little bit more than what my husband is comfortable with, on our home.

Claudine

And with that being said, I will say when you guys are well into your 50s and other people or eyeball into debt, you guys will be retired and travel around the world and enjoying life. And you'll be like, wow, I'm so glad I didn't get that new couch when I wanted to, because my kids would have ruined it anyway. And I had to get another new couch. So anyway, that's such a great, great sample. I know, for me, obviously,

the comparison has been that every house around this is sold. So that triggers a lot of insecurity. For me, I had to dig really deep about feelings of worthlessness like I don't, I'm not worthy, right. Like, maybe God doesn't really love me and really want to give me what I want, right? With that, and really work on that and really get back to No, I feel very loved. And I'm very worthy. It's just timing. And the funny thing with this whole story is, it's a little soon to share, but our house is in escrow right now. And because of the timing, we're able to find a house that we would have never found right, never been able to get into. And as it hopefully will all turn out in a few months, we'll be settled in that new home, which couldn't have been a better fit for us. And we would have never found it had the timing, right. And any sooner or any later. It's just you know, when that story completely unfolds, I'd be happy to share it. But it's just amazing. And it's like, easy to sit today and go right. I'm getting everything I wanted. I mean, eight months is a long time in this real estate market to have a house sell. Yeah. And you know, when especially when every house around you I'm like, I'm looking at the pictures going this way. not as nice. Like, not even close it Yes. I look at the price per square foot help me understand. I just can't understand it. But you know, as it unfolds, things get clearer and clearer. And some Oh, yeah. We don't know. Like, even when we look at people around us, we don't know what's in their journey, we have no idea. And maybe social media makes it look right, or maybe even friends in our real life. But we don't know what's ahead in their journey. We have no idea and like, everything's, you know, up today and down tomorrow for all of us, right, we all have our peaks and valleys. And you know, we're comparing other people's peaks to our valleys, perhaps, but then time will come when we're going to be in our peak, and then there'll be in their Valley. And there's something to be said about just knowing that like, being aware that everything goes up and goes down. And so your up might be someone else's downtime, and your downtime might be someone else's uptime. But it all kind of evens out in the wash at the end. It really does.

Ashley

Right. And you know, a great point too, is considering how you said the peaks and the valleys, you know, and when we compare, it can kind of give us negative attitudes towards that person, because you feel jealous or envious. But when we recognize that we are all on our own journey, we all have highs, we all have lows, you were not supposed to go on the same road and the same journey as anyone else. It's all on our own. But when we do have those peaks, that prayerfully we are having empathy towards those people, you know, when they're maybe at their low, but also just keeping in mind, again, it goes back to our thoughts, that's not necessarily the person, you know, it's more what they have, or what they're doing with their life, you know, when you think about it, and so we have to be very careful about putting those emotions, you know, in in the middle of that relationship, especially a lot of times it's people we're close to, you know, that we can tend to compare more so in a positive or negative way. So it's very important that we don't ruin our relationships with these people, because we may be jealous or comparing ourselves because again, it's it all comes down to the story that we build up in our head. Yeah, like you said, Claudine, I thought is really fascinating. Because we talk a lot and this was the first time I heard you say that when other houses were being sold, it kind of came down to your self worth. And that's a much deeper issue than Oh, their houses have sold and ours has not and it's been a long time like that's much deeper and you would not have arrived at that conclusion, had you not learned all this stuff and learn to become more aware and be really focused on the thoughts that are going around

in your head. You know, and that's what we want to drive home for our lives. Nurses really pay attention to those thoughts in your head.

Claudine

Yeah, absolutely. Like intellectually I knew my mind knew but my heart was struggling, right? And then it becomes, for me my weaknesses, I contend to make it about God's love for me like, well, I really love them. You know that scripture in Proverbs hope deferred makes the heart sick. I'm like, God, my hope is heard. I have like 100 people praying for us, their hopes are gonna get deferred. But you know, it's easy now sitting where I'm sitting today to see how his timing was just right. But even two months, I mean, even two weeks ago, I mean, we were meeting in small group, and I literally was at the end of my rope. I mean, you all I'm like, oh, my goodness, guys, I'm going to lose. I was on the verge. I mean, between everything that's going on in our world, we're still in a pandemic regrowing almost a year, my house hasn't sold. I've been living out of a suitcase since practically March, although you have a lot more clothing items to my little suitcase. But, you know, I was getting to the end, like, I can't do this anymore. This is just too much. And, you know, sure enough, two days later, we got an offer. But I was willing to look deeply at myself, right. And I wasn't it wasn't a comparison at this point. But the comparison did trigger the deeper issue which I was able to work on. Important. I mean, really, we talk a lot about mental health on this series. It's why we do what we do, because we both really had to work to overcome and get to a healthy place where we could rise up and shine and really help others and be our best selves for our husbands and our kids and our friends. And everyone around us. So another practical is celebrate others victories. And I think about that passage in Romans that says, you know, we rejoice when others rejoice, and you brought that up. And that's so much harder to do, right? It's so much harder when you feel like you don't have to celebrate right have at least for me, that's my, you know, sinful nature, it's really hard for me to rejoice with others that have what I don't have, right. But again, it goes back to understanding that at some point I'm going to have to, and then I want others to rejoice with me. So really practice and it's practice, like a muscle, celebrate others victories celebrate that other people get to travel, celebrate, that other people's kids are doing really well, or getting married and having kids or whatever it is that we struggle with that their house is clean. Yeah. clean house and homeschool our kids, that's amazing. I was just telling someone the other night, I thought, Oh my gosh, if my four kids were young right now, and I was homeschooling for them, I think I would have lost my mind. But anyway, more power to all of you at home moms, because I just, I don't know, if I would have made it, I could now at 55. But you know, I was, I was 35 when I had four small children, so didn't have all the extra wisdom and grace for myself. So another practice was practice self love. And we talked about this a lot. And what does that mean, you know, really taking time to do things that nourish your soul that nourish your heart, I mean, it's hard to feel insecure or bitter or discouraged when you're loving yourself and, and taking care of yourself.

Ashley

Yeah, that is a huge one, especially how we talked about earlier with the upward social comparison, the downward social comparison, and even just the levels of self esteem, you know, some tend to have a higher self esteem, and some tend to have a lower self esteem, and me knowing that I have more of a

lower self esteem. And I've had to work a lot on that in my own life and my own value and self worth. self care was very challenging, because I didn't feel like it was okay. I felt like it was selfish. And I should be thinking about everybody else all the time. And I have to be on all the time for everybody, that I couldn't do things for myself. And I actually had, like, my husband basically kicked me out yesterday because that you need to go do something for yourself. You need to go take some time. He was about ready to check me into a hotel for the night and I and you guys encouraged it too. You're like yes, I was like, I am going to be left alone to my own thoughts. I that is not a good place for me to be. I need to.

Claudine

You to have to wait till I'm back in town and we will go together.

Ashley

I'm like, I either have to be with people or I need to just be distracted and you know, go out for the day, which I did. I was able to go out and you know, get some new clothes. So I that was that was great. I came back feeling really good. But my issue was self care and like again, it goes back to those deeper thoughts. about it like, gosh, I felt like it was so selfish, you know, just because of my personality. And it's hard for me to ask for some time, hey, is it okay? If I take off for a few hours? Is it okay? If I go take a nap or a bath, I have a hard time asking for help in general. So self care, you have to have a really healthy, accurate perspective on self love and self care. Self Care is definitely part of self love and forgiving yourself having compassion on yourself not being too hard on yourself. I had several talks with people that I know a lot of us can relate to right now with it, especially as younger moms with younger kids doing school, trying to keep up with the house, we're a lot of us are feeling that burnout and overwhelm. And then when you add on the comparison issue, it just makes you feel worse, right and more overwhelmed, more stressed Adam or like a failure. So it's very important to focus on that self love what is self love look like to you have grace on yourself. You have compassion on yourself. You're doing great. Nobody has gone through this before. This is so new for all of us. We're doing the best we can. And yeah, just, you know, go easy on yourself. Don't be so hard on yourself.

Claudine

Well, you know, and I've had to do that. Because even for me, not with my children, because obviously they're all grown. But you know, I was hoping to launch my business. Last year we started you and I and we were doing workshops. So I was taking on a very different look. And so then I had to pivot is I'm building an online right business, but I look at all these women who in a year, you know, you read these stories or articles and they've already built a six figure income and a pandemic. And I'm thinking, Man, I'm just trying to get dinner on the table. I know. Granted again.

Ashley

Take a shower today. You know it's good.

Claudine

I know, right? Did I shower today? Do I even know what day it is? I've shared with a few people. We missed midweek. A few Wednesday's ago, we just didn't even know what day it was. We sat on the couch and at 8:30. I'd like to my husband's like, today's Wednesday. I totally forgot church. That's the you know, 30 plus years. Yeah, I've done that twice. That anyway. Yes. So, so many things. And I've had to have that grace on myself. Like, everything evolves, everything evolves the way it's supposed to, right, my journey is a little longer. So be it just like this home sale took a lot longer. But oh my goodness. And a few months when I'm sitting that new house, it's gonna be absolutely worth it. So we don't know what's on the other end. So yeah, be patient. Show yourself grace. I mean, it does say love is patient. Love is kind, you know, we have to remember those things and practice those for ourselves really have patient kind thoughts just towards our own selves. Another big one, to me that overcomes comparison is having a gratitude list. And I've prepared a resource that you can find on both of our websites at mindoverchaos.com, or claudinesweeney.com. And it's prompts to really do a good solid gratitude list that you can either add to daily or just review. And that keeps our heart in the right place. Because when we're comparing it leads us to envy or insecurity or pride. But when we're grateful, it leads to contentment, it leads to peace, it leads to joy. And that's where we want to live. That's where we want our hearts to be full of is love, joy, peace, contentment, not the others. So gratitude lists, we've got prompts for that. But that is powerful. And those are the things even for me, as we've been living here, for I don't know how many months now almost a year, but I've just had to every day, thank God that I'm close to my children and my grandchildren. And last night, we had our first sleepover with our grandson who's just shy of three and it was it was hysterical. He would not go to sleep because he's so excited to be at Granny's house, you know, but it was just a right we had the lights off for two hours and he was sleeping next to us on the floor in his little bed. But he would not sleep. He just kept standing up. grainy, you awake? No, we're sleeping. And it was like 7:30. So we're really hoping he would go to sleep. So we could watch a movie or something that did not happen. We just laid in darkness for like two and a half hours before fell. It was funny. And you know, if I had moved in any sooner, I wouldn't have had that experience. Yeah, we wouldn't have had that safe to fight every day to keep my mind focused on what I'm grateful for. And I think that's a huge practical for overcoming the comparison trap.

Ashley

Oh, yeah, it takes intention and sometimes even planning into your schedule. You know, you have to be more proactive with those things. It doesn't necessarily come natural. You know, I mean to, Okay, sit down and think of 10 things or five things that you're grateful for. It doesn't always come natural. You have to make a point to make it happen, and it really is, how do you want to feel? What, you know? How do you how do you want to feel with the comparison thing? Or how do you want to feel in your life and you know, we all want to feel better. We all want to feel happy. We all want to feel at peace. goodness sakes, right now, peace, please. Don't we all want peace and somewhat of normalcy. But really putting that into our schedule, as every morning, let's write something down that we're grateful for. It's very powerful.

Claudine

Absolutely. And my last practical is really spending time in your Bible. I mean, for me, what I've had to learn and realize is that my true standard The only one worthy of my comparison is Jesus Christ. Oh, I'm never gonna reach that. But that's my standard not you know, Susie Q on Instagram on how many followers she has, or what she looks like in a bathing suit. Eight or, you know, so many things that keep popping up. And I'm just like, Oh, is this is this my standard? I didn't know, I was so happy until I saw this picture. Now I'm like, oh, but you know, like, I didn't know that was my standard, but it's not. And the truth of it is Jesus is our only standard and the more we spend time in the Bible, that's gonna shape our thoughts that's going to shape our hearts, our emotions, that's going to change shape, our behaviors and our actions. Again, more peace, more joy, more love. So those are the practices that really helped me overcome comparison and the ugly sides of it. I found this scripture in the message version of the Bible and Galatians 6:45. And I thought it was such a great well written one, but it says, make a careful exploration of who you are, like what we talked about, and the work you've been given it and then sink yourself into that. Don't compare yourself with others. The other one, each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life. I love that said, you know, we just have ourselves to compare ourselves to in Jesus and no one else.

Ashley

That was a really great scripture, Claudine, and I'm gonna have to look that one up. I like that that version is very true. You know, I mean, God gave us each our own journey. And, you know, we are made in His image and we get to create what that looks like in him. So everybody, thank you for tuning back in with us today. And we look forward to catching you next time. So we will catch you next week.

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