

Ep #20: Lessons Learned from Steven Pressfield



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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Welcome to The Life Coach School podcast, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Hi, everybody. Welcome to the podcast. We are at Episode Number 20. That's pretty exciting. As you know, at every 10th episode, I'm going to do a Lessons Learned episode where I talk about one of my favorite teachers and what I have learned from them. Episode 10 was Byron Katie.

This episode is on Steven Pressfield. Steven Pressfield is one of my most influential teachers. His books are so well-worn in my home. It's funny, because I hadn't read his work for a while; it had been probably about 6 months since I had cracked one of his books. When I was prepping for this session, I was really excited to have just reconnected with one of my most fantastic teachers and to be reminded of some of the lessons that he's taught me. He's written 3 books that I find absolutely unbelievably amazing. First one is Turning Pro. The next one is The War of Art. The third one is Do the Work. Those books, in that order, are my favorite. I think that everyone who is a life coach or anyone that has a job and anyone who is raising children should read the book Turning Pro.

First of all, Steven Pressfield writes in a way that makes you just love reading. He doesn't waste any words. For a lot of people that write succinctly, it seems because there's less words that the writing must be easier because it's more simplified. I know from personal experience that writing in that way is much more challenging. It's harder. When you write down what's on your mind, it can be very lengthy. When you go through and edit and edit and edit so the only thing left is what's really important, that's, I think, the most challenging way to write, but it's the kindest to the reader. I feel like he really does that beautifully in his book Turning Pro.

Turning Pro: Tap Your Inner Power and Create Your Life's Work. I've read this book so many times, but I can read through it and apply it to whatever I happen to be going through. As I was reading it preparing for this podcast, I was on my Facebook group with my Weight Schoolers, telling them about some of the stuff that I was reading in here and how it

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applies to weight loss, and we were having a conversation about it. It was really awesome because it just seems like everything he writes, you can just think about, okay, can I apply this to my job? Can I apply this to my actual work? Can I apply this to my creativity? Can I apply this to my weight loss? You most certainly can.

What I'm going to do today is I'm just going to go over some of the quotes that I've pulled from his work and what they mean to me and how I think we can all apply them to our lives and make our lives so much better. His book *Turning Pro* is really about becoming an adult and being a grownup and not making excuses and showing up and doing the work, so I'm just going to go through some of the portions that I pulled out of his book.

"Turning pro is free, but it's not easy. You don't have to buy a course or a product. All you have to do is change your mind." I love this on so many levels. We talked in a previous episode about massive action. We talked about the difference between passive intellectual action and buying courses and reading books and entertaining ourselves there instead of really doing the work of our lives, instead of showing up and really doing it. One of the things that he talks about here is changing your mind. Everything I teach and everything I believe is really about that ability and that willingness to be able to look at your mind and to be willing to do the work of changing your mind.

He talks a lot in this book about how we are prone to distraction; we give in to resistance. We don't want to be aware because it requires us to do so much more work. He says, "When you are pro, you are facing your demons. It's messy. It's scary. Becoming pro means growing up." I love that idea that when you want to be pro, you're taking your life seriously. You're paying close attention; you're being aware of what's going on in your mind. It matters. You're paying enough attention to it to see the effect that it's having on your life and making a decision to think consciously, to take responsibility for the choices that you're making in your mind and to make a decision to think more deliberately about what you want so you can create what you feel and ultimately live the life you're meant to live.

He says, "The difference between an amateur and a pro is in their habits. A professional has professional habits." God, I just love this. This was one of the points that I had brought to the Weight Schoolers, and one

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of the things that I was saying there is that what you practice every day is what you get good at. He talks about how so many of us have habits that are repetitive but make no progress. That just blew my mind because I think about those of us who are locked into overeating and locked into overdrinking and locked into overworking, and we basically spin ourselves into these places of incapacity. We keep overeating; we keep doing it, repeating it, repeating it, repeating it, repeating it, and just digging ourselves deeper and deeper and deeper away from who we want to be, deeper into resistance and deeper into distraction instead of repeating something that gets us some progress, that helps us evolve into more of who we are.

One of the things I was saying to them is when you're willing to practice feeling instead of eating and you start getting better at that, then you start making progress. When you're just repeating overeating every day, you're not going anywhere; you're just spinning on the same habit over and over and over again. It's not serving you, and, in fact, it's pulling you away from your progress, away from your evolvment. It's helping you hide from yourself. That's something I talk a lot about in Weight School. Whatever your issue is, just apply it to you. What is the thing that you do over and over and over again that helps you hide from yourself, that doesn't ask you to look into your mind or to do the work of feeling what's going on for you and paying attention?

Maybe for some of you it's you just yell and you just have temper tantrums and you just scream all the time. That's the habit that you're in that keeps you away from being who you truly want to be. Those of you who overeat, that keeps you away from being who you truly want to be. Staying in a job you hate, staying in relationships that are unfulfilling is a way of hiding from yourself. He says, "What changes when we turn pro is we stop fleeing from ourselves. Amateurs have lives full of drama, denial, and distraction." Think about that. Are you fleeing from yourself? Are you fleeing from your emotions and into food? Are you fleeing from your emotions and into drama or denial or distraction?

Sometimes this is really difficult for us to discern because we're in it. We don't have the perspective. That's why life coaching is so amazing, weight coaching is so amazing, because then you have someone in your life that can offer you a perspective, that can look at your life and help you see it for what it is. If you're looking for a coach to help you, make sure you

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e-mail me, Brooke@thelifecoachschool, and I will hook you up. When you are able to look at yourself and see that, see that you are in denial, you are in distraction, you are fleeing from yourself, that awareness in and of itself opens up the idea that it's a choice. When you recognize that everything in your life is a choice, that's when you get your power back. If you want to be a pro- What I love about his concept of being a pro, it's like you're taking your life seriously; you're showing up as an adult, and you mean it. You're a professional in your own life. I love that concept.

"Each day the pro knows he will wake up and face the same demons, the same resistance, and the same self-sabotage. The difference is that now he will not yield to those temptations." That is something that we really teach; we teach it at the Life Coach School and we teach it at Weight School, too, is that the first step is really increasing that awareness, understanding how much you are deluding yourself, understanding how unconscious you are, understanding what you're thinking, what's going on in your mind and noting that and seeing that. That really has to be that first step. Then once you do that, really owning those choices, owning that every thought you think is a choice, everything you do, everything you eat, everything you say, every time you yell, every time you choose drama or denial, that's always a choice. Just because you're doing it unconsciously doesn't mean that it's not a choice. Then once you recognize that that is a choice you are making, then you can decide to make another choice.

I've been getting quite a few e-mails from you guys, saying, okay, I recognize I'm having this negative thinking. I recognize that I'm not serving myself with my mind, but I just don't know how to change. I want to offer this to you. First and foremost, I want to offer that don't be in a hurry. Just the awareness and holding that awareness and watching the results of your thinking can be incredibly powerful. I know that there's a huge temptation to change right away. Oh, my god, I notice all these negative thoughts; I've got to get rid of them right away. If you're willing to stay with that awareness long enough, there can be this evolvment that happens without having to force it. The more you notice what you're creating in your life with your mind, the less you are going to be inclined to do it.

The other temptation is to just turn away from it and to look away from it and to not pay attention to it because you don't want to see it. That's actually what's happening when you're trying to change it really quick because you just don't want it to be there. Really, that active acceptance,

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that being willing to be with yourself and recognize the thoughts you're thinking and seeing the effect in your life, holding space for that and acknowledging that has to be a really solid, committed first step. Then what happens, and this is what he says, the difference is that now you will not yield to those temptations. You have to become aware of them. You have to see the messiness of your life. You have to see the messiness of your mind. The more you pay attention to it, the easier it will become to notice the thought before you react to it, but give yourself some time and patience to be aware enough to then make that change.

I want to move into some other quotes that I have from him. These are notes that I have in my notebook that I've kept from Steven Pressfield for years, and I just want to go through them. The previous quotes that I all mentioned were all from the book *Turning Pro*, which I absolutely highly recommend that you go and purchase immediately. If you want to get the title, make sure you go to thelifecoachschool.com/20 and there will be a link to his books in the Show Notes.

Here are some other concepts that he brings up. "Resistance presents itself when you are ready to go to the next level." I love this word resistance because I think it sums up so much what happens with ourselves when we push against who we are and what we feel and what we think. It's a term that Steven Pressfield uses a lot and so does Abraham; Esther Hicks and Abraham use that terminology. They use it in the same way, and it's a really good way to summarize what we go through as human beings.

When he says, "Resistance presents itself when you are ready to go to the next level," I love this concept because it's nothing's gone wrong, you're just ready to bust out of that cocoon; you're ready to go to that next level, so, of course, there will be some resistance. If you're a pro, you will show up and you will face the resistance. You will not flee away from it; you will not think that something has gone wrong. You will recognize that it's part of your evolvment.

"The amateur is an egotist. He takes material of his personal pain and uses it to draw attention to himself." I love this. I love that so many of us want to feel sorry for ourselves when we face that resistance, when we're going to the next level. We want everything to be easy. I know for me with my own weight loss and in building my company, I just really wanted it

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to be easy, and I had this idea that it should be. When I wake up even today and I face this resistance, instead of feeling now like something has gone wrong or poor me, why do I have to deal with this, I know that it's part of the deal and I'm willing to do that work. I'm willing to work as hard as it takes to overcome my belief that I can't do it in order to break through to the next level. I feel like that's a gift I give to myself. It's something that I do for me.

I will tell you guys, there's a way where you can have your own back and when you really go to work for yourself, that appreciation that you then have and the respect you then have for yourself really bonds that relationship with yourself, and that's what builds your self-esteem. Remember, the idea of self-esteem is what is your opinion of yourself; when you think of yourself, what do you think. The more you show up and go to bat for yourself and do that thing you don't think you can do, the more self-esteem you'll have because the higher opinion you'll have of yourself.

He says, "Just sit down and do the work. The force that can save the amateur is awareness." I love that. "A cherished self-delusion must be abandoned when we go pro, and this hurts." Let's talk about this for a minute. This is something when I'm training new coaches, they have a really hard time when they're dealing with their clients because what they say is: "My clients want to hang onto their stories. They want to keep these beliefs that they have about themselves. They're very attached to them" I like to call them- I got this from Dave Ramsey, this idea that we carry around these ideas of ourselves like little pets, beloved pets. We don't want to let go of the idea that we have all of these things wrong with us. It's our little excuses; we want to have little cuddles with them. We want to put them on the couch and pet our excuses, and we grip them very tightly.

Even when we show our clients, hey, look, you believing this is not serving you, this excuse is not serving you, they still don't want to let go of it. This is the same for ourselves, too. When you've believed in something for so long, when you've thought something over and over and over again and your identity is built up around it, it's not so easy to just go, oh, okay, that's not true anymore; I'm just going to move on to the next thing. We cling to it because it's what we know and it's what's familiar even though it's not serving us. We have to look at what are our cherished self-delusions. Are we willing to go through the pain of letting them go?

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With my weight-loss clients, it's are you willing to let go of the idea that you can't lose weight? It seems like something you would just want to let go. Of course I want to let go of that idea. That's a horrible idea; I wish I didn't believe it. It's something that you've grasped onto and it's become your identity and it's become your excuse, so to let go of it is a surrender that causes quite a lot of pain even though it doesn't make sense intellectually. It says we can reconstitute our BS or we can turn pro. For every dream, there's automatically going to be resistance.

I love that. We do work at the school where whenever our clients, ourselves, wherever we're making goals, we immediately anticipate the obstacles because we know that's the resistance that's going to come up. If your goal doesn't bring up a resistance, if your dream doesn't bring up a resistance, it's probably not a big enough dream. It's probably not going to require you to reach and go to that next level. But when you know, hey, when I dream, I'm going to have all sorts of thrashing and resistance and I'm going to have messiness and I'm going to have to face that within myself and you plan on it, it makes all the difference in the world.

He says, "The most important thing about art is to work. Nothing else matters except sitting down every day and trying." Oh, my god, is that brilliant? "Nothing else matters except sitting down every day and trying." That's for those of you who are my students or my coaches who are trying to build your businesses, nothing matters, but every day you sit down and try. That's for my students, my clients who are trying to lose weight. Nothing matters except that you sit down every day and you try to feel and not eat. You try and pay attention and honor yourself instead of overeating.

"It's better to be in the arena getting stomped by the bull than to be up in the stands or out in the parking lot." Oh, I love that. It reminds me of Brené Brown a little bit where she talks about how your opinion is not important to me unless you're in the arena. Unless you're in here getting your ass kicked, I don't really want to hear your opinion about my work. I feel like that's true for ourselves. If we're willing to put ourselves out there and work hard for ourselves, we are going to have our own respect. We are going to have high regard for ourselves. Notice he doesn't say that the only thing that matters is that you succeed. He says nothing else matters except sitting down every day and trying. How much trying are you doing? Are you sitting down and giving your best effort for yourself to overcome the resistance that is between you and what you want, what your dreams are?

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"The opposite of love isn't hate; it's indifference." The opposite of love isn't hate; it's indifference. I want you guys to think about this in terms of yourself. How often are you indifferent to what you're doing? How often are you indifferent to your lack of success? To how you treat yourself? To how you show up in your life? I have so many people that come to me that have given up on hating themselves. They don't even hate themselves anymore; they're just completely indifferent. That is the opposite of love. We turn that around by increasing our awareness, owning our choices, and then deciding do we want to garner our own respect. Do we want to honor ourselves? Are we willing to do the work and face the resistance to achieve the dreams that we have inside of us? Because isn't that the point of our lives?

I had someone say to me that they don't know what they want because they don't think that what they want matters. I told her, I said, "I think what we want is the only thing that matters." I think what we want is the map to our destiny, to what we're supposed to do. If we're not willing to look at our own wants because with every want, with every dream, is going to come resistance and we don't want to have to deal with the resistance, then we are going to be doing what Steven Pressfield calls a shadow life. We're going to be distracted, denying, and then drama instead of showing up and facing the resistance that is asked of us to face in order to achieve the dreams and live the life we're meant to live and to evolve into ourselves and reminding ourselves that doesn't mean it's going to be Easy Street. That means we are going to do the work to find out who we really are.

I will tell you that when you are doing work ... People will say to me, "How do I become a life coach? It just seems like so much work." I'll say, "But it's the work that is so fulfilling. It's the work that makes you so proud of yourself." Because you're showing up and doing the work of your life that you love. You're not just doing a work in this, what Steven Pressfield calls a shadow life. You're showing up and really doing the work that matters to you.

He says, "Our job in this lifetime is not to shape ourselves into some ideal we imagine we ought to be, but to find out who we already are and become it." I'm going to leave on that note, because I think that is so beautifully said and there is no comment that needs to be made to that.

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I would love to hear your thoughts. If you are already a Steven Pressfield fan, I'd love to know your favorite quote from him. I'd also like to know what you think about his teachings here that I've shared. What are your thoughts on what grips you the most? What's enticing to you? Or do you totally disagree with him? I'm open to any and all discussion. Again, I reply to every comment on my blog; I look forward to seeing you there. Until next week, have a beautiful, beautiful resistance-filled-but-showing-up-anyway life. I'll talk to you later. Bye-bye.

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