

## Ep #33: How to Change Your Past



### **Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Brooke Castillo**

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

Hey everybody. What's going on? Today we're going to talk about how to change your past. That's a cool thing to think about, right? Think about all the things in your past that you want to change. You could just magic wand them. You really can. This is some of the most important work that I do with my clients. One of the things that really separates life coaching from therapy is how much time we spend talking about our past. So much of therapy, it depends on what type of therapy, so let me clarify, I had a Freudian psychotherapist that I worked with when I was in my late teens early 20s.

I used to go into the therapist office and she would say very little. She would just literally sit there and nod and I would talk about my past, and she would ask me about my past, a few questions here and there, and then we would talk more about it. I was in my early 20s. I didn't have much of a past to talk about, but I went to therapy four times a week and talked about my past for four hours a day. One of the things that I really learned through that process was that talking about my past over and over and over again was not helpful for me. I do believe that discussing your past, telling the truth about something that happened to you to another human being, I really do believe that is powerful.

I think sharing our version of our story with someone is helpful. Reiterating it and going over and over and over again without changing it, I don't find useful. That's just my person opinion. It's how I approach all of my work with my clients. I don't believe in rehashing the past over and over again, and I don't believe that it is useful to explain our current condition based on something that happened to us in our past. I have a lot of reasons for this and I'm going to share them all with you in this session. If you are someone that struggles with your past, whether it's your immediate past, maybe you just went through something traumatic, or your past in terms of your childhood, it's all very important to know that you can change it in whatever way you want.

Here's why. Your past no longer exists but in your mind. I know that many of you have heard this before, right? All you have is this moment. The past

is over and the future is in your imagination, but the way that I like to look at it because I don't know why, but that concept has really been challenging for me to wrap my mind around because I'm a very future focused person. I like to plan for the future and I love to dream about the future, so the way that I like to look at it is all you have in this moment are the thoughts you are thinking. If you are thinking about your past, that isn't your past.

This is a huge distinction. Your past is over. The only way your past exists at all is in your thought about it now. Otherwise, it doesn't affect you in any way. Your thought right now about your past does affect you. All of your thinking affects you deeply in this moment, but what happened to you in your past does not affect you. There's your past that's over, that doesn't affect you, and then there's your current thoughts about your past, which do affect you. Your past no longer exists but in your mind. That is a huge concept. Then what is your past? When I ask you about your past now, what is it? It is your story about your past.

That's what your past literally is to you. If you had amnesia and you had no memory of your past, if I asked you about your past, it would have no influence on you in terms of your current thinking, so when I ask you about what happened to you when you were a child, you are going to tell me your story, your version, your memorized story about your past. I could ask your mother or your father if they were alive about your past and they would have a different story, a different version, so your past exists in their mind in their way and your past exists in your mind in your way.

If you have any siblings, sometimes I talk to my brother and sister about stuff that happened in the past, and they're like, what are you talking about? That never happened. That wasn't my experience of it. That's not what we did, right? I think that's so fascinating. There are the facts about what happened that can't be verified in most cases, and then there's your story about what happened. There's what you made it mean about yourself, what you made it mean about your life. I know I keep repeating myself here, but this is a concept that many of my clients have a hard time really wrapping their mind around, so all through this podcast, I'm just going to keep repeating that that your past is over.

The only thing you have right now are your current thoughts about your past. Clients will say to me I have really old wounds. I have really old pain. I

have really old thoughts. There are no such thing. You have a feeling that you experience in this moment. It's not an old feeling. It's not like a feeling from when you were three and you're feeling it now. That's impossible, right? There's the feeling that you had when you were three and that's over, and then there's the feeling that you have now. The only way that you can have a feeling now is if you think about something that causes you to have the feeling now.

You're not experiencing pain from your past. You're experiencing present pain, the pain that you are creating with your mind today, so when you think about your story, about your past, you may cause yourself to feel pain. It may be similar to the pain that you felt when you were three years old, but it is not the same pain. It is new pain, new pain, this moment pain that you are creating with your current thinking. That's a life-changing thing to know. You cannot experience pain from your past. What happened to you in your past is over. The only pain you're experiencing is the pain you are creating now.

I know that for some of you this may make you mad for me to say this, because it happens with clients with me all the time. They say how could you possibly say that? I went through this horrific thing. How can you possibly say that it isn't affecting me now? I say it's good news. That person that did that to you then cannot affect you now. The only way they can affect you now is if you think about them, if you think a thought that creates pain, if you create a situation where you're currently a victim, that's how you can feel that way. If you feel shame now, it's not because of what happened to you in your past, it's because what you're currently thinking about what happened to you in your past.

Why is this great news? Because they have no more power over you. I have worked with hundreds of clients who have experienced extreme abuse when they were children, and they are continually abusing themselves now. That abuse is long over. The physical abuse is long over, but they are perpetuating the emotional abuse with their own mind, and they don't even realize they're doing it. They're giving so much power to this person that abused them and many times that person has already passed, and yet that person is continually in their mind and continually torturing them over and over and over again. This is not blaming the victim.

I know that sometimes people say how can you possibly say that this person is causing their own pain? Because it's absolutely true. Something that happened to you in your past is over. The pain of that is over. The only pain that continues is the pain you are creating in your mind when you think about it. The great news is that you can change how you think about your past and you can change how you feel because of changing how you think about your past. The only way your past defines you now is in the way you choose to think about it. I often do this exercise. I think I've talked about this on my podcast before, but I often do this exercise where I present two different people to the audience, and I'll say this person had this kind of life.

This person grew up with this experience. This person had these things happen to them. Where do you think this person is now in their life? Then I'll give the example of another person, and I'll say this is the experience they had and this is how they grew up, and this is what happened to them. What kind of life do you think this person has now? At the end of course, I show them that it is the same person and they would never have recognized that because the stories about their past, the exact same life is so different. What I choose to focus on in one of the examples is to prove that this person had a horrible life and in the other example, I choose to focus on that the person had a wonderful life. That's true for all of us.

If I ask you to make a case that you've had a wonderful life, you can go through your life and focus on everything wonderful that happened to you. You can pull out all the wonderfulness of your life and you can tell me a story about your wonderful life. If I asked you to tell me about your horrible life, you would be able to do the same thing. You'd be able to go and pick out all the horrible things that had ever happened in your life, all the horrible things you think you've done, and you'd be able to make a case for that, right? The story that you tell about your past will depend on what you're choosing to focus on.

If you currently believe that you've had a really horrible life, you will tell me the story and you will tell yourself the story of your horrible life. If you decide to tell me that you've had a wonderful life and if you believe that you've had a wonderful life, you will tell me that story, and that matters. How you choose to focus, how you choose to tell the story of your life matters. Why does it matter? Because it creates your thinking about your past and how you currently feel and act. If you believe you've had a horrible

life and that you were a victim and that that has shaped you and that now you're destined for a certain life because of your past, you will create that life for yourself. It will show up in so many ways.

All of us know someone who identifies themselves as a victim, and they may have very good reason. They may have been tremendously abused when they were a child. They may have been victimized in many ways, and then you will see how it perpetuates into their adulthood. The reason it perpetuates into their adulthood is not because they are a victim, and not because they were treated as a victim when they were younger, it's because they are currently thinking in that way and creating that in their own lives, whether it's on purpose or not. Someone may say how can you possibly say I've had a good life? My parents died when I was young. I was abused. I was in foster care.

They're focusing on all the things that didn't work in their life. I had a client like this one time and I was talking to her and I said it depends on who you're comparing your life to. Everything is relative. If you compare yourself to someone who is blind, if you compare yourself to someone who was paralyzed, if you compare yourself to someone who doesn't have food or water, who doesn't have a way of taking care of themselves, who lives somewhere else where it's constant torture and abuse all the way through their life. You can look at your life however you would like to look at it. What I have found in my own life is that when I look at it from a way of everything is meant to happen exactly the way it's supposed to in order for me to have the life I'm meant to have, I feel freedom.

When I believe I had the exact parents that I was supposed to have in order to live my most important life. I had an alcoholic father that was very unavailable, was cheating on my mother. I had a mother who was very depressed and really just non-functioning, not able to really care for us in any deliberate kind of way because of her emotional state, and I really struggled a lot when I was a kid in terms of trying to find my identity. When I look at it like that and I think poor me. My mom should have got her act together. My dad should have quit drinking. They should have been more available to me. They should have taken care of me better, right?

When I focus that way, I feel angry and upset and frustrated, but when I look at my life and I think God, I had the perfect set up. I had the perfect



parents that required me to become independent. I was really challenged to figure out what was going on with me, so I could survive. I had to have the self inquiry. I had to go searching in order to make it through and thank goodness. I couldn't have picked better parents to prepare me for the life I'm now living, right? My dad died of cirrhosis when I was young and before that, he was drunk basically the entire time, and yet when I think of him, I feel happy and so much love for him because of what I do choose to focus on.

I choose to focus on how funny he was and how fun he was and many of the things that he said to me and how he was kind in his way and how he was really suffering and trying to find his way in the world and really struggling with finding his way and making so many mistakes, and still I'm able to think about him and love him and not feel like a victim of his and not feel like he did me wrong or that he intentionally hurt me, and that sets me free. I love being able to think of him that way. Same with my mom. I like to believe that everybody is doing the best they can. Everybody is really doing the best they can and yes, I wish they could have done better and given me the perfect childhood, but then I think, but wait, no, maybe I don't wish that because maybe I wouldn't have turned out the way that I am now and have the life that I do now, right?

When you think about your parents, when you think about your childhood, when you think about maybe your first marriage or your first boyfriend or high school, what are you focusing on? What are you thinking about and what do you want to think about? One of the ideas that I like that I get from Dan Sullivan who's one of my favorite teachers, is you get to take from your past what you want and you get to leave the rest of it, right? It's your past. The only way the past exists is in your mind, and you have 100% control over your mind. You get to decide what you want to think about when it comes to your past.

You get to decide how you want to feel about it. You get to decide what you're going to make it mean. You get to decide whether it was an amazing experience that taught you so much and was part of your destiny or whether something went terribly wrong and notice how you feel when you tell the story of your past. There is no pain in your past that affects you now. The only pain that affects you now is the pain that you have in your present. The only emotion you feel right now is the emotion you create

with your mind right now. Believing that and knowing that sets me free. It sets me free from something someone said to me yesterday and it sets me free from what happened when I was five years old, and it set me free from what happened when I was 18, and everything that I think about when I think about my past can bring me joy.

All the things that I've done in my life that I could regret, that I could beat myself up for, that I could struggle and cringe at, I say to myself, it was always going to happen that way. It's all part of the plan. It's all part of the history, right? A lot of time when I say it was always going to happen that way, people will argue with me and think we have some predestined life, right, out ahead of us. I don't think about my future that way, but I do think about my past that way, and the reason why is because what I learned from my teacher Byron Kathy when she says when you argue with your past, you lose, but only 100% of the time, it really sunk it because I was spending so much time arguing with what happened in my past, and she would say how do you know that it was supposed to happen the way it did?

Because it did. Because it happened the way it did. It couldn't have been another way because it's done and it's over and when you argue with it, you lose, and it just clicked. I don't think I have a predestined future. I think those are all my choices, but I think immediately when something is in the past, that's how it went down, there's nothing I can do about it, I make peace with it immediately. I was supposed to say that. I was supposed to do that. As soon as I believe that, it sets me free, arguing with it, I never win and it never feels good. That may not work for you, but find out what does work for you. How can you make peace with your past? How do you want to feel about your past? How do you want to use your past to make you stronger and better and more capable and happier? That is an amazing question to ask yourself.

I use my past as strength. When I think about my past, I feel strong. I focus on my grandfather who was an entrepreneur, who built his life from literal poverty into a business that went public. He played professional football and then created a business from scratch and took it public. He was an amazing person. I love thinking about him in that way. I love thinking that I have his blood running through my veins. I love thinking about my dad and how fun he was and how funny he was, and I love thinking about my mom and how she really did the best she could and how much my relationship



with her has shaped my relationship with myself in such a wonderful way that I couldn't have even begun to develop had I not struggled in the way that I did, right?

Look at your past. How do you want to use it? It's yours. It's yours in your mind. Nobody can change it or touch it, right, but you can. You get to decide what you're going to make your past mean in your life. You're going to decide whether you're going to be the hero of that story or the victim, right? You don't need to go into your past to heal it. There are exceptions. If you've had trauma in your past, physical trauma, post traumatic stress syndrome, those sorts of things, those are out of the realm of what I'm talking about, and there is so much healing that can be done by therapies that take you back and let you experience that level of healing.

I'm talking about most people who come to me who are chained to their past, chained to a painful story about their past and what happened to them and what it means about their life. That is completely optional. You can change this story. If I ask you to write a story, if you decide the way that I want to feel about my past is I want to believe that it has made me strong, it has made me capable, it has made me worthy, go mining for that evidence. You will find it. You will find evidence for that and then retell the story of your past in a way that ultimately serves you, that gives you thoughts, that build feelings of positivity and strength and wonder and energize you and leave the rest of it.

You don't have to take any of it into your brain that you don't want to. If you find yourself thinking about it, ask yourself why. If you find yourself thinking negative thoughts about your past, ask yourself why. That is definitely worth coaching yourself on. You get to decide what you bring into your future. Your future is your property. You get to bring whatever it is you want from your past and here's the best news. You get to leave anything you don't want to bring with you. It's over. It has no power over you. You can release it forever and move on. If you notice that anything from your past is causing you pain, it's because of the story that you're telling about it, and you get to change this story.

You may not be able to change what happened to you, but you get to change what it means to you now. There is no work that has had a bigger influence on me than changing the story of my past, changing what it

means, and how I want to focus on it moving forward. I highly encourage you all to do this practice. Sum up your past in one sentence. How do you want to define it? It made me the strong woman that I am today. What is your title of your past? I'd love to know. Share it with me in the comments going to the [LifeCoachSchool.com/33](http://LifeCoachSchool.com/33) and I will see you there. Have a wonderful amazing day everyone, and make sure you go and sign up for our free coaching call that we're offering on Wednesdays.

We would love to have you join us. You could get some coaching from me and you can listen in to some coaching from some other people. All right everybody, talk to you soon. Bye, bye.

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