

## Ep #211: Villain Compassion



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With Your Host

**Brooke Castillo**

## Ep #211: Villain Compassion

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.

Well, hello there, my friends. I wanted to create a podcast for you this week titled, Villain Compassion. And it's a concept that I use with a lot of my students who've been with me for a long time. It's one of those kinds of more advanced concepts that once you get to know me is a little easier to accept. And it's a hard concept in the beginning of my work.

So here's my philosophy. I feel like y'all have been with me for 211 episodes. If this is your very first podcast that you've listened to from me, this might be not a great idea because this is one of my more advanced concepts, but welcome and try it on and see what you think.

So one of the things that I live my life by is the idea that I love the humans. And I love all of our humanness. And we're on a range, right? We're on this scale of goodness to badness in terms of our morality and our judgment. There's the dark side and the light side. And so much of the story of the human experience is based on good and bad.

And what most of my life and my clients' life has been focused on is trying to figure out what side we're on, right? Are we on the good side or the bad side, and most of my life I've thought I was on the bad side. I had so much self-loathing and you know, kind of crinating myself and my own life that I always say myself as the bad one, the one that wasn't good enough.

And I went from being the bad one in my life to then also being the victim and playing out that victim and villain role that we're taught so often in our stories and taught so often in the lessons as we're growing up.

And as I've done this work on myself and I'm embraced the part of the world that isn't "good", and the part of the world that is good, I have come to understand that this human spectrum of good and badness and

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judgment there does not serve us very well because the problem with it is that we're always trying to locate and vilify the villains. And one of the things that we end up doing is dehumanizing other humans based on their behaviors and in our dehumanizing of the villains, we become a lesser version of who we want to be.

And here's what I mean by that. I'll give you an example of a conversation I had with one of my clients. She was talking about sex trafficking and she was talking in a way about sex traffickers as if those weren't actually human beings that were doing the sex trafficking. The men that she had done research on that were in charge of the sex trafficking were human beings doing it.

And they were, in her eyes, dehumanizing the women and the children that they were using for the sex trafficking, which I agree with, right? Of course. But in her vilifying the villain, she was then dehumanizing the villain, the very thing that she was vilifying him for.

So for example, as a sex trafficker, he was not seeing women and men as humans, he was seeing them as dollar signs, and in her judgment of him, she was not seeing him as a human being but just a monster. And so we end up truly creating the exact issue that we're trying so hard to fight, and I see this happen over and over and over again.

I have a lot of people in my life who have said a lot of really negative things about politicians and about people in leadership roles, and people that they work for and bosses, in a way that they feel is justified. So they are basically hating on these people and saying very hateful and critical things about these people, but they feel like they are justified in doing that because of all these horrible things that these people have done.

And one of the things that I asked my clients about, and I asked my students and colleagues about this, is are you a person that criticizes and puts down other human beings? And they would say of course not, no. No, I hate the people that do that. Those people are awful, those people are terrible, those people should be killed. I would never put down another

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human being like those people do. Those people are the scum of the earth, I would never put down human beings, right?

So in their being critical of the humans that are putting down the other humans, they are doing the exact same thing. They are saying ugly, vile, awful things, and justifying it. They are making fun of other people and saying it's okay to make fun of him because he makes fun of other people. It's okay to hate on him because he hates on other people. And we in doing that, try to justify our own hate because of the hate that came before us.

And this becomes a cycle of villains. This becomes a way of not being the best version of ourselves and not being who we want to be. And so when I see my colleagues criticizing other people and hating on other people, in the name of justice, in the name of compassion, in the name of love, all I can do is shake my head and say they are very, very confused because spewing hate about another person and their family, no matter what they've done, is still spewing hate.

And you have to notice, are you someone that says horrible things about other people and justifies it because you think those people are horrible? You have to decide if that is the kind of person that you would want to be. Do you want to be saying those things about other human beings? Is that the person that you want to be?

So one of the things that I want you to consider is that when you vilify other people and when you put them down and hate on them and criticize them, you are justifying it by your judgment about how they've shown up as a human and how they should be showing up as a human.

And there's this wide range of what we can consider good and bad and what is worth criticizing and what is worth hating on, and where do we cross that line. When does someone become a villain that it's okay for us to throw rocks at? And what I have found is that that line moves depending on the level of our own judgment.

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And the problem with it is that whatever we're projecting out there into the world onto all these bad people that we see out there in the world, we use that same judgment on ourselves. And what we loathe and what we project in terms of our own loathing onto other people is what we're also experiencing inside.

So when we hate on our boss, we are feeling hate. Now, you may feel like you're justified. You may feel like they've done wrong things, you may say you just don't like them, you may say you don't want to like them. That's fine, but you are the one experiencing it. You are the one suffering over the hate of this other person.

And so when I suggest this to my clients, they sometimes get very upset and tell me that they can't have compassion for another human being that has been a villain because that would somehow mean condoning their behavior. And I always am so puzzled by this.

How is having compassion for someone the same as condoning their behavior? We have to separate people from their behavior. We have to separate the human from their behavior and not necessarily condemn the person, the human because of the way that they behave. And this makes people so mad at me when I suggest this, but the reason I'm suggesting it is for your sake. It's for the sake when you vilify someone, you become the victim when they are your villain.

And when you vilify them to the point where you feel like you need to dehumanize them, then you become the villain of them. You see what I'm saying? It's like, when you start hating on the hater, when you start beating up on the hater, you have then become the villain.

So what I'm suggesting is that we step back from the villain, the person that we've made the villain in our mind, and we drop into compassion, if we can find it. And I want to tell you that compassion is not the same as condoning anything. We're not condoning people's behavior ever, but it doesn't mean that we have to condemn the person in our mind if that is hurtful to us.

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So one of the best ways that I know of to find compassion for all human beings, I always imagine every human was once an innocent child. And one of many things could have happened that put them in a position where they end up doing horrible things in the world. And I evaluate this in my own mind when I think about the pure innocent child that was born and the possibilities of what they were exposed to, what they were taught, what types of mental illnesses they may have experienced, what belief systems that they may have adopted, that has them acting in a world in a way that we would condemn their actions.

But what is it like when we can be compassionate for the human? Because if we can be compassionate for the human who can, you know, struck the worst possible experience for themselves and other people in the world, if we can find compassion there, then we will find it much easier to find compassion for ourselves, for all of our own wrongdoings, which we will have. All of us will have in our own lives.

And again, it doesn't mean we condone the behavior, of course, we don't condone murder, we don't condone abuse, but we can have compassion for all of the humans on the planet and curiosity and understanding. And I would say that curiosity has been the thing that has served me the most when it comes to this experience is why are people the way that they are.

I know that hurt people hurt people. I know that people that are suffering sometimes don't know how to not cause suffering. And I've seen this experience played out with myself because I was suffering, I caused myself so much suffering. I was both my own victim and my own villain. And I've worked with thousands of clients who identify themselves as victims, and I've worked with thousands of clients who identify themselves as villain.

And when I can look at everyone as just a human, and I can look at everyone with curiosity, and I don't ever condemn the human, then I open up my heart to so much possibility and so much compassion. Because otherwise, I have to keep myself always judging other people to decide where they fall on the side of my version of good humans and my versions of bad humans.

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And when I just look at all humans as humans and some of us really get it wrong, and some of us really get it right, and some of us are somewhere in the middle - in fact, most of us are right there in the middle - we can have compassion for the whole spectrum of what it means to be human, what it means to be on this planet because what it does mean on this planet is there are horrific things that happen.

And yet we still want to be here, and we still want to bring our children here. And we still understand that there are parts of the human experience, that our parts of the human experience, there's no arguing them, that aren't what we would prefer. And yet we can use those things in our life to turn to hate and abuse and murder and frustration, or we can use those things in our life to deepen our compassion.

I like to think of the example of someone who notices someone else doing something in the world that they hate. So maybe I'm noticing someone abusing someone else. And that could make me angry and frustrated, and it can make me hate that abuser, and it could actually make me then abuse the abuser. Turns me into an abuser because I'm hating so much on the abuser.

Or I can use that anger and frustration and work on myself to find a way to be compassionate for both the abuser and the abused and myself, and know that from that compassion is where strength and change will come. So instead of saying, "Oh, it's fine that someone's being abused, it's fine that someone's abusing someone else," that's what we call indifference.

Instead of doing that, or instead of then abusing the abuser with my words and with my actions, there is the other option, which is using compassion and wisdom and inspiration and strength to understand that human experience and to turn it into something more positive.

And I think all the great leaders, all the great stories that we've heard throughout our history and throughout our lives are people that have used love and peace and compassion to handle all sorts of situations. Negative, very negative situations that are happening in the world.

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And what I have learned by my work with the model is that when we take action from a place of compassion and love and strength, that change is so much faster and so much easier, and so much better. When we attack violence, we're adding to the violence. When we resist other people's behavior, we are adding to the tension.

When we come from a place of understanding, when we come from a place of compassion, we come from a place of intelligence and love for all humans, and for the deep desire to understand why people do what they do, in a way of really understanding the cause of violence, the cause of pain, the cause of abuse, then we have much more of a chance of changing the results permanently.

When we beat people up for their actions, we miss the cause of their actions. And when we find the cause of their actions, that's where we can find compassion and from that place of compassion, strength to enact change.

So I want you to think about the things in the world that you think are bad, the things in the world where you find villains, and I want you to ask yourself, how are you showing up when you think about them that way? Are you showing up with outrage and fear and offendedness? Or are you showing up with compassion and love and strength? Which my friends, is the opposite of condoning. It's understanding.

And when we start understanding where all human beings are coming from, that is the beginning of change. Change does not come from a place of hate and fear. Nothing good comes from a place of hate and fear. Our desire for something better, our desire for something good, our love of goodness, our compassion for humans, that's what causes change. That's what makes abuse intolerable to us, is our love and compassion.

And we don't want to forget that that can motivate us to make all the change we need to change in the world. We do not have to spit in other people's faces and yell in their faces and say horrible things about them



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and their families and the way that they show up at our work and our jobs, right? That does not serve the world. That adds more hate and pain.

So I want to suggest to each of you that there is a way to find compassion for your villains. And that compassion is where your strength is, and that compassion is where your humanness is. And that is where you will get the most leverage as it comes to enacting change and righteousness in the world. And to making there be more good than bad, in your mind anyway.

So I want to invite you to explore the idea of having compassion for your villain and finding strength there. Since I have done this in my own life, since I have done this with every human that ever does something horrible in the world, when I find my way to understand that person and try to have compassion for them, I find myself stronger and better and more capable of enacting change.

I think you will find the exact same thing. Have a gorgeous week everybody, talk to you soon.

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