

Ep #214: Drama



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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.

Well hello, my friends. Welcome to another amazing podcast with Brooke Castillo. Today, we are talking about drama. So you guys know that I have Self-Coaching Scholars, which is my monthly coaching program where I coach, once a week. Any of the students who volunteer to be coached get coached on that weekly call.

And just recently, I've had a few of the sessions be on a very similar topic, as it applies to drama and creating unnecessary drama in our lives that cause us unnecessary negative emotion. And so, I wanted to do a podcast on it to bring to your attention that you may be a little bit dramatic about your life.

And here's the thing, people that are dramatic about their lives, we don't recognize it in ourselves. And that's why coaching is such a beautiful thing because when you recognize that you may be taking things and dramatizing them in a way that's painful and unnecessarily painful, then you can change your life pretty dramatically.

And I want to offer that one of the biggest reasons that I recommend that you de-dramatize your life as much as you can is because the bigger your goals are in your life, the more dramatic your life is going to feel to you. And you can actually escalate your drama if it's, like, literally you can't function.

So if you can approach your life from a non-dramatic approach, you'll be able to have bigger goals, if that makes sense. And I notice this extremely clearly in my own life when I first met my husband, Chris, who is very non-dramatic. Chris always gives everyone the benefit of the doubt. He always looks at stuff at very face value. He doesn't get riled up about things. He doesn't make up stories.

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And I think part of that is because his childhood was not as dramatic as mine was. And just ask us; the way he describes his childhood is very matter of fact and the way I have tended to describe my childhood is very dramatic. So what's interesting about that, obviously, is the way that he conveys his childhood to me. It seems like it's very chill, so I use that as an explanation as to why he's non-dramatic. But as I'm saying this out loud, I'm like, "Oh, he describes his childhood as non-dramatic because that's how he is."

So I'm going to give you guys some ideas and tips to think about as you are approaching your life and how much power you really have in terms of how you describe your life to yourself and how much that will change your life. I often will be coaching someone and they'll tell me a story and then I'll ask them to retell me the exact story in a positive way, without changing any of the facts.

And the brain resists this. I watch the literal struggle – the cognitive struggle – that my clients have, when they have been committed to a story of doom and gloom and drama, to turn it into something that is harmless and positive. The brain really resists it. And that's when I'm coaching them. So this is twice as difficult when you're coaching yourself.

But I'm going to give you some ways to identify if you're doing this to yourself and how you can change it if you would like to. So remember that our brains – our primitive brains – are always looking for danger and that is how we are literally wired. And we love drama, so notice how we don't go to movies that are just about normal people's lives.

We don't like reality shows that are about well-adjusted people who just get along. We would all fall asleep, right. We like it when there's screaming and yelling and drama and cheating and lots of money earned and lots of money lost and lots of back-biting and divorces and all of that crazy stuff. Like, our brain likes that drama. It likes that high intensity and it likes to look for danger.

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It's almost like that's the brain's stimulation. We love stories with villains and victims in them. And if you think about all the movies and the books – the fiction books that you have read – there's usually high drama, high suspense in those stories and lots of tension and opportunities for people to be heroes.

I often say this about my company and about all corporations, like, there shouldn't need to be any heroes because if there's a hero in your organization, it probably means that there's too much drama. There's too many fires and too much danger so the hero needs to come in and save the day. It's so much better if everyone in the organization is just kind of a boring hero that prevents drama from happening.

So a lot of us create drama where there really is none. We make things way too important, too stressful and too urgent. And again, it's because our brains are programmed to this.

So I'll tell you a story about one of my friends, who will remain nameless, who sent me a text and it said, "Call me immediately; it's very important." So, please don't text me that. because immediately, what does my brain do? It concocts a story. It concocts a dramatic story of death and destruction.

The other day actually, I sent my son Connor a message and it said, "Come home." That's all it said. And he freaked out. Just those two words, I normally don't send him a text like that. And I just didn't finish it. I was – come home right after school because grandma's here, was what the whole text should have been, but it just said come home.

And he immediately concocted a story that there was an emergency and something terrible was happening and the drama ensued. So just notice; does your brain do that automatically as well? Do you automatically create a story in your brain of terror when the opportunity is presented to you?

So anyway, back to my story about my friend. I immediately called her because I was needing to understand what was going on and she told me

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that her daughter had gotten into trouble with the school over a social media issue and that she was furious about it and they were treating her unfairly and that all the kids had the same social media issue and everybody should be getting punished and not just her daughter.

And she was seriously like spun out over this. And I was immediately relieved that no one was hurt. So isn't that funny? Like, my drama level was like at a ten – so was hers, by the way. But mine was at a ten because I thought someone might have been hurt; hers was at a ten because she had worked herself up into a level ten drama over something that easily could have been treated as a one drama, in my mind.

So she was really in a state and other people were calling her and she was wanting to talk to the district or the school and she was totally upset about it. And so I said, "Hey, call me later when you're calm." So later that night, she texted me and she's, like, "They're going to kick her out; call me."

And I was like, oh my gosh they're going to kick her out of school because of this thing. Maybe this is more serious than I thought. So I called her right back and I said, "What do you mean they're going to kick her out?" And she goes, "Oh, well they're going to kick her out of this election that she's a part of." And I was like, "Oh my gosh, stop sending me texts that are so dramatic. What is going on?"

And she asked me – she said, "Here's my plan. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to go into the school and talk to the principal and then I'm going to hire an attorney and get the district involved and I'm going to really handle this. And by the way, all of the other people that I think should be punished for this same social media thing, I've provided all the evidence for that."

And I was like, "Whoa, slow your roll on this." And this is my friend, so I'm not coaching her; I'm just telling her exactly what she should do. And I said, "Hey, I think that the school has rules, the rules were broken, there's consequences for that and that's it and we just move on. And it doesn't matter that anyone else did it, it matters that your daughter broke a rule and

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there's a punishment and that's the end of it. Like, we can just move on with our lives. Is it unfortunate that she broke the rule? Yeah, but okay."

Now, that's what happens when you break things down to just the facts and you don't make them mean anything. So the facts are there was a rule; it was clearly stated. The rule was broken and there's a punishment for breaking the rule and that's it; move on.

And when you take those facts and make them mean anything other than the facts, you can create a lot of unnecessary drama. So she was creating drama in her mind of the injustice of it all, that is was unfair that her daughter was being singled out, that there were lots of impropriety things in terms of how this rule break was kind of exposed and my friend was seriously – it was almost like – and I know that you guys can relate to this personally. I know I can too.

Once you're locked into an injustice of something, you can like lose your ever-living mind over it and become all consumed with the craziness of trying to seek justice. That's exactly what was happening to her. And so when this thing happens, what you need to do when this happens to you in any situation – and the way that you will know that it might be happening to you is you will feel a sense of danger and fear and anxiety.

And it won't be like that vague underlying – it will be acute and it will feel like something needs to be solved immediately and something is dangerous. You want to, whenever you're in a situation like that, you want to take a breath and say, "What are the facts?"

I'll give you another example. I had a client a while ago who was completely freaking out about her financial situation and she came to be because she wanted coaching. She had several properties that her family had purchased that were income properties and she was having trouble getting them rented and having trouble paying all the bills on them and was afraid that she would lose them and she was afraid she might lose her own house.

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And she was, like, seriously in a state of legitimate panic as if a lion were chasing her and not able to function because of her terror around losing these investment properties, which I can relate to, right. You're in a situation financially, you have an expectation of where you are financially, it's not that way and you can make it mean, like, everybody's going to die when it doesn't mean anything like that.

And so when I had her explain to me, like, exactly what the deal was, she listed through her properties. And of course, when you say it like, "Well I own a property here and I own a property here and I own a property here and I have the house that I live in and I'm trying to sell everything but it's not selling and I don't want to lose money. And if I lose money..."

And I said, "What does it mean if you lose money? What does it really mean? What's the worst case scenario here?" And of course, when we get to the worst case scenario, factually, when we aren't dramatizing it, when we're just saying factually I won't have any of these houses. But what will I have? I'll still have money. I'll still have a house that I can live in. I'll still have my family. I'll still have my pets. I'll still have me. I'll still have my health, right.

It's like all of a sudden, all of the drama becomes so much less significant because she had spun herself into this, "If I lose all this money, I will be worthless," was really what she was telling herself. And so the panic was incredible and it was making it so she was non-functioning. She couldn't even make clear decisions about what to do with these investment properties because she was so freaked out by her own story.

And so, I want you to think about the stories that you tell yourself and make sure you're distinguishing those stories from what's actually happening. Because we create dramas – stories – about other people and about our own situation that are literally fiction. They are fiction in our own minds and they create the same reaction as if we were reading a great fiction novel or watching a horror drama on the movie screen.

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It's as real as that feels. You know how scared you are in a movie? That's real fear, right. You're experiencing real fear even though the story isn't true. I just went and watched that movie the Quiet Place with my kids. You like genuinely are terrified, even though you know it's a movie. And that's the same thing that happens to us. Like, we tell ourselves these stories and we become really immersed in our stories, not recognizing that they're optional.

So the last example I'll give you is I had a client who was struggling with a relationship at work. She felt very competitive with this woman at work. And this woman at work was very rude to her and very competitive back to her and it was causing her all sorts of stress and she was trying to win at the game of coworker against coworker. I mean, she was losing sleep and just stressing out, freaking out.

And at the end of the day, she was making this woman into this villain and this adversary, really, in her life and they were both selling the same thing and they were competing against each other in terms of, like, bonuses and stuff like that. But beyond that, they were basically very, very similar women because they're in the same job doing the same thing, selling the same thing and both wanting to win.

And so, instead of seeing her as an adversary, she could have seen her as a colleague, as someone who was working with her, literally on her same team. And then the drama there would have been much less significant. And so, I always say to my clients, especially when it comes to businesses and building businesses, there's facts and then there's thought drama.

And in order to build a business, you have to be able to separate the two because if you let thought drama drive your actions, you will do some crazy-ass things that are not useful. So I was talking to one of my colleagues the other day and she was talking about some of this work that she'd been doing trying to up her marketing and increase her sales and it wasn't working.

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And at that point, you can decide that you're a failure and you're not worthy and that you can't be a life coach and you can't create a big business. Or you can just look at the facts and say, "Okay, what I'm doing isn't working; I'm going to try something else." It really is as simple as that.

This plus this plus this is not giving me the result I want. I just need to change the equation. It doesn't mean any dramatic thing about my life. And I think a lot of people will say that their life is genuinely dramatic, like they genuinely have a lot going on and I want to counter that with saying that, really, how you look at everything is a choice.

So if you're in a relationship that, let's say, someone in the relationship had an affair. Like, you can take that and dramatize that to such a high degree that it could destroy everyone involved – like seriously, their mental capacity in that moment. Or you can just look at the facts of it and minimize the drama and be so much more clear.

And I want to be clear that a lot of times I think we have to dramatize things so we will take action against them, quote en quote. And I want to offer that you don't have to dramatize things to take action against them. So for example, if somebody is having an affair, you don't have to lose your mind and scream and yell and be overdramatic. You can just say, "I'm leaving. This is a deal-breaker for me. I love you and goodbye."

It doesn't have to go to the extent – I think sometimes we think, in order to take action, there has to be a lot of danger and drama and angst around everything. And there really doesn't. Like, strength comes from an understanding and compassion and sticking to the facts and not creating stories that hurt you or anybody else.

So kind of swinging back to my husband and the way that he really approaches the world is all very – like his theory and his thought that leads him is that if someone does something, they probably had a good reason. And this is general things that I usually dramatize. So that person didn't call me back. They probably had a good reason.

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That person was grumpy with me on the phone today. They probably had a good reason. And so he approaches everything that way and then the story that I tell is usually much more boring than, "I think they're saying things behind my back and I think they're out to get me," which is what my brain wants to automatically do.

So, the bigger your goals, the more drama you're going to want to create and the more immobilized you can become because you have to remember that your brain creates drama in its mind and then it goes into fight or flight. And so you either are reactive and screaming and yelling and very dramatic, or you are running away or you're freezing up and not doing anything, which is also very dramatic.

And for someone who loves to create drama in my own life and to tell stories that really make me into the victim and everyone else into the villain, I have caught myself doing this throughout my life. And I think, my husband being totally unimpressed with any kind of drama has really changed my life because I'll tell him dramatic stories and he'll say, "Sounds like she was just in a bad mood today."

I'm like, "What? I think it's awful. I think it's an outrage. I'm totally offended." He's like, "Really? It doesn't seem like a big deal." And the more time I spent with him, the more I realized, like, what a better way to approach life, to like not take everything personal, not be offended by everything, not tell a story of dread and drama about every single thing that's happening; just to stick to the facts.

And what I've noticed is that when I don't get outraged and offended or freak out about something, I just simply take action from a really strong place. So for example, if somebody says something inappropriate to me or makes, like, a suggestive inappropriate action to me, there is no way that I'm going to say, "Oh that wasn't a big deal," and brush it off. That's not what I'm talking about.

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I'm talking about, like, I don't have to go into drama about it. I can just be like, "That is completely unacceptable and I will never be around you again." That's not dramatic. It's very cut and dry and it's very clear.

And so I'm talking about the kind of drama where people are like, "I'm going to cry and stay in bed for ten days over this. This is so upsetting to me." It's just like, no, this is not okay and I will not tolerate this for one second and I don't have to be dramatic about it. I can just say that's it and that's over. Or I can say I want to talk about it, in a non-dramatic way. Like, whatever the issue is, like if somebody's upset with me, I can respond to them being dramatic by being dramatic, or I can just be present with myself and be non-dramatic.

Drama comes from the stories that we tell about situations and from the way we describe situations to ourselves. So I want you to take a look at your own life, take a look at your own situations and decide how you want to tell the story. And if nothing else, I want you to recognize that you have options.

You can overdramatize something or you can minimize something in a way that serves you to take action from a non-dramatic thought drama place, but from a very factual, cut and dry, clear approach to how you want to live in the world. The benefits are it will save you from so much unnecessary stress, anxiety, and kneejerk panic that we create in our own minds.

I'll leave you with a final example of – you and I can be walking down the trail and we can notice that there's something that looks like a snake ahead of us. And we can jump and scream and run and panic and never really know was it really a snake because we ran away and freaked out. Or, we can take a deep breath, take a good look, back away slowly and understand that, yes we are taking action to protect ourselves and we are in a state of protectiveness, but we aren't creating drama and unnecessary emotion when it's not needed.

I know some of you are going to disagree with me about that snake, but it's just an example of how you can live your life in a much more, I'm going to

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say, even-keeled way and you can save the extreme emotion for passion and excitement and drive and ambition instead of using it all up with unnecessary drama and panic that doesn't serve you in your life.

Alright, my friends, have a beautiful week, I'll talk to you next week. Bye-bye.

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