

Ep 216: Vital Changes with Shira Gill



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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. I'm so excited today. I have a special, special treat for you. You guys know that I normally don't have guests on the show, but every once in a while, I get super motivated and I invite someone to come on.

So today, I'm so happy to introduce you to Shira Gill. She is here to talk about so many things. We're actually going to do a two-part series. She's going to be episode 216 and episode 217. So first, let me just welcome her and then we'll get started.

Brooke: Hello, my friend.

Shira: Hello. I'm so happy to be here.

Brooke: Yay. So why don't we start with you just telling us a little bit about you and why you're so amazing.

Shira: Okay. My pleasure. So I'm Shira, and I run a company that is kind of a hybrid of coaching and home organization. I founded my company nine years ago when I - I'd just given birth to my first daughter. I have two daughters now. And so, I was in with all these mothers' groups, and everyone I met was overwhelmed by stuff. Overwhelmed by clutter, disorganization, and I had this kind of light bulb moment of realizing that wasn't something that I was struggling with, and I could help people. So my business was born very organically, out of just wanting to help the women in my life declutter and organize their homes.

Brooke: That's so awesome. You know what, I don't think I actually knew that about you, that you like, never struggled. Like, most of us coaches start off as a total mess, and then we solve it for ourselves. And now we teach it to other people. Like, you've just always had the understanding of all of these things that you teach, yeah?

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Shira: Yes, well, I'm a mess in many other ways but this is one area where I think as a young kid, I was a child of divorce, I moved a lot, had joint custody and went back and forth every day between homes, and I think actually my need for organization was born out of that. So going back and forth, having two sets of things, multiple homes, and just feeling like my world was a little bit in chaos, I think I realized one thing I could have control over was my physical environment. So my mom says I was always kind of pottering around my room and organizing and streamlining and I think it was a form of self-care for me.

Brooke: That's so interesting. You know, you and I both are super organized, have very minimalist lifestyle, very clean homes, and I was the same way when I was a kid. I was very - I was always like, organizing my room and cleaning it up and getting rid of clutter. So I think it's fascinating that this can all start when we're kids. But there are so many people that are listening that do not have this wonderful trait that we have, and I have lots of - even my friends come into my house, they're like, "Oh my gosh, how do you keep your house so organized? How do you - where's all your stuff?" is what they say, basically.

Shira: Right, yes, I get that too.

Brooke: I think they're going to find it in the closet.

Shira: Yes, I mean, I think right now more than ever, we are a nation overwhelmed by too much stuff, and I think we've reached a real tipping point where our physical possessions have become more suffocating than liberating. And I think that's really a challenge that most people are up against right now is kind of navigating how does their stuff impact their lives, and I think for most people, they're finding negatively at this point. So yeah, so I work with people to completely shift their mindsets about what they own and set up a home that reflects and supports their life and their values, instead of making things more difficult and overwhelming.

Brooke: Yeah, and what's so interesting about all of this work for me, and the reason why I include it in my work - we work on this in Self-Coaching

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Scholars and the reason I'm having it on the podcast is because I think a lot of people think home organization is about an activity that you do or a talent that you have and what you teach and what we both know is that it has to do with your mind as well, and how you think about - in your life, how you think about your home and how you think about organization is really reflected in your house and how it looks. So I love that you do both. So it's such a perfect combination I think in your business. And you guys, while you're listening to this, if you're at your computer, you have to go to Shira's website because it is so beautiful, and she has the most beautiful pictures and it's shiragill.com. So you got to go check it out while we're talking. But pay attention to what we're saying. So here's what we're going to do. We're going to talk about - in this episode we're going to talk about vital changes and how one change, doing one thing can change everything. And then in the second episode of this series, we're going to talk about organization in general. Of course, we will sprinkle in a little minimalist, but because I've already done an episode on that, I didn't want that to be our main focus although Shira and I can totally geek out on that as well. And it is a huge part of organization, but we're going to stick to those two topics today, and then we'll tell you about you can get some really cool free stuff from Shira. So let's start with how one thing can change everything. And here's why I want to start here, is when I talk to people about organizing their lives and their homes, they immediately imagine their entire house and their car and their storage unit, and their lake house, and they get so overwhelmed that they don't do anything. So how do you deal with someone who's coming to you and wants their whole house organized but can't even think about where to start?

Shira: Yeah, so when I walk into a house, that is generally most people feel like every square foot has room for improvement. So I like to really just find one small area to focus on and it almost doesn't matter which area because the point is just to start taking action. So like, if you think your entire kitchen is a mess, I would say great, do your junk drawer. If you think your entire closet is a mess, I would say, open your sock drawer. So what I found also is that people are in such a state of kind of overwhelm and paralysis when it comes to their living spaces that they overestimate the

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amount of time that it will take to declutter and organize. So it's just like recently, I had to do my taxes and I was in a total state of overwhelm about my taxes, and it actually gave me a lot of empathy for my clients because I was just spinning around how complicated it was going to be and how much time it was going to take. And then when I finally sat down and just put my head down and did my taxes, it took under an hour. And I was like, I spent more than an hour obsessing about my taxes. So this is what I find is people feel like they're in so deep they'll never get out, but then when they just take one small concrete project and tackle it, it like, suddenly triggers this sense of I can be successful, I can organize, I can take action, they start seeing transformation and results immediately. And I find this work becomes really addictive for people. So it's like, once you get over that little hump, really a cascade of positives can happen where you start - it starts having a ripple effect where you suddenly see yourself as someone - you were talking about in a past podcast the minimum baseline, and I felt like it related so well to this work because, you know, if you want to run and you just put on running shoes and take a walk or a run, suddenly, you're a runner. You're a person who runs. And I think likewise, if you're a person who can organize their sock drawer, suddenly, you're a person who can organize. You're a person who takes action and creates results for themselves.

Brooke: Yeah, it's so interesting. It's just like that meta skill. And here's the way that - like, when we think about it with coaching, like, I'll have someone come to me with this huge problem. They'll just think, "I'm just not worthy," or, "I overeat all of the time," or, "I don't have any good relationships." And that's a pretty overwhelming, you know elephant to handle. And so, we want to do like, one little bite at a time. And so, one of the things that I will say to them is like, give me a specific example. And I think what happens is people look at their houses and their houses are so cluttered, and they feel like they're overwhelmed and they're unorganized, and there are so many dimensions to that, right? So the first dimension is what caused it to get that way? Like, where was our mental space that we weren't able to keep up with the house and we kept accumulating and it didn't stay organized? The other piece about it is how we have - many of us have shame about it,

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right? So we don't want to have people come over, we don't even want to look at it, we start avoiding it, it just keeps getting worse. And so, I think when we're able to just focus on one specific area, what it does is it helps the mind understand that it is possible to change. And when we start - I love, love, love that you start with one small area and that it's something that you can do from start to finish within about an hour period, if not shorter. Because it shows you that there is a process and it can be completed. The other thing that I love, love, love about it is that you see a little bit of change and you experience the effect of it, and like you said, it like, creates the desire for even more. And I think dividing up the house and conquering it in separate little sections is so, so, so important. And I know that your new project is all about the closet, and we'll talk more about that because I think the closet is so, so, so important, but let's talk about why you chose the sock drawer - or maybe you could give some examples, maybe with other clients you didn't use the sock drawer, you've used other things. But I would love to hear some examples of how you've used this approach with other clients.

Shira: So I recently had a wonderful client, Meg, and she was so overwhelmed in every room of her house she felt was cluttered and disorganized, she had two kids, a dog, didn't know where to start. So in her case, we actually decided to just start with her junk drawer. And I said, "You know what we're going to do, we're going to set a timer for 15 minutes, and we're just going to take everything out of your junk drawer, decide what you want to keep and what you want to get rid of, and then we're going to put back in a systematic way and organize it." And we set a timer, she could wrap her head around this because it was just 15 minutes, and we actually were done in 11 minutes.

Brooke: Wow.

Shira: Got rid of about 70% of what was in there, was just, you know, nonsense. It just landed there like bouncy balls and jacks and trash. So she was able to just focus on - I think her brain was able to kind of relax knowing this is 15 minutes, it's one little drawer, I've got this. And it was so

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interesting because just seeing her reaction to this junk drawer, like, she was like, a kid in a candy store. She was so delighted with herself.

Brooke: Totally.

Shira: And she could not believe - you know, she said, "I have been staring at that messy junk drawer for 30 years." She had owned her house for 30 years, and you know, it was a drawer that she was in a fair amount, that brought her some degree of stress on a daily basis, and 11 minutes, done. And so, I think just having that experience, what she told me was it allowed her to kind of start believing in herself and her capacity to be an organized person. She had never identified as an organized person. And so suddenly - and I think also because the skill of organization is the same whether you're doing a junk drawer or a closet or a whole garage, or a storage unit, the process is the same. So I think having mastered the process with her junk drawer, she suddenly kind of had this breakthrough of realizing, "Oh, I'm a person who's capable of organizing, that means I can apply the same set of skills and process to any area in my home."

Brooke: Right. And here's the other piece that I want to say about this. Whether you're talking about your junk drawer, I think you could do this with like, the glove box in your car, I think - you know, you said you use it with your sock drawer. I think a lot of people think that organizing those areas don't matter. It's a junk drawer, there should be junk in there. And you know what I think the other area is for other people that kills me? When I go to people's houses - you must really have this. I have this a little, but you must really have it. I go into other people - to get a glass of water, in their glass cupboard. I'm like, "Oh no. This is a no. First of all, why are there mugs in here?" And they're all different glasses and they're all shoved in there, and you know the ones in the back haven't been touched in years, and I think people think it doesn't matter. It's glasses.

Shira: Right.

Brooke: But it does matter. And I think the junk drawer matters and the sock drawer matters and the glasses matter. And underneath the sink in

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the bathroom matters and that closet that nobody opens matters. Tell me why it matters.

Shira: Well, so I think all of these things, they're physical and mental stimulation, right? And so, when you're constantly seeing clutter and disorganization, it's extra energy that you have to expend, even if it's on an unconscious level, it's clutter in your brain. And so, I think even when you just start like - with your example of the glasses, like, that's one I do a lot is I just say pick your favorite eight glasses. Pick your favorite eight mugs. Let's get rid of the 39 others. And people are like, stunned. They will literally email me and say, "I went to get a glass of water this morning and it was like going to the spa. Like, opening my cupboard was this whole new experience." I think people don't even realize until they kind of get the kind of sweet taste of the after, how much it was weigh on you on a day-to-day basis. All of those areas, your wallet, your handbag, all of those areas, if you take just a few minutes to declutter and streamline and be more intentional, it makes you feel better in all areas of your life. I really believe that.

Brooke: So now, most people - this is another reason why I think it's so smart of you to have people start with smaller areas to practice getting rid of things. Now, you and I have laughed about this before where you just have like, no problem with people getting rid of things, and you have no problem getting rid of things and I have no problem getting rid of things. But this is a real issue for people. They don't want to get rid of that glass that they got, it's like a plastic glass that they got at that baseball game 25 years ago, like, it reminds them of their grandpa or whatever. I think it's really hard. People really genuinely struggle with this. So how do you work with people that even if it is their junk drawer, even if it is their glass cupboard, why they have such a hard time?

Right. Well, so I think that clutter is caused by fear and I think scarcity thinking and fearful thinking is what prevents people from letting go of clutter. And so, I think people walk around asking themselves the wrong questions. So what I find most of my clients have been asking themselves

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are questions like, "What is this is useful one day?" Or, "Somebody gave this to me, what if they find out I've gotten rid of it and they're mad at me?" Or, "Did I pay a lot of money for this item?" And I think all of those are rooted in kind of fear and scarcity thinking, and will keep you stuck. So what I like to do is coach my clients to reframe things and start asking themselves different questions and seeing their space through a lens of wanting to transform it and wanting to create something wonderful for themselves.

Brooke: Yes.

Shira: Some of my favorite questions are does this item support my current values and priorities? Would I buy this item for full price today?

Brooke: Yes, that's my favorite one. Would I buy this again? People are like, no, I would...

Shira: I wouldn't even buy it in the bargain bin. Or like, would it impact my daily life not to have this item? Is the item worth the space it's taking up in my home? And one of my real favorites is is this item adding value to my life right now?

Brooke: Yes.

Shira: So I think a lot of people can get really stuck in the past thinking or future thinking, and I like to really get people focused on who they are right now, what their values are right now, and let's focus on creating the life you want to lead. Does this stuff support that vision?

Brooke: Yes, it's so true. So much of what I teach at the school is reflected so beautifully in our homes. I - when I first started learning about coaching, Martha Beck told me this idea that like, how we describe our homes is really how we're describing ourselves. And you know, when you have someone describe like, their closet or have someone describe that room that no one goes into, they're revealing so much about their psyche, and I really do believe that that is true. I think my home is truly a reflection now of

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where my head is now. The clarity. And there's got to be something to the mind of a teenager and how their room looks.

Shira: Absolutely. Yes. Transitional.

Brooke: Yes, it's so - I go into - and you know what's so fascinating, and let's just touch on this quickly is I'll go into my son's room, and like, literally, he hasn't - his leg is still kind of in his jeans. It's like, it hasn't been pulled all the way out, he's laying on this bed, and I think like, how can you live in this room? Don't you have any sense of like, wanting order or wanting cleanliness? And I think - he's like, "Yeah, I do. I do want it and I appreciate it when it's clean," but he like, can't get himself to care enough to change it. And I think so many of our clients feel that way too. And that's why we have to bring in reinforcements, we have to bring in people like you to help us.

Shira: Yes, and I think having - starting with the clarity. Even I work with teenagers sometimes, and I always start with them because they're in this position of, you know, their mom always saying like, "Clean up your room," and you know, nagging and haranguing them, so I like to start with the complete opposite angle and say, "What's important to you right now in your life? Like, what's going on? What's fun? And does your room reflect that?" And even teenagers can tap into - you know, like, I'm really into skateboarding, or I'm really into this hobby. I'm like, "Great, then why is your skateboard under, you know, two pounds of dirty laundry?"

Brooke: Right.

Shira: Let's focus on displaying that and giving it a place of honor and respect of your room so you can grab it when you want to go skateboard. But I think it's always coming back to, you know, the values and the vision of who are you, what do you care about, and is your stuff serving you, or is in the way?

Brooke: Yes, it's so true. It's so true. So I want to end this episode by really emphasizing the point that a lot of you will think that it's too insurmountable and that you don't even want to tackle looking at the clutter or the

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organization of your house or your office or whatever. And that it won't matter if you only focus on one drawer. And I want to tell you, and I want to encourage you to try us out. Like, I want to encourage you just to do this one exercise with us, and it's not even about the organization or the house being clean, or the drawer being pretty. It's really about the mindset and the skill process that you will go through as you create that. And I know that Shira has a free opportunity for you guys to try this out with her whole entire system, she's giving it to you for free to focus on one single sock drawer. Now, what do you think people are thinking right now when I say the sock drawer?

Shira: I think they're like, "Who cares about my sock drawer?" You know, like, it's fine, it'll always just be a sock drawer. Why would that matter?

Brooke: And tell me what you think people's sock drawers look like right now.

Shira: Oh my god. I can tell you because I mean, I've seen hundreds of sock drawers, but this is funny because when I put this freebie together, I actually did my husband's sock drawer, and the things that I found in my own home I was like, "What is happening here?" I have a very organized home, but like, there are some spaces like my husband's sock drawer, you know, I had let him do this thing there. Like, no more my friends. So what I found in my husband's sock drawer was literally like, you know, iPhone speakers, wires, gum wrappers, I was like, "What is happening?" You know, this is the home of a professional organizer, so I can only imagine - but you know, I feel like most people have mismatched socks, old socks, socks with holes in them, things that are not socks. So items that randomly land there that need to go elsewhere. Trash. Literally trash. So I think this exercise, it's 15 minutes, and I really do think that it can change everything, and just at the very least to see yourself taking action and to get unstuck and to see some physical transformation happen.

Brooke: Yes. So excited for you guys. So I want you to go to Shira's website, shiragill.com, opt in for this freebie, and I want you to do the exercise, do the program that she's offering you there before you listen to

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the next podcast. Because in the next podcast, we're going to talk about organization and we're also going to give you an invite to join us and when I say us, I mean Shira, and I'm just going to be a passenger along for the ride. Now, what's really interesting is I'm very organized, and I'm like - my house is very clean, but I am going to go through this process with you guys, all that want to join Shira and her program. So I'm excited for her to be able to tell you about that next week, so make sure you join us then. Until then, have a wonderful week, get that sock drawer totally sparkling, and we definitely want you to take pictures. So when you join us in our Facebook group, you can share it with us. Alright my friends, talk to you next week.

Shira: Bye, see you next week.

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