

Ep #219: Listening Hard



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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.

What is up my friends? Hey, I want to hug y'all. I love you guys so much. Seriously, I feel like having a podcast has been the best thing I've ever done in my life, and it's because of the relationship that I have with you guys. I was just recording earlier a podcast with Amy Porterfield, and it's so fascinating because I've known Amy for years. We are best friends. She hasn't known it but we have been best friends, and she has been listening to my podcast recently, maybe for the past year.

And so, we got on the phone together and we both knew each other so well we had like, this instant rapport, this instant connection with each other and we had never like, talked to each other in any depth way before. And I know that I feel so close to her because I listen to her podcast and I know that many of you feel that way towards me, and so I just want to give you all a hug. I know exactly what it's like to listen to a podcast that you really like and I want you to know that I think about you all, all of the time.

Isn't that crazy? Like, we've never met but I think about you all the time, and what do you want to learn and what do you want to hear from and what matters to you. So it's kind of interesting. You guys are always on my mind and I know that sometimes my voice is in your head. So it's super fun to think about.

Alright, so I am going to give you a tool today that will be super useful and super helpful even though it's simple. And so, I don't want you to be like, oh, that's easy and not apply it. So the title of the podcast is called Listening Hard, and we teach this to our coaches on how to listen to their clients, but I also want to teach this to all of you for when you're talking to people who you really want to hear what they're saying.

And there's a huge difference between listening and really listening hard. And this is the difference, and here's - I'm going to kind of set it up from the

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perspective of I want you to imagine that someone's talking to you and the process that happens when people are having a conversation.

So there's someone talking to you and that person is thinking they're intention. They're thinking what they mean to say. And then there's what they're actually saying. And sometimes, what they're intending to say doesn't come out the way they're intending to say it out of their own mouth even. And then there's you that's hearing what they say and then you're interpreting what they say.

So there's like, four layers to this communication. And a lot of times, we don't ever listen to what they may be meaning. We're much more interested in what we are making it mean. So I want to make sure that's really clear. There's the person's intention in what they're saying, and then there's your interpretation of what they're saying.

What is actually said goes in the circumstance line of the model. That is the circumstance. But what we think about what they say determines how we feel. So there's the circumstance of what they said, then there's the thought you have about what they said, and that determines what you feel.

So many times, my students and my clients say to me, "Well, what they said hurt me. What they said frustrated me. What they said angered me." Impossible. That is not what happens. What happens is they say something and then your thought causes your emotion.

So this is such great news for us because we have to be aware that nobody has the power over us to create our emotion. Only we do. And when we understand that, it's so much easier to listen hard. And the way that we listen hard is by trying to understand all three components of what is going on.

So you're listening hard for what they are intending, you're listening hard for what they're actually saying, and you're listening hard to what you're making it mean, what you're thinking. And you may be like, "Okay Brooke, so I'm having a conversation with someone and I'm trying to like, dissect all

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of these things that are going on at once." And at first that will be challenging and at first, that's not something that will come easily to you.

So in the beginning, what you'll do is you'll evaluate conversations after they've happened. And I do this very often with my students in our coaching sessions is they'll be telling me a story about where someone "hurt their feelings" and what we'll do is we'll basically break down what the person said, what my client thought about what they said, and what we imagine the person intended and why they said it.

I know that we can't ever really determine why someone said something unless we ask them, but it's still a really important piece of the exercise to ask what you think they may have intended. Because I don't know why, but our brains don't consider it.

So I give the example a lot where like, a husband or a wife will come home late from work and the person will say to me like, "Oh my gosh, my wife doesn't respect me because she comes home late from work. And she said that she was going to be running late or whatever."

And I'll say, "Do you think that their intention was to disrespect you? Do you think they're like, hey, I want to disrespect my husband today so I think I'll come home late from work?" And any time I ask that question to my client, they're usually like, "Oh, no, I don't think that's what they intended." And I said, "But isn't that interesting? That's how you're choosing to interpret it, that they don't respect you."

But when you ask what they intended by that, most people are like, "Oh, they just ran out of time, they had so much to do at work, they're trying to catch up at work, they're trying to impress their boss at work," whatever it is. When you write down, oh, this is what they must have been thinking before they said that, then you sometimes get a very different perspective.

So I'm going to give you a few ways of looking at this that will be really helpful. You ask yourself, why is this person saying this? Now, be careful. You want to find the answer to that question in their brain. Not your brain.

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Are you with me? So if someone says to you, "I don't like you." You want to ask yourself, why are they saying that? Now, if you find the answer in your brain, your brain will come up with all of the reasons why you're not likable, it will come up with all the reasons why this person is a jerk, and they're saying rude things, right? Our brains are immediately going to go into defense and interpret that in a way that is seemingly protective.

So that's why you don't want to go to your brain for the answer. So they say I don't like you, you want to ask why are they saying this and then go to their brain for the answer. What are they thinking and feeling that would cause them to take the action of saying this?

I know this sounds super simple, but it's a game changer. Because as soon as you look into their brain for why they might be saying this, your brain is open to interpreting with more compassion. And so usually when you think someone's saying this, they're probably scared, or they think I've hurt their feelings, or I did something they didn't like, or they're blaming me for what's going on in their life, then all of a sudden, you're like, oh, usually when people say they don't like you, you should respond by saying, "Oh, they're very confused."

I'm very likable, right? And instead of us trying to reconcile it in our own brain, we can start understanding people from that sense of compassion. So question number one, why is this person saying what they're saying? And listening hard means you're going to hear what may be going on in their brain.

Now, that question alone and that interpretation alone will completely change your way of interacting with people. The other thing you can do is ask them, why are you saying that? And they may be able to answer from their own brain in a way that clarifies something for you. But even if you don't ask that question to them, listening hard means you are listening for the intention behind what they're saying, not just what they're saying.

And when you ask yourself that, you want to look at the model in their brain. So let's review what that is. The action - when you think about the

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model, the action is what they're actually saying to you. The feeling is what's driving them to say it and the thought is what's causing their feeling, right?

So when you ask yourself, "why are they saying this, what are they feeling and what are they thinking that's causing them to say this?", it's listening hard. It's everything. It changes how you show up because you get out of your brain and you start being in a more compassionate place to understand other people and understand their brains.

Let's do one more example. Let's say your boss comes in and says, "I need you to take care of this right away, it should have been done yesterday." Now, you're going to ask yourself, "Wow, why is he saying this?" Now remember, if you go to your brain, what is your brain going to say? Because you're inadequate, you're not doing a good job, you're probably going to get fired, you didn't perform well enough. That's what you're going to get from your brain. It's not good stuff, right?

But remember, we're not listening only to our own brain, we want to listen to what we think is going on in their brain. So when they come in and say that, we can ask ourselves, why are they saying that? What's going on in their brain? They're under the gun, they're worried they're not going to get it done, they want to make sure they're communicating clearly, whatever it is.

And then from that place, you can see where they're coming from, possibly from their brain, and you can take action based on a much more compassionate, motivated role versus being defensive with yourself and with them because of your own brain.

Because you're going to say in your brain, the reason why I said that is because he's going to fire me, and then you're going to function under that, which you've just made that up in your brain. That may or may not be true, right? So what's fascinating is when you actually take the time to listen hard and you actually take the time to think, "What is actually going on in their brain?"

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Most of the time, you're going to be like, "They don't want to fire me, they're just worried about this work getting done." It changes your perspective, and it helps you stay out of your own reactive brain and question thoughts.

Okay, listening hard. Going to do a quick recap. When someone's speaking to you, there's what they're thinking, there's what they're saying, there's what you're hearing, and then there's what you're thinking. When you listen hard, you ask yourself, "Why are they saying this?" And you look into their brain, not yours to see what they could be thinking.

It's a very clarifying experience. And I'm going to end with this: those of you who are coaches or those of you who are psychological professionals, this is how you hold space. This is how you are functioning in your relationship with all of your clients.

But there's one piece that a lot of schools don't teach that I always teach my clients, and it is this: when you are listening to someone speak, and especially if they're speaking to you about you, and you are asking yourself, "Why are they saying this? What is going on in their mind?" sometimes, what you will find is that the reason they are saying this is because of something very negative that's going on in their mind.

They may be thinking negative thoughts about you, they may be judging you. And you want to make sure that you don't go to your brain once you find that out. You want to just ask why again. And why would they be thinking that? And that will drop you into compassion.

So if you are a coaching professional and they say something to you, you're always going to be thinking what is the thought behind what they're saying, and then you want to question again, but why are they having that thought. It's a beautiful thing to be able to understand people and take the time to listen hard to them. It will change your relationships.

Alright you guys, enjoy that one. Talk to you soon. Talk to you next week. Bye.

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