

Ep #233: Acceptance Is Not Indifference



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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Ep #233: Acceptance Is Not Indifference

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, how are you, my friends? How are you? Like, really, how are you? Super good today. Super good. I'm super excited to talk to you. I've been doing a lot. I just got off the phone with one of my colleagues and actually one of my friends who I'm going to be doing a project with.

I think I mentioned to you guys on the podcast that I'm doing a new project called Coach Tank, and so what I'm doing, it's kind of my play on Shark Tank, and what I'm doing is I'm working with really talented coaches who have really great ideas and really great and aligned passions with me to create projects and even courses together to do that kind of what we're calling venture collaboration.

Anyway, I just got off the phone with one of my friends, and we're creating an entire management program around founders similar to me. Women especially, who are building entrepreneurial companies and are breaking out of the part where we're doing everything ourselves and then creating systems and hiring people. It's basically what I've been doing this year. I've been sharing my journey with you on the podcast and I have learned a lot, my friends. I have been in the trenches learning it and creating systems to really produce a self-managing company and I think I've done a pretty dang good job so far. And so, I have a lot of amazing tools that are really working well in my corporation and making my business really thrive.

And I don't have the time to coach other executive women on how to run their companies the way I do. I really want to focus mostly on my coaches and helping them develop their businesses, but one of my girlfriends, that is her specialty. She works with executives, so we are going to collaborate on a project and do it together and really, I'm going to teach her and we're going to collaborate on creating all the tools that I use in my company so we can teach them to other people. And I think it will be a game changer for most of them.

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We have people come in to our organization that are blown away by how we're running it and the fact that none of us have to work more than 40 hours a week, that we all take six weeks vacation, that we have such a small team but we're able to produce at such a highly efficient level, I think first and foremost is a testament to The Model, but second of all is to the systems we put in place.

So anyway, I just got off the phone with her and we were talking and collaborating on that, and we're probably going to do a retreat in the Caymans. So if you're a woman executive founder, keep your ears open because we're going to rock that out. You know, the Caymans is my favorite.

So but today we're going to talk about acceptance versus indifference because of all the things I teach, I think this is one that I get most pushback on. And of course, I love that because it means that your brain is resisting it because it likes to stay in its old patterns and as soon as your brain starts resisting something, then there's always that window of opportunity for me to encourage you to try something new, and that's how we change our brain.

So one of the concepts that I've taught you all is that life is 50/50, and people get mad about it because they don't want their life to be 50% negative and the question is why not? What's so wrong with the negative part of life? And then all of a sudden it becomes a change in perspective where negative doesn't even really have to be negative. It can be just all in your perception of it.

So when I have people say, "No, that's not really true, you don't really have 50/50," it's a mental construct so it's not something that's like, debatable with science even though people try and like, throw science at me. What is interesting is it's all subjective. It depends on what do you interpret as a negative experience? Would you put on the side of the negative 50/50 benign emotions like boredom and apathy and that sort of thing? And for me, I do put them there. I put them on that negative side because most of

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us try to avoid those emotions. And so any emotions that we're trying to avoid I like to put on the negative.

But I experience 50/50 of negative and positive and the way that I think about that really sets me free from trying to always feel positive all of the time, which then lets me approach my relationship with negative emotion in a much more positive way, which is like, what? It's kind of a mind twister. So as soon as you accept that life is 50/50, then all of a sudden it doesn't feel like 50/50 anymore because the negative part that you've now accepted as part of life is kind of seeded in this space of acceptance, which makes it less painful and less negative. What? So confusing and trippy.

But that is how the magic works. And so, people will say, "Well, it just feels like it's 50/50 negative, it isn't really 50/50 negative," which makes me laugh. Like, highly educated people try and explain this to me. I'm like, listen, what matters is does this theory serve you? Not whether we're going out there and running experiments on it, but when you think about your life like this, what it does is it completely sets you free from thinking something's gone terribly wrong if you're not happy all the time. You're not supposed to be happy all the time. There is no happiness without sadness, my friends.

So what I'm trying to encourage you to do is to embrace the contrast in the world as a human experience as not a terrible thing but as the negative being part of the deal, as being part of the experience. And knowing that negative is what makes the positive possible, which makes it awesome. How can the negative be awesome? Because without it, we don't have the positive.

So if negative makes positive possible, then negative is positive in that way. Stay with me, my friends. Okay, so let's talk about where most people get mad at me. They get mad when I talk to them about abuse and about the horrible things that happen. Child abuse, and rape, and starvation, all of those horrible things that happen in the world, everyone likes to take it to the extreme with me, which I love that we do that because then we can have a really intense talk about it. But it also includes people being rude,

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people not driving the way you want, and your cat crying at you too hard and all of the other things that irritate us or take us to that negative side. It includes all of those things.

And most of the time, when I have a client come to me, what they want to do is change the "cause" of the negativity. So if there are people in the world that are doing negative things, the answer is to get rid of them. And if there are horrible things happening in the world, get rid of all those people and change all those people. And if there's people that are rude or that are bad drivers, we need to do something about it.

Well, listen, if that worked, we would have already taken care of that. We'd be done with it. That doesn't work. We can't eliminate the negativity in the world by changing people that are negative because people get to do whatever they want and we've been trying to change them.

So what a lot of us do is instead - we have this theory that we need to change all the "negative" things in the world, and then we can't change those things and then we get very cynical and negative and hateful, which I've seen happen in people's circumstances with their jobs, in their circumstances in politics, in their circumstances in their relationships. They define those things are negative and then they get very cynical about them and then they think their negativity is justified and then they just feel terrible all of the time.

And it's because they're rejecting the reality of what is true, which is that there will always be death. Let's go to the furthest extreme. Now, we've all pretty much accepted that we're all going to die. Now, does that mean that we are indifferent to death? Does it mean that we don't care about death? No, of course we care about death. But we know, we've accepted it. We've accepted it.

Now, a lot of people would like to change the reality that the human body dies, right? And that's what a lot of our stories about the afterlife are about because it's very difficult to accept that we're going to die. And so we have ways in our brain of constructing what death means so it's not so terrifying,

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and I think that's a beautiful thing. I think that accepting death as part of the human experience is imperative to being free as a human.

If you spend your entire life trying to fight death, you will always be in fear and scarcity. Now, let me tell you some very bad news. Your brain is programmed to always be avoiding death. Your brain is programmed for survival. It rejects the idea of death. It doesn't want there to be death and it thinks everything is dangerous. So you - the bigger part of you with your prefrontal, with your cortex, have probably - if you're a high functioning human - accepted the fact that you and everyone else will die and that we really don't have control over when that might be. We could all die today. That is the truth. One of us could die today. None of us could die today. We have no control over any of that.

So when I ask my students to accept that death is inevitable, they can agree to that even though they don't think death is a great thing. They're not like, super excited about it, they can see that it's part of the deal, right? We all know that the children that we bring into this world will die at some point. Now, we hope it'll be later, after we're gone, but we also know that it may not be. It could be earlier. We could experience our own child's death. I mean, many people do. And we do that willingly with the acceptance that death is inevitable at some point.

Now, all I'm suggesting is that that is a very healthy thing to do and it makes it so even though we've accepted that that's a possibility, we still live a full, abundant, wonderful life. We don't use that as a reason to focus our life on trying to change the way the world is. And what I want to recommend is that approaching life, knowing that death is inevitable does not mean that we aren't careful. It doesn't mean that we don't try to keep ourselves safe. It doesn't mean that we don't take care of our health.

Do you see what I'm saying? Just because we've accepted that death is part of life doesn't mean that we're completely indifferent to it, meaning, well, I could die anytime so why bother to take care of myself? Why bother putting my seatbelt on? Why bother being safe if I could just die any minute?

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And that's the argument that so many of you come at me with. "Well, if I accept that abuse happens in the world, then I'm just going to be indifferent to it. I need to fight it." And I'm suggesting that you don't do that with death. You don't have to fight and go to battle against the idea that you're going to die, and it doesn't mean that you don't prevent it.

And it's the same for all of us when it comes to abuse, and murder, and rape and all those things that are inevitable part of life because they're part of our human experience. We can accept those things as part of life and stop resisting them and being so furious about them, and it doesn't mean that we'll be indifferent to them. We can still be very active in preventing them and healing from them and helping people not experience them. But we can also at the same time that we're doing that, we can also accept that yes, they are a part of our experience.

And I want to tell you that the work that I've done with my clients where they've been able to accept a few of these things that they've been fighting, it has completely set them free. Some of the biggest things that I've helped my clients accept is that the abuse that they experienced is a human experience that many humans experience, and it doesn't mean that something terribly wrong has happened that should not have happened.

And I know that that's like, such a crazy concept but it's the same with death. Like, when someone loses someone unexpectedly, if they spend a lot of time fighting that that shouldn't have been the case, they end up creating suffering on top of their pain. Unnecessary suffering on top of their pain.

So when someone dies, we can argue with it for the rest of our lives. If we are abused as children, we can argue with that for the rest of our lives. When someone is rude or cuts us off in traffic or when someone does something in our country that we don't like, we can spend a lot of time fighting about it and arguing about it and yelling about it and outraging about it, or we can accept that that is the way of the humans.

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And from there we can make decisions to take care of people and be kind to people and be compassionate to people from a place that isn't of scarcity and fighting and resistance but is from a place of love. And answering hate with hate or violence with violence is the opposite of what most of us want to do intentionally but because we are unwilling to accept reality, because we feel like we're somehow then condoning it, we spend our lives in a spin.

So I want you to think about this in terms of death. If you accept that death is inevitable and you accept that any of us could die at any moment, does that mean that you want it? That you're condoning it? That you think it's okay? You'd probably say no. But you can also see that spending your life trying your hardest to fight against it just keeps you fighting your whole life to something that is inevitable.

And so I want to help you all get the freedom that comes from accepting that 50%. The 50% of the negative emotion that we have but also the 50% of the world that isn't the way we would want it to be. And by being cynical and negative about that, we are not accepting it, we are not serving it. If you look at all of the people who have made the most tremendous advances in humanity, as far as human rights, as far as how we treat each other, what is really important to understand is that they had a vision of what they wanted. They did not spend a lot of time having fits about what was. They had ideas and visions and they lived up to those ideas and visions while at the same time accepting reality the way it was and not freaking out and fighting in a way that kept them so angry and outraged that they couldn't ever take action towards the things that they wanted.

And what I admire the most in people that enact change for the sake of humanity is their understanding of why things are the way they are, their understanding of humanity. In all of the situations where there is inequality, in all the situations where there is abuse and hate and pain, when we point our finger at another human and say, "You are not me, you are unlike me, you are evil," we are pointing our finger at humanity in general in an unaccepting way. And what you will see throughout history and throughout

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parties and throughout day-to-day interactions, when we reject each other, we make no progress.

When we focus on what it is we do want and we will create and what we want for us as humans, that is when the magic happens. Fighting against with violence in the name of peace is crazy, and so many of us do that. We fight in the name of peace. We resist, we reject, we hate in the name of love. It doesn't work that way, my friends.

The reason why I think this work is so important and the reason why I'm always telling my clients to find that person who they hate the most, the person who they struggle to love the most, because when you do the work on that person, what you're really doing is the work on yourself because when you can't find compassion and love and understanding for anyone else's humanity, you will not find it within yourself.

What I have found 100% of the time is when there is loathing, there is self-loathing. When there is outrage, there is enrage 100% of the time. And where I've seen my clients make the most progress with themselves, with their people, with their communities, with their extended communities is when they come from that place of self-love and understanding. There's a reason why people are the way they are.

I was watching a show the other night, it was really fascinating. It was like, this really old show with like, Ethan Hawk and Angelina Jolie, and I don't recommend it, it was very odd. But one of the - she was a cop in the show and one of the things that she said - she was interrogating Ethan Hawk who is one of the suspects in a murder investigation, as she was interviewing him, she did like, some tricks of the trade to see how he would react and when she went out back behind the double way mirror and she was talking to the other detectives, one of the things she said is she said, you know, sociopaths, psychopaths have a different brain than regular people. When you talk to a psychopath and you say, tree, bird, love, rape, murder, their brain doesn't change at all regardless of what word you're using. They see rape and murder and torture in the exact same light in their brain as they do trees and flowers and lawn. There's something wrong with

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their brain that they don't feel the effect of that violence different - they interpret it differently in their brain. There's something wrong with their brain.

And I just thought that was so fascinating because when we can look at people who - there's something that's gone wrong in their brain, typically and most often because of the way that they were born or the way that they were raised in such horrific abuse that that is what their brain turned into and then they became the abuser later in their life. When I can look at a serial killer or I can look at a psychopath or I can look at a murderer from the understanding that their brain is different than mine, the way that they see the world is different than mine, the reason they do the things is different than me, I can come from a place of acceptance and compassion.

Now, does that mean I accept a psychopath as someone that I want to hang out with or that I condone murder or torture or any of those things? Of course not. But what it does mean is that I accept that there are psychopaths in the world that are going to kill people because of what's wrong with their brain. And I accept that there are people in the world that will abuse children because something has gone wrong in their brain. And of course, that's my interpretation that something's gone wrong in their brain.

But I wonder how challenging and horrific it is to live the life of that and as soon as I take a minute to think what must it be like to be a person who abuses other people, what must it be like to be a person who kills other people, what is the human experience of being that, I can touch a place of compassion within me. I can find that compassion within me and it doesn't mean that I think the way they are is okay or that they should be that way.

But what it does for me is it lights the way for me to find compassion with myself, with all of my shortcomings, with all the things that I do that I wish I hadn't done, the things that my brain will have me do that I don't want my brain to have me do, and understanding how challenging it is to manage our own brains. You know, and maybe it's a totally different story when it's, you know, violence and someone that's beating other people up and that

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sort of thing, but I can on some level, I can understand what it's like to be someone I don't want to be, to do something I don't want to do, to do something that doesn't give me the life that I want to live.

And I hear some of you saying, "Well, what about the people that do want to live that way, that want to be violent, that want to hurt other people on purpose?" I can still ask why. What made that person become a person that enjoys violence? That wants that? What's going on in their brain that that's what's creating their life for them? And when I approach all other humans with curiosity and acceptance, I have so much more power in my own life. And I 100% believe that we should rehabilitate people that can be rehabilitated and that we should lock up people that murder other people 100%. Just because I accept that that's part of the human experience doesn't mean that I don't think there should be consequences for it. Of course, I do.

And when we look at it on a big level, it's much scarier, but I also want you to look at it on a smaller level. When somebody cuts you off in traffic and what your response is and how accepting you are of that, and does it mean that if you accept that someone cuts you off in traffic and that someone's always going to cut you off in traffic, does that mean that you are now a doormat? If you don't get angry, if you don't flip them off, if you don't yell at them, does it mean that you're a doormat? Does it mean that you're indifferent to your own self and that you don't care if someone cuts in front of you just because you've accepted it?

It's a really interesting question, right? If you accept that you're going to die, does it mean that you're going to die earlier? If you don't fight it, does it mean that you're going to die earlier? I think the answer is no. I think fighting death is so stressful I think the opposite could be true. So when you look at your models and you look at your circumstance line, that is neutral. Everything out there, the way that life is is neutral and your acceptance of it will set you free. Your fighting of reality will always have you in violence and that also applies to you internally.

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There are parts of you that you will not want to accept, that you won't want to have compassion for, that you won't want to be curious of. There are tendencies of your brain that you will want to reject and you won't want to accept and you'll feel like if you accept it that you're condoning it. It's not true. When you accept that something is the way it is, that's when you can start having some authority over it.

Humanness does not mean good and happy all the time, and I want to suggest that it shouldn't mean good and happy all the time, and that if you're a person that strives for good and happy all the time, it doesn't make you better than someone who accepts that it's not good and happy all the time. What if instead of approaching the world as if there's something terribly wrong with it because it doesn't fit the way we want it to be, what if we looked at it at its perfection? What if we looked at the contrast and what is as the way that it's meant to be in order for us to grow and evolve? And it doesn't mean that it will always be that way, and it doesn't mean that we don't strive for good, but we also accept that as we strive and as we change and as we create wonderful things that we will also always have that contrast.

Justifying active negativity only gets you active negativity. It feels productive to be actively negative and yet what are you producing? What is the effect of your active negativity? Of railing against someone, of yelling to someone, of being violent? Most of us reject acceptance and create more negativity to push against and resist the negativity. It feels like survival but really, it's just the justified violence.

Violence against a villain is still violence. Rage, hate, discontent, whether it's justified or not is how you experience, and I want to suggest that it doesn't have the upside. People say, "You have to get angry, you have to get upset, you have to get outraged for change to happen." I want to suggest that all you need for change to happen is a vision, and sometimes the vision comes from the contrast, and that's a beautiful thing. You see something, you don't like the way it is, you create a vision and you work towards that vision. Instead of railing against what is, you create a vision for

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what it is you want to create. Acceptance is so powerful. It's the compassion, love, and understanding of the human condition.

When a lion kills a gazelle, it's the way of lions and gazelles. We accept that as the way of it. Outrage by the gazelle would accomplish nothing. Sitting around talking about lions and how awful lions are and we got to take care of the lions, we got to get rid of the lions, we got to lock up the lions, all it does is create a lot of tension with the gazelles. So the acceptance that lions eat gazelles doesn't require that a gazelle to live in hate of the lion. It must be aware and it must adapt. In fact, it doesn't mean it's indifferent to the fact that lions eat gazelles. It's aware of it and it's careful about it. It evolves to survive.

Without lions, gazelles don't evolve as quickly. What if the lions in your life are opportunities for you to evolve? For you to become more of who you are? For you to create a vision of what you want in your life? There will always be predators and lions and death. So now what? What and who do you want to be knowing and accepting this?

Indifference means we give up and we act the victim. Acceptance means we understand and we adapt and we take care of ourselves. I want you to imagine that you can live the life of acceptance, which is not accepting that you are a victim, but is also not making yourself the villain. When you land in a mental construct that there are always going to be victims and there's always going to be villains and your relationship with yourself and the world determines on how you see those things and what they mean to you, that's when we can have non-violent evolvment.

Now, my really smart friends that go to Ivy League schools tell me that evolvment isn't a word and I still use it just to spite them because you know what I mean when I say it, right? Non-violent evolvment comes from acceptance. The process of realizing that a fact being received is valid, and once you receive the fact as valid, it doesn't, mean you agree with it. It just means that it's valid. That's when you can start creating a vision for yourself.

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Indifference means a complete lack of concern for it, and most of us aren't indifferent about the things that we can accept in our lives. So here is my challenge to you, my friends. What if you accepted that adults get to behave the way that they want? That there will always be contrasts in the world? That there's always going to be villains and there's always going to be victims? There's always going to be pain and death and abuse, and even though our definitions of those things might change and we have come a long way and we will keep moving, there will never come a time where it will all be resolved, and I don't think it's supposed to already be resolved. And when we come and we think there's something terribly wrong because there's negativity, we are missing the point of the human experience.

But when we come and we can embrace that negativity is part of it, then we can dance with our lives and include that part and accept that part and move towards it and experience it in a way that makes us feel the most alive. The alternative, my friends, is avoidance. The alternative is the indifference, is the hiding from the reality of it. The reality is not that bad.

What if nothing has gone terribly wrong? What if all the negativity, all the stuff happening in the world is our opportunity to see a higher vision for ourselves and for each other? What if I'm right about this? Try it out, even just for 30 days, try out this philosophy and see how you feel different. Acceptance is not indifference.

Have a beautiful week everybody. Talk to you soon, bye.

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