

Ep #235: Obstacle Thoughts



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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 there, my friends. Welcome to the podcast today. We are going to talk about obstacle thoughts. And I love this topic because it just takes everything that prevents us from success and simplifies it.

So let's start with what an obstacle thought is. Now, if you've been following me a while, and hopefully this isn't your very first episode that you're listening to because a lot of the episodes build on themselves and you want to make sure that you go back to at least the first 20 episodes and listen to my teachings on The Model because everything that I teach and everything that I offer you guys here is based on that underlying structure of the Self-Coaching Model.

So when you look at what you want in your life and you look at success and how you define it and the goals that you have, what I want you to know is that there's where you are now and then there's where you want to be. So for some of you, that is a behavior you want to change, for some of you it is an amount of money, for some of you it's a level of status in your job, for some of you it's a certain weight. Whatever it is for you, there's that difference between where you are now and where you want to be.

And I think that's the magic dance of life that keeps us growing. When we have something out there that we want, that gives us a purpose and a direction and a reason for overcoming any of the BS that's going on in our minds. When we don't have goals, we are more comfortable because we can just live in automatic pilot default mode, but we also don't generate any growth and any movement. And a lot of times that stagnation then turns into the problem that we then want to solve.

So I want you to imagine your goal, and most of you who have been listening to this podcast for a while, you probably have a pretty specific goal that you want to achieve in your life and you have it and it's measurable in your mind. And maybe it's a year out that you're looking at. Now, as soon

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as you set that goal, as soon as you say I want to make this much money or I want to weigh this amount or I want to get this promotion or change this job or marry the man of my dreams or the woman of my dreams, as soon as you say that, your brain will automatically flood you with reasons why that will not work.

It will immediately present you with all of the obstacles to achieving that thing. Now, most of us find this to be a very unpleasant experience because basically what it is is it's your brain shooting down your wonderful dream. And a lot of us complain that other people shoot down our dreams but no one shoots down our dreams more than our own brain. Nobody doubts us as much as our own brain.

Now, remember, our brain is well intended. It's trying to protect us. It's totally fine. But it also needs management and we also need to be aware of what it's doing. So all of the obstacles that it's presenting you is basically giving you a list of reasons why that is not yet true. So if I say I want to make \$100,000 as a life coach, immediately my brain will tell me why that's not going to happen, why it already hasn't happened, and why it's probably impossible.

And we want to listen when our brain tells us those things and I mean listen and pay attention but not believe. Because what your brain is providing you with are all your obstacles to achieving it. And if you've listened to me for a while, you know that all of our obstacles turned into strategies then become the map to getting there.

And when we don't pay attention to the obstacles, when we don't look at what's in our way of getting there, then we go into some fantasy world where there are no obstacles and that's when we avoid anything that looks like work or a challenge or something to overcome. We try and stay in a fantasy world. And when we stay there, when we're in that level of avoidance and pretending like there are no problems, we don't achieve anything.

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We achieve our goals by overcoming the obstacles between where we are now and where they are. That is the process for goal cultivation. So when I first train coaches, I know that the categories are going to be very clear of the people that come through the doors.

Now, some people will come to me and they'll say I want to make five million dollars and I'm excited about it and I think it's possible and I believe in myself and I'm going to do it. And they've never made any money as a life coach before but they're going to make five million dollars in their first year and they feel great about it. There's no concern.

So when somebody comes to me with that kind of energy, I don't want to do the job that their brain should do, which is presenting them with those obstacle thoughts. Of course, I mean, who am I to say they can't make five million dollars. But here's the thing: when there is no obstacle presented, when there's no challenge presented to the goal, my guess is usually that it hasn't been presented in a way that's believable.

Because when we're in a fantasyland, there is no reality check, right? There is no obstacle thought because it's like, I'm going to become a unicorn and then I'm going to fly and then I'm going to eat some rainbows. That would be amazing. I can really identify with that. I can feel how amazing that would be.

So then we're in fantasyland and there's nothing wrong with that. I think we should spend a lot more time in fantasyland and a lot less time beating ourselves up. But that's not going to get you to achieve your dream. Achieving your dream means setting a goal with a timeline and then being flooded with all the reasons why it's not possible.

And what we're going to do when that happens is we're going to write down all of those obstacle thoughts purposefully. So a lot of them will sound like, well, I don't know how to do that, I don't know if I can get clients, and I don't know if I have enough confidence, and I don't know how to set up a website, and I don't really know how to sell my services, and I don't know how to process money when they want to pay me. Whatever those

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obstacles are between you and your goal, you want to write all of them down. The hard ones, the easy ones, the ones that seem like you can't solve them, the ones that are easy to solve.

So the definition of an obstacle thought is any thought that produces a result that's in contrast to what you want. This is really important for you to acknowledge because sometimes obstacle thoughts seem like observations. They just seem like the truth. I don't know how to build a website seems innocent, seems like an observation. But if you think that and continue to think that and you run that through The Model, the result will be no website.

So you have to write down that obstacle thought. An obstacle thought is any thought that produces a result in contrast to what you want. So in this case, you want a website. So you can't continue to believe that you don't know how to get a website up and get a website up at the same time. What you need to do is look at that obstacle thought, see that it can be turned into a strategy that then you can implement in terms of achieving your goal.

Now, here's the other thing that's important to know about obstacle thoughts. They strengthen themselves, these thoughts, by producing evidence through you. So this is really important so if you have an obstacle thought that says I don't know how to build a website, and you believe that and then you continuously don't build a website or learn how to build a website or move towards getting a website, you will further strengthen the evidence that you don't know how.

And the thought will become more and more believable the more you think it and feel it and act on it and produce the result from it. So you can see why these obstacle thoughts need to be acknowledged because otherwise they're like strengthening themselves and breeding themselves within your own mind without you knowing it. And then what you say to yourself is, "See, I was right."

You look at the evidence that you have created by the way, and you say, "See, I was right. I didn't know how to do a website. I couldn't build my

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business because the technology was too hard." Now, that's not true at all but you've proven the thought and strengthened the thought enough that you believe it and therefore that is your reality. And I can't even tell you how many people I've seen this happen to. I'm not capable of this, I don't have enough time to do this, I can't figure this out, this is too hard.

Those thoughts are all obstacle thoughts. Those thoughts seem true. They seem valid. They seem legit. None of them are. So what you need to do is write them down and look at them and notice that many of them are habitual and unconscious so you may not even notice them the first time.

So that's why I'm always telling my students, listen, when you set a goal, I want you to try and fill up as many pages as you can with obstacle thoughts. As many as you can. Things that you have to do to get the goal, things that you don't know how to do, things that are going to be challenging, things that seem impossible. All of it. Write it down because a lot of the thoughts that just seem stream of conscious in your brain, seems like you're just observing the world are really obstacle thoughts.

Now, I want you to remember that your obstacle thoughts will prove themselves true by creating evidence, but they will also narrow your focus. So if you believe something, remember the podcast I did on confirmation bias. If we believe something is true, then that is what we look for in the world. So if we believe that people are rude, we will see tons of evidence that people are rude. If we think that people are kind, we will see tons of evidence that people are kind.

If we have an obstacle thought that we don't know how to do something or if we have an obstacle thought that we can't find enough clients or an obstacle thought that we can't make as much money as we want to make, we will see that that is true in our day-to-day life because that's what we will be inadvertently looking for.

Our brain wants certainty. It wants to be proven correct. So if you set a goal and you bring up all these obstacle thoughts, these obstacle thoughts are seeking to strengthen themselves by producing evidence but they're also

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seeking to strengthen themselves, to be more certain about themselves by finding evidence, by looking for evidence.

So our thoughts, remember, determine what we see, and our obstacle thoughts are always having us look for the wrong things. I want you to imagine that an obstacle thought is like Google. So if you're letting it do the searching on the internet, it's always going to find the evidence for why you can't do something. So unless you have intentional intent - it's like double intent - intentional intent where you create new thoughts on purpose, you take those obstacle thoughts and turn them into strategies, so for example I don't know how to build a website to I am learning how to build a website.

If we don't change them, we will always be at the effect of our current obstacle thoughts. Our unconscious obstacle thoughts will produce unconscious, undesired results.

Okay, so how we do change this? How do we really do it? It sounds nice in theory, and a lot of people understand the concept of taking obstacle thoughts and turning them into strategy thoughts and focusing on them on purpose. But very few of my students go through the work of actually doing this. And this is one of the reasons why I started Self-Coaching Scholars is because many of you listening to my podcast would hear what I was saying, you would understand conceptually, and then you would try to do it all in your head.

It doesn't work because your head is where the problem is, my friends. You don't want to go in there to solve your problems. What you want to do is put it on a piece of paper, and I'll tell you why that's so important. When you take the thoughts in your head and you put them on a piece of paper outside of your head and you can see them from your mind's eye as an external separate thing, you start to notice that all of those obstacle thoughts are optional.

And in fact, you can see if you do models on those obstacle thoughts the results that they're going to produce are going to be the exact opposite of what your goal is. This is how all goals are set up. This is why it is much

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more likely that you won't achieve your goal than it is that you will. Because something is much easier to do if it's already been done, if it already is. To change ourselves, to overcome our obstacle thoughts is the path of most resistance.

And what I'm always suggesting is let's embrace that path without resisting it. Let's go towards the hard things. Let's climb the mountain so we can get the view from the top. Is it easier to stay at the bottom of the mountain? Of course it is. Is it easier to stay a caterpillar? Of course it is. Can we be happy caterpillars? Of course we can. But then we miss out on being the butterfly, and maybe it's not better being the butterfly, but maybe it's the point. Maybe that is the way we're supposed to evolve.

So what you're going to do is once you've written down all those obstacle thoughts and you've turned them into strategies, you've turned them into plans, you've turned them into conscious thinking, conscious actions, conscious feelings and different results, you are going to have to revisit and keep working towards the new thinking that will get you the new result.

So when we revisit The Model and you look at where you are now and you look at the result that you want and you think about The Model, what has to change to be the cause of that new result? It's not optional. You can't get a new result without changing your thinking. You can't.

So how do you change your thinking into someone who gets the result that you want? You have to figure out what you're thinking now that's producing the result that you have. Those are your obstacle thoughts. Your obstacle thoughts are the thoughts you are thinking now that aren't producing the result you want.

So if you think about thoughts that produce your current weight, thoughts that produce your current level of satisfaction in your job, in your relationship, those are the obstacle thoughts. Those are the ones you first must become aware of and then you must change on purpose, and then you must practice and believe the new thoughts that will produce the new result.

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I'm going to end with something that's really important because it happens in all of my trainings. Whenever I do a coach training where I have new students coming in that want to become coaches, one of their main agendas when they come through the school is they want to know how to make their clients feel better. They want to know how do we get to rainbows and daisies and butterflies and cash.

And I totally understand that the motivation to feel better is high and the motivation to make someone else feel better is even higher. But when you're in a rush to make someone else feel better or you're in a rush to feel better, you are missing the magic of the skillset of overcoming your own current thinking. In order to think differently, you have to know what you're thinking now.

You can't just put happy thoughts on top of negative thoughts and hope that you'll produce a positive result. You have to start where you are. You have to locate yourself, much like the GPS, you can't just go to the map and point to where you want to go and start focusing there. You have to understand first where you are. Where am I? Where do I want to go? And what are the obstacles in between?

And deciding ahead of time how you will overcome those obstacles. How will you deal with the terrain and the turns and the weather and the length of time and the gas you'll need and the fuel you'll need, all of it. You plan the trip, you anticipate the obstacles ahead of time. And when you look at them from an honest perspective and you don't judge them as reasons why you can't get there, you don't make them mean that it's impossible, you just ask yourself, what do I need to do to overcome them? What do I need to believe and think instead? And then your obstacles turn into strategies, and the strategies become actions that you take that make you stronger and more capable of being the person that has the result that you want to have.

I think a lot about this with money. I've been dealing a lot lately with my students who want to build their businesses and make a lot of money. And I see that one of the biggest mistakes that most of them make is they focus on where they want to go in opposition to where they are right now, and

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they struggle with that gap and with that distance. And when you recognize, wait a minute, that space between where I am and where I want to go is the good stuff, that's the magic, that's the uncovering, that's the understanding, that's the learning stuff, and when you really start to get that, that this process is really revealing our obstacles and overcoming them, then that becomes the magic. That becomes the point. Not achieving the result, not getting the money, but being the person who lives in the space of overcoming her own or his own mind.

That is our privilege as humans. As a human species, we are able to get over our preprogrammed conditioning, our instincts. We can think our way beyond them. We can create beyond our instinctual inclinations. That is the magic. The process of doing that. And when I explain this, sometimes people don't really understand what I mean by it and so I want to tell you just a little bit of a metaphor kind of that you can think about when people tell you to enjoy the process.

I recently had a photo shoot with my photographer and the process of taking pictures with her is always magical. It's always an experience and it's always fun and there's always a bonding and a connection and I would say a deepening of my relationship with myself because taking pictures of me and looking at pictures of me is really an opportunity for all my thoughts about myself to come up.

And I want you to know that the experience of the photo shoot is different than the experience of the pictures. We're doing the photo shoot to get the pictures, but the photo shoot in and of itself is the best part, is the part where we all grow and connect and feel each other. And that's what I want you to imagine for your goals too.

Yes, you will get the photo at the end, but the experience of creating the photo is what's magic. That's the experience of overcoming our own selves, our own obstacles to get that result we want. And the result is great and it's sweet but the creation is even better when you learn how to overcome your obstacles.

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So if you're someone that hasn't set a goal for yourself in a long time and doesn't have like a very specific end date and a very specific measurable goal, I want you to do that. I want you to write it down and then I want you to see what comes up for you. And I want you to notice that that is the best part of the process if you allow it to be.

All of the reasons why your brain tells you that you can't do it, that is your assignment. That's where you're like, oh yeah, let me show you what I'm made of. Let me overcome my own restrictions on myself. Let me overcome. Let me evolve to the next version of myself despite what my primitive brain may think.

Alright, my friends, have a gorgeous, beautiful week and I'll talk to you next week. Take care. Bye.

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