

Ep #246: Modern Mental Health



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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. How are y'all doing? I'm super excited about this one today. What I have done is taken one of the webinars that I taught and turned it into two podcasts. My latest obsession right now is modern emotional health. What does it mean to be emotionally healthy in this modern day?

And so I taught a webinar on it, I'm going to create a book out of it, and I'm probably going to teach an extended course on it in Scholars. But I wanted to share with you guys who didn't get to see the webinar, I wanted to share with you all of the content here in the podcast. So the first half of the webinar will be on this episode, and the second half of the webinar will be on the next episode, so please enjoy.

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We're going to talk about modern emotional health and I'm really going to talk about this from the perspective of a beginner. So I know that some of you have just joined Scholars, I know some of you might be Scholars. We invited everyone on my list so we might have some advanced people.

Now, here's what I want to tell you. If you're a brand-new beginner, you're in the right place, and if you're advanced, you're in the right place. I always laugh when I start teaching master coach training. I'm like, we're going to start with the Model. We always start with whatever it's going to be for basic, basic, basics, and then we build up from there.

Because if you forget the basics, then you really can't pursue anything more advanced. And whenever people try and get fancy and forget the basics, they lose the plot altogether. So this is really for anyone who wants better emotional health in their life.

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So we want to start with the question, what is modern emotional health? And I use that word modern on purpose because it's really important that we understand that our brain and our cognitive and emotional life in this environment is a problem. Our brain in this environment is a problem and if we don't learn how to manage our brain in our modern environment, we are going to be in a little bit of trouble, my friends.

So I'm going to take you through this whole process. We're going to answer this question, what is modern emotional health, what is emotional health, and I want you to think about what you think the answer is here. What do you think emotional health is? Have you thought about that question for yourself? Are you emotionally healthy and how would you define that?

The main problem just to start is that most people don't even know how to define emotional health, therefore how do they even answer the question? So first we have to ask it. Now, the big hint is happiness is not emotional health. When you ask people, "Are you emotionally healthy?" what most people think that means is, are you happy?

We don't know how to differentiate what is emotional health from happiness. It was kind of like - I used to think that thinness meant happiness, I used to think that thinness meant healthiness. We associate these things. So a lot of us think emotional health means happiness, health means you're happy all the time. And I'm going to offer that that belief system has caused more trouble and more emotional unhealthiness than any other thing we're focused on in our lives.

So first of all, we need to ask the question, are we emotionally healthy and how do we know if we are? Alright, so let's start with why we need to use the word modern when we talk about emotional health. The first reason is false pleasures. Our current environment, our modern environment is filled with false pleasures.

In our perspective, everyone is happy but us. Have you looked on Instagram lately? Have you looked on Facebook lately? Have you looked on the TV lately? Everybody's happy. Everybody's having a great life. No

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one has any zits ever. Everyone's hair is perfect. Everybody's good and happy.

And the other thing is that our motivational triad is backfiring. So I'm going to tell you what the motivational triad is, I'm going to tell you why it's backfiring, but this environment, this is what we are dealing with nowadays. Our brain was designed for back in the day. Our brain, the way it was designed got us here. But now it's causing us all sorts of trouble because of our modern-day environment having so many false pleasures, the perspective that everyone around us is happier, and that our motivational triad is no longer working for us.

So what is the motivational triad? The motivational triad is this; there's three components to the brain and motivation. So if we're looking at motivation, what motivates us, we can say that that's part of emotional health is that our brain is designed to seek pleasure, preserve energy, and avoid pain. This is what got us here.

You think about us in the cave, we had to be motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain and preserve our energy in order to survive back in the day. We can see how that served us. The fact that we wanted to seek pleasure had us going out and connecting with other people and having sex and getting food and getting water and seeking comfort and warmth to take care of ourselves and avoiding pain. Avoiding the emotional pain and avoiding the physical pain that literally could have killed us, and preserving our energy so we could stay alive.

This is what got us here. Now, modern times, my friends, this is killing us. Seeking pleasure is literally killing us because we are seeking and getting so much false pleasure, there's so much pleasure now that we are over-seeking it, over-getting it, and causing ourselves all sorts of trouble with our emotional health.

We are avoiding pain to the point that we are what I call buffering our way away from any pain because the point is to be happy all the time, we got to avoid pain all the time so we don't feel our emotions, we don't process

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negative emotion, we don't experience what it's like to be a human who experiences pain.

Back in the day, we had to avoid pain. Can you imagine how much pain we were in back in the day? Like, literally in fear for our lives, no clothes, no comforts, no air-conditioning, no heat, nothing. Avoiding pain back then meant avoiding having a rock stab you in the back when you're trying to sleep versus now, avoiding pain means like, I feel a little bit uncomfortable, I best avoid that.

And then preserving our energy, conserving our energy is what kept us alive. We are now doing that to the point of inaction and laziness. This motivational triad that served us so well in modern times is causing problems. We need to do the exact opposite of what our brain initially was designed and evolved to do.

We need now to delay pleasure instead of seeking it. We need to embrace our emotional pain, open up to negative emotion and experience it and we need to generate our energy and utilize our energy instead of trying to preserve it. So let's talk about what happens in our emotional education. What are we taught about emotion? We are taught that other people hurt our feelings. We are taught that other people make us happy. And we are taught that circumstances make us happy or sad.

That is what we are taught in our life as children. "Did little Sally hurt your feelings? Well, let's go talk to Sally and tell her not to do that anymore. What you said really hurt John's feelings, don't say things to hurt his feelings. That hurts mommy's feelings, don't say that." How often are we told that?

That is what we are taught in school, not to hurt other people's feelings or don't let other people hurt our feelings. Other people make us happy. "That makes mommy so happy when you do that, you make me so happy. Get married, find a husband that'll make you happy. Find a wife that'll make you happy. Find friends that make you happy."

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And we're also taught that circumstances make us happy or sad. When good things happen, we're happy. When bad things happen, we're sad. When we achieve things, when we go after things in life and accomplish them and achieve things and acquire them, that will make us happy. If we don't get them, we'll be sad. If we're thin, we'll be happy, if we're rich we'll be happy, if we're married, if we have two kids, if we're normal, if we fit in, if we have lots of friends.

We are taught this is what our emotional education is reduced to. Now, first of all, it's not like they have a class. It's not like they bring us in and they're like, okay, today we're going to teach you about your emotions. Why would they? They're only the most important thing in the world. The most important thing.

Our emotions are the reason why we do or don't do anything. We want to accomplish things because of how we think they will make us feel. We avoid doing things because of how we think they'll make us feel. Our personality, the way we show up, everything is based on how we feel or how we think something will make us feel. It drives everything. It is the only thing that matters.

Our emotional life is what matters because it determines everything else in our life, but we're not taught anything. We're taught maybe in third grade, happy face, sad face, mad face. I have a degree in psychology, the amount of time we spent studying emotions was so minimal. What we studied was the effect of emotions, what we studied was the pathology of not processing emotion, but we didn't understand how to process them. We never were taught just about emotional life and what causes emotions and how to manage our emotions.

This is what we're taught. This is the extent of our emotional education in the modern time, and yet, if you ask somebody - I mean, really think about your life as an adult. What is more important? History, math, studying physics, trigonometry, what happened in the 1800s, or what's going on in your emotional life? How to manage your emotions. Zero. Zero is taught.

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So I think that's ridiculous. I think when I studied, when I have gone through this process of learning how to be a life coach, most importantly, learning how to manage my own mind, what I have discovered is that first of all, I've had to dig deep to learn about emotions. I've had to study myself. I've had to be a scholar of myself to understand that none of this is true.

What I discovered is that other people have no ability to hurt our feelings. In fact, other people can't cause our feelings at all because our feelings are caused by our thoughts. I remember when I first learned this. I remember I heard it like, on a tape, your thoughts cause your feelings. I was like, what? What are you talking about? I thought other people caused my feelings, I thought other things caused my feelings. I thought feelings just happened. You're telling me that my thoughts cause my feelings and I have 100% control over my thinking? What are you talking about?

It was mind-blowing to me. So this education is actually a false education. Other people don't hurt our feelings, other people can't make us happy. We try to change them, we try to teach them how to behave, we try and teach them all the things but they don't behave the way we want them to, so they don't make us happy because they don't do - and even if they did, every single thing we wanted them to do, they still wouldn't make us happy because you know what makes us happy? Our own thinking.

And besides, being happy isn't the goal anyway. So let's talk about the worst lesson that we are taught. The goal is to be good and the goal is to be happy. That is the goal of life. That's in the undercurrent of everything we are taught. We are taught that negative emotion should be fixed, and that it can be fixed by something external.

If I see a little girl crying, "Oh my gosh, what's wrong? Something's terribly wrong, you're having a negative emotion. Let's fix it. What's wrong?" That's how we ask people that are having negative emotion, we ask them what's wrong with them. What's wrong with you? What's right is to be happy. If you're crying, something's wrong with you. This is what we're taught.

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So the problem with this is that nobody can be good and happy all of the time because there is no good without bad and there is no happy without sad and the world isn't meant to be happy and good and right all of the time. How do we know this? Because it isn't and it's impossible to even have good without the bad.

If we were happy all the time, we wouldn't even know we were happy. If we were good all the time, we wouldn't even know we were good because there is no bad. There's no balance. So when we're taught this, we are sold so much BS and then we feel like there's something wrong with us when we're experiencing negative emotion, that somehow it should be fixed.

So let me educate you on how the world really is. This is your modern emotional education that I'm going to give you. I'm going to be your third-grade teacher, I'm going to teach you this. Life is half positive and half negative. How do we know this? Have you been alive? Have you noticed that that is the case? Yes, there is good and there is bad. There is positive and there is negative. There is comfort and there is discomfort.

And it's a balance, and this doesn't exist without this. You can't have it. We don't even know that something's positive if there is no negative. So when we have people having negative emotion and we say there's something wrong with you, what happens? We think there's something wrong with us when we're human.

We're like, oh my gosh, I feel anxious a lot of the time, I feel frustrated a lot of the time, I feel hate, I feel doubt, I feel scared. What is wrong with me? Everybody on Facebook is happy all the time. All these other people are causing me all this negative emotion. So you know what we try and do, we make an effort to be happy and positive all of the time.

But you know what we're taught? We're taught that what makes us happy and what makes us sad, and in order to be happy is the world. So we go out into the world to try and solve a problem that isn't even a problem. This isn't a problem. This is humanness. But we try and solve it, we try and solve this problem by telling other people how to act towards us, by trying

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to get them to behave in a way that doesn't hurt us. We try and go find people that will make us happy and they're terrible at making us happy because it's impossible.

And we feel bad when other people don't comply, and the circumstances of our life aren't making us happy all of the time so you know what we try and do is fix the circumstances of our life. Now, let's go back to what I originally said about the modern environment. If you're supposed to be happy all of the time and you're not, and you try and fix that, what do you do?

You go out and get things like false pleasures. You get concentrated pleasures that have been created by moneymaking organizations to provide us with pleasure. So think about overeating and overdrinking and over-Facebooking and over-porning and over-smoking and drugging and all of the things that we're trying to do to compensate for this.

We're doing all this buffering to try and make this go away. We resist this, we avoid this, we deny it, we hide from it because we think it means there's something wrong with us. But what I want to tell you is that there's nothing wrong with you. First of all, we're supposed to have the human experience.

I want you to just look at the world. So many of us think there's something wrong with the world and we want to fix it. The world should be kind and happy and peaceful and it's not, so we need to fix the world to make it kind and happy and peaceful. And yet what makes us think that the world should be kind and happy and peaceful? It's never been 100% kind and happy and peaceful.

It's always been a collection, right? When you look at back in the day, we had really amazing things and we had really terrible things. And then you go forward 100 years. Really amazing things, really terrible things. Now, today, a lot of the terrible things that we had hundreds of years ago we don't currently have, but you know what we have? All brand-new terrible things.

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We've eliminated some of those terrible things and replaced it with positive things, but then the negative thing is filled in with new negative things. Have you noticed the balance is there all the time? And yet we're still so upset that the negative is still there. If we could just eliminate the negative, then everything would be right and everything would be good, and everything would be happy.

But we spend so much time being upset by the negative that we become inordinately negative about our own negativity and we start trying to compensate it by adding more negativity and more buffering and more false pleasures and more compensation. And then we think there's something terrible wrong with us because listen, we have this negative emotion so we eat over it and then we gain weight, and then we hate ourselves for that and then we eat more and then we hate ourselves for that.

And then all of a sudden, we're in this spin of rejecting everything. So people say to me, "Does it have to be 50/50? Can we go with 80/20 maybe? Please 80/20." And I say, here's the thing, when you accept that half of your life has negative emotion and that half of the world has negative things in it, then they're not so negative anymore. When you make them so awful and so negative by trying to push them away, they become worse than they are.

So I want you to think about this. If I said to you, hey, do you really want to be happy all of the time? Some of you may say yes, I would love to be happy all of the time. And the truth is you could try to be happy all of the time, but you would have to be happy when horrible things happen. You would have to be happy when people die and when people are raped and murdered and hurt. When all the terrible things happen in the world, you would have to be happy in order to be happy all the time.

But what my students start to realize is wait a minute, you know what I'd rather be? I'd rather be human. Humans aren't happy all of the time. Humans feel pain and they feel sadness and they experience anxiety and discomfort and fear, and I want all of that in my life because I want to be

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fully human. I want to open up to this part of life because then I can open up to this part of life. When I think this is better than this, I miss out on the full human experience, and so I end up not showing up. I end up hiding and trying to compensate for this and cowering from my life because I think there's something wrong with me.

So here is your education. Here is what I want to teach everyone when they're really young. I want to tell them listen, your whole life is going to be 50/50. And here's what I tell my kids and this is really important for us all to remember, everybody's life is 50/50. When you look at that person on Facebook or you look at that billionaire or you look at that person that has the perfect body or the perfect life or the perfect husband or the perfect children or the perfect face or the perfect hair or whatever, their life is 50/50. Your life is 50/50.

Now, the 50/50 is different. That person with the perfect body, do you think they don't worry about their body? The model that has the perfect body that's on the runway, do you think she doesn't hate her body and think about her body and worry about her body? You think she's just like, my body's perfect, I'm so happy? No.

Everybody has 50/50. So even the professional football players and the professional basketball players and the ones that get the division one scholarships and the most popular people and the most successful people, it doesn't ever get better than the 50/50. So when you're trying to go out there in the world and compensate for this by accumulating and changing and nipping and tucking and dieting and all of that, what you find out is that you're still left with this.

This change, the topics change but this is still your life. So knowing this is the most amazing thing because it saves you so much time. You can stop trying to compensate for this and you can decide what you want your life to be, knowing that it won't get any better, it won't get any worse until the way that you interpret it.

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So this is everything. If I can teach you this one concept. Alright, so let's talk about unhealthy emotional life. So if we have modern emotional health, what is an unhealthy emotional life? Number one, a complete lack of awareness. You're not aware of what you're feeling, you're not aware that feelings matter, you're not paying attention to your feelings. Complete lack of awareness.

Number two, avoidance and resistance to negative emotion. This means you're buffering. So you're going into your house at night and you feel stressed and you feel frustrated and you feel overwhelmed and you feel tired and you feel negative emotion, and you think that that negative emotion needs to be fixed because that's what we've been taught. We got to do something about it, and you know how you fix negative emotion? You find something outside of you to fix it.

So you find something to drink or something to eat or someone to talk to or a bath to take or something external to you to solve your internal crisis of negative emotion. And that's what buffering is. That's what drug addiction - that's when we're using drugs and we're using food, we're using porn, we're using obsession, we get compulsive about things because we're trying to solve internal problems with external solutions.

We have these urges inside of us and we use all these false pleasures to try and solve for them. Now, of course that doesn't work because you can't solve an internal issue with an external problem, and by the way, your negative emotion doesn't need to be solved. It just needs to be accepted and processed properly. When you resist it and avoid it, that's when you cause yourself problems.

The third thing that we do that's unhealthy for our emotional lives is we indulge in our emotions, which means we blame and we react to our emotions. So there's two ways that I like to see them. It's kind of like the victim role or the villain role. So the victim role is all about blaming other people for causing our negative emotion and holding them accountable for our emotional lives and reaction is when we have an emotion and we just act it out. We bully other people, we react to our anger, we yell at other

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people, we try and change them from a villain frustration type of role in our life.

And this is just indulging in self-pity, in anger, in reaction, in self-loathing. All of the things, overwhelm and worry, all of these emotions that we get tied up and spinning in because we think if we could just solve them from someone else changing who they are. So when we react to emotion, when we act - bullying or we over-anger at someone or we lose our shit, we blame them.

Or we blame ourselves for acting out our emotions, and the blame part is we blame other people for causing our emotions. Nothing here works because it leaves us totally powerless. We're out of control with our emotions or we're blaming other people for causing them. That leaves us in a very unhealthy spin of our emotional life.

And the last thing that we do is we hide from truth and from goals. When we don't want to experience negative emotion, we hold ourselves back from life. So I want you to think about this in terms of goals that you've set in your life. Now, a lot of people tell me they don't want to set big goals in their life because if they set big goals in their life, they're afraid that then they'll feel worried and stressed and embarrassed and they might fail and they have all this doubt and this overwhelm.

So they'd rather not set big goals, not tell the truth about what they want in their life, not show up and have the conversations because they're trying to hide from any purposeful negative emotion. I see this in the coaching that I do on relationships all of the time. So what I see is people come into relationships and they think that they're responsible for the other person's feelings and they think that person is responsible for their feelings.

So they don't show up as the truth of who they are because they want to be the version of the person this other person wants them to be, and they don't want that person showing up as the truth of who they are because that may affect you negatively. So two people coming into a relationship, taking responsibility for each other's feelings can't be truthful, can't be

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honest. They have to try and be the version of the person that the other person wants them to be.

And so you never have any true connection, which is what both people desperately want is a connection, but they don't have it because no one's even showing up for the relationship because they're afraid that they will hurt the other person's feelings or the person will hurt their feelings.

But my suggestion is what if you went into a relationship and you said listen, half of this relationships is going to be negative emotion because half of the human experience is negative emotion and that's okay and you don't need to behave any differently and I don't need to lie about who I am. We can both just show up as who we are and take care of our own emotional lives and the rest of the time just have a blast together, just being in this space of fully accepting the other person as they are.

Isn't that what we all really want? We want to be in a relationship where we can just be accepted and we can just love the person we're with without trying to change them because it's so ineffective. Trying to change other people is so ineffective.

So this is where I see so many of my clients hiding from their lives. They don't want any change, they don't want to rock the boat because they're just in this point where they've been able to try and keep their life so they don't have any purposeful negative emotion, and they've been able to hide from their negative emotion by over-treating it with false pleasure.

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