

Ep #294: How Are You Feeling?



Full Episode Transcript

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 my friends. How are you guys? I am recording this at a very different time than I normally do, so I feel like my voice is quieter. It doesn't need to be, but I'm recording this in the morning. We're leaving today to go to Scottsdale. We're going to go there for 10 days, take the dogs, go hiking Camelback, and get out of the cold.

Yes, my friends. We're going to get out of the cold of Dallas, which I know my friends in Canada laugh at me about this, but I'm from California. I'm very tender and soft when it comes to weather. So I wanted to get this recorded before I left so you would have it while I'm gone, so that is the magic of being able to record ahead of time.

So today, what I'm going to talk about is one of the most important questions that I think we can use in our relationships. And the question is how do you feel? You can also ask it, how are you feeling? I'll give you some other options as well.

But I wanted you to have just one clean way of asking and one clean way of thinking about it as we move forward through this podcast because I feel as if we are missing out on knowing each other in deeper ways because of the way that we speak to each other.

And I'll tell you, the way that I figured this out was with my own kids. So most of you know that I have two kids who are away at college. One's at an academy for golf and one is at a college in Massachusetts. And communicating with my kids now is different than it was when they were here, when they were living with me.

And I actually think it's pretty fascinating how our relationship has changed in terms of communication. So my kids love to text and text cryptically. You guys know what I'm saying? And when you ask them questions that are really common questions, you ask them questions that have pad answers, you're going to get pad answers. You're going to get formalities.

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And as I was watching this with my kids, I also noticed this in my relationship with Chris, my husband. I notice it in relationships with my friends. We're in a habit with each other where we ask the same questions and give the same answers over and over and over again, which keeps us on a very surface level in our relationships.

So I want you to think about this in your relationships in your own life. I want you to think about the conversations that you have on a regular basis and I want you to think about the patterns and the habits of communication. So for some of you who are married, you - or have a partner that you live with, the person will come home. Do you always ask them the same questions?

How was your day? How was it? How did you do? How did it go? Those are questions that a lot of us are in the habit of asking. They're lovely questions. There's nothing wrong with those questions. But I want you to notice how when you ask them, it puts the answer kind of in the context of something external.

So when I ask you how was it, how did it go, what am I asking about? I'm asking about the event. I'm asking about the circumstance. I'm asking about the external thing. Even if it's just your day, how was your day, we're asking about the external thing.

So when we go to answer that, we almost disassociate ourselves from it and we look at the day or we look at the event or we look at what happened, and we convey what happened in terms of the external thing. So let me give you an example.

You went to a conference. Let's say you and I are friends and you went to a conference yesterday, and I say to you, so how was it? You're going to think about it. You're going to think about the conference and what happened there and who showed up and who spoke and what they said and how it was run.

That's immediately where your brain's going to go, and it should because I'm asking about it, the conference. Now, if instead of asking about it, the

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conference, or how did it go, if I ask you, how are you feeling, or how do you feel, you're going to go internal and tell me about you.

And even though we may be referencing the conference, I could say, so how are you feeling after the conference? How do you feel after attending the conference yesterday? It's much more interesting for me to find out about you and your experience and what's going on with you than it is the conference.

Now, my husband was laughing because we just recently went to a story workshop. This is kind of a little bit of a tangent but I'll go on it. We went to go see my son at his college for family week and we kidnapped him a little bit and took him to a workshop that was happening really close by, by Matthew Dicks, who wrote the book Storyworthy, which is a book I love and I highly recommend.

And we went to this workshop where Matthew was teaching about telling stories and having stories be really interesting and having stories connect with people when you're communicating. And one of the things that he teaches is how important it is to make all the stories matter to the person that you're telling them to. Make them relevant to the person you're telling them to.

And so often, what so many people do is they just convey chronologically the facts of something that happened instead of finding the meaning in it. And I thought it was so profound the way he thought that, and now you'll never be able to not think about it when you're hearing someone tell you a story.

So there are people who tell stories. So you'll say, how was the conference? And they'll say, well I arrived and they had this welcoming sign-in committee, and then we went and had drinks, and then I went to bed, and then the next day we went to - right? And everything is chronological and we're just conveying the facts.

And for the person hearing it, it's not very meaningful. It's kind of like, just looking at a schedule. And for the person telling the story, it's not very

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meaningful. It's kind of like, just running through the circumstances and the facts of the day.

But when you tell a story that has a transformation in it, that has a moment of feeling in it, the both people, both the storyteller and the person telling the story can relate to, there's a connection that happens that makes the story so much more interesting.

And so I think this question is one of the ways that I lead people when I'm talking to them. And so Chris was laughing at me because he's like, you always make the story more interesting than someone's telling by asking them questions and kind of directing their story.

So if you are ever with me socially, I tend to interrupt people if they're telling us chronological, boring stories. I interrupt them and ask for the meaning of the story. And I don't do it really obviously. I'm not like, so, what is the meaning of your story? But I'll ask a question that will require the person to tune into themselves, into what they were feeling or what they were experiencing, or what it meant to them.

And then all of a sudden, their boring chronological story comes alive for everybody at the table that's hearing it. And I think this is important when we're telling stories and when we're conveying our life, but I think it's also important when we're engaging with people.

So I think for all of us who want to connect deeper with people and we want to connect with the people that we love and we want to connect with ourselves, having this, just this one question to help direct where the conversation goes I think is game-changing.

So I want to give you some kind of warnings about this question too. So remember, the question is how do you feel, or how are you feeling. A lot of times, when you ask someone this question, they won't answer it with a feeling. So I'll say to someone, how are you feeling? And they'll say, well, it's been a good day. I went to the mall, I went and bought this.

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So they're not even hearing the question. So when that happens, I'll say something like, yeah, but how are you feeling? It's the exact same question. They don't even know that I'm asking it twice but it brings it back to them.

So let's go back to my kids. I want any of you who are parents to try this out and see what you think. Instead of asking your kids, how was your day? Or how did you do on the test? Or how did it go? Or what was it like? Or how are you? I want you to see what happens if you ask them, how do you feel?

And you can say, how do you feel about today? How do you feel about the test? How do you feel about your life? How do you feel about your boyfriend, your girlfriend? How do you feel about your class? And a lot of times they won't hear the word feel, and so they'll kind of start describing that external thing.

Just re-ask them and see if you can get them to connect with how they feel. Now, here's what I have found is so fascinating about this is that when you ask this question, you may think that you already know the answer. And if you watch a lot of people have conversations, they ask questions just to talk at people and they don't really listen to the answers because the answers are usually just this chronological kind of fact communication.

So it's kind of like, so, how did it go today? Well, it went great. Here's what we did. And neither person is really listening or connecting with each other. They're just kind of talking at each other. You guys know what I'm talking about?

But when you ask someone, how are you feeling, or how do you feel, if they hear the question the first or second time that you ask it and they answer it, you will be so surprised at what you learn about people. Because what we do so often is we project what we think people are feeling onto them. We project, oh, they're fine, oh, they're doing great, or they're doing terrible, whatever.

We project what we think onto people instead of just asking them. So what I've noticed is that when I ask my kids or my husband, how are you feeling,

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a lot of times, the answer is completely unexpected, which makes it so much more interesting and makes me feel so much more connected.

So practice asking that. Even in a text, to your kids, to your husband, whatever. Asking that question and really waiting for the answer. Really making sure that you get the answer that is a feeling and that you connect with that answer.

The person that I want you to also try this with is yourself. So if you're in Self-Coaching Scholars, you're already doing this probably pretty regularly because you're doing models, which require you to ask yourself what you're thinking, what you're feeling, what you're doing.

But I want you to try to do this with yourself throughout the day where you say to yourself, how do you feel? How are you feeling? How are you feeling about that? And when you say how are you feeling about that, you're going to come up with your thinking about it, but you'll also tap into your emotions.

What I have found is that so many of us are completely disconnected from our own emotional life. We don't even know what we're feeling. We aren't even tapped into our bodies or the vibration in our bodies, with the chemical reactions in our bodies, or the sensations in our bodies.

And when we ask ourselves this question, how do you feel, or how are you feeling, you have to kind of go into the place where you connect with your body to find the answer. And if you are one of those people who has no idea how they feel or they're completely disconnected from their body, this is imperative that you start practicing doing this.

And if - by the way, if you keep doing this and you cannot access yourself, if you are completely non-functioning as it applies to your emotional life, that is when working with a coach can really help, but sometimes you may want to work with a therapist.

A lot of times when you're completely disconnected, it's because of a traumatic experience or because of something that happened to you in

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your childhood that you're just not being able to access yourself physically and that is a space where therapy can really help get re-embodied, to get reconnected with yourself.

But if you feel like maybe you're just a little bit numb or a little bit avoidant, or a little bit disconnected, it may just take some practice for you to start recognizing and acknowledging and naming your own emotions. I've done a couple podcasts where I talk about how the vocabulary that you have to describe your emotional life will actually determine the richness or the sophistication of your emotional life.

Because if you're able to decipher between different types of feelings, instead of just saying I feel bad, you're able to say I feel anxious, or I feel frustrated, or I feel perplexed, or I feel agitated, and you really know the difference between those emotions and how they feel and you have different labels for them, it will create a much more intimate experience that you will have with yourself.

And when you start having conversations with other people in your life, asking them how they feel and not just good or bad being the answer, you can kind of ask for more specifics about that, you can actually increase the vocabulary and the emotional intelligence of everyone around you by just the conversations that you have.

So here's how I want you to think about this patterning that we normally have. So when we say, how do you feel, people may come back to us with their regular habitual patterning and say fine, or great, or okay, or tired, or ready.

So I wrote all of these down as I went through today and asked people how they were feeling or how do you feel. And we're so used to saying fine. Fine isn't really an answer that people have gone into themselves to get. That's just a pad answer. They just come out, fine, I'm fine. So how do you do? I'm fine.

How are you doing? Great. How are you doing? Good. Those are all kind of mental answers. Those aren't emotional answers. They haven't really gone

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in. And a lot of people, I find really fascinating is a lot of common answers are okay, tired, and ready.

How are you feeling? I'm okay. How are you feeling? I'm tired. How are you feeling? I'm ready. So I think for the feeling, one, people are going to sensations. So it's similar to hungry. How are you feeling? Hungry. How are you feeling? Tired.

So pay attention to the feelings that people say that they're having and notice, are they just going to their brain to find an answer or are they going to their body? Are they going inside to find that experience of what they're actually feeling right now?

And especially with people close to you, it's easier to just keep asking the question like no really, how are you feeling? Think about it for a second. How are you really feeling right now? And doing this with your kids will make them squirm sometimes. I don't know, mom, whatever. Do it anyway.

And the other thing that I have found to be helpful in terms of that connection is to offer how you are feeling to others when they ask you how you are. So it's kind of like you're flipping the question. So people will come to you and they'll say, how are you?

Now, don't do this with random strangers. Be like, well, I'm really emotionally perplexed right now. They're like woah, I was just being polite. But people in your life that ask you how you are, tell them how you really are feeling. Tell them in a way that they can connect to the truth and the authenticity of where you're at emotionally will deepen that conversation immediately.

And even with strangers, like at parties and dinner parties and stuff like that, find a way to answer their question, how are you, in a way that's interesting and different than just fine, or I'm okay, or complaining. Tapping into how you're feeling emotionally.

Now, strangers that ask you this question are not inviting you to have a therapy session with them, so I'm not suggesting that you unload on them.

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But I am suggesting that you possibly do this in your more personal relationships, that you be more honest about what's going on with you emotionally with your partners and maybe with your kids, maybe with your parents, maybe with your friends to really tap into what's going on and say, well, to be honest, this is what's going on for me, this is what I'm feeling right now.

Now, when you ask someone how they're feeling, for example, let's say you ask your son, how are you feeling, and he says I'm frustrated. Our inclination, for most of us as humans is to solve for that emotion. So if someone's sad or if someone's frustrated or if someone's angry, we want to help them not be those things.

And I know for me especially with my kids, I want them to be happy all of the time so I'm always trying to solve for any negative emotion. This is not advised. It is not useful. First of all, you can't solve other people's emotions. And it almost invalidates the experience by trying to get them to get to a different experience immediately.

So don't try and solve people's problems. Well, don't try and solve their problems, or thinking of their emotions as a problem to solve. And don't try to talk people out of their emotions. Be with them and hear them where they are.

So when somebody, like your son, or my son says to me, I'm frustrated, can I just be there with his frustration? Now, here's what I've noticed. If I say, how are you feeling? And they say frustrated, and I don't say anything after that immediately, I just look at them and I'm silent, or if I say huh, or sometimes I'll say why, tell me. Then they'll offer it.

They'll offer the reason why. They'll offer a lot more information about the frustration. And if I still don't try and solve it, or I still don't try to override their thinking about it, or try to fix it, there's more space for them to just open up and talk about it.

And what I have found is that when I do that, when I'm not trying to coach them, not trying to help them, they haven't asked for me to do any of that,

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I'm just hearing them, I can leave that conversation with nothing having been solved, nothing having been fixed. Just my son telling me what he's feeling right now is frustration and feel a much deeper connection with him.

Versus if I had said to him, hey, how's it going? And he said, it's going good, and then I leave. But really, he's feeling frustrated. Now, he may not want to talk about being frustrated, and he definitely may not want me to help him with it. But just knowing that it's there and hearing that it's there and holding space for that will make it so it's much more likely that he could tell me how he's feeling in the future without me always trying to fix or control things.

So that's my challenge as a parent. I'm sure the rest of you guys can relate to this. Notice your response to other people's feelings. This is something that I've been noticing with myself. When you ask someone, how are you feeling? And they say terrible, do you go, oh no, why? Or if someone says sad, you go, oh, I'm so sorry, why are you sad? What's going on? Let me fix it.

Notice your response. I notice a lot of times when I'm feeling amazing, I feel great, I feel excited, people are kind of suspect of me. What's going on? Why? What happened in the world that's making you feel this way?

So notice your response to other people's answers and notice and their response to yours. I think that livens up everything and makes it more interesting too, versus just the patterned answers. So a couple variations. I've already given you a few of them.

How are you feeling about, how do you feel about, how do you feel right now? How are you feeling right now is a really great question. How do you feel leaves it open, but when you say how do you feel right now, it gets a little bit more into it.

Now, as you ask this question, one of the things that you can play with is grabbing eye contact. Just a little bit of a glance, eye contact into their eyes. Don't be weird and creepy. Don't be like, looking into their eyes longingly.

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But when you ask the question - I like the term grab eye contact. Just a little how are you feeling about that? How are you feeling right now? And just looking into their eyes for just a minute, just a grab. That connection can make that holding space so much easier.

When you are talking, you will be amazed at how often, especially watching other people have conversations, people aren't looking at each other. They're asking questions while they're busy doing something else or even looking at their phones, and they haven't grabbed any eye contact.

So when you ask a question like how are you feeling now, you want to make sure you grab a little eye contact so they know, hey, I'm with you, I'm connected, I want to know what's going on for you. Now, this could change a lot of conversations in your household and I kind of want to give you a heads up about this that it may bring up a lot of stuff that has been simmering below the surface.

It may bring up stuff that maybe you've kind of been avoiding knowing. I've noticed this is especially true in partnered relationships where people have been together forever and they have a pattern of being with each other that is very surface.

So they say the same things in the morning when they go to work, they say the same things when they come back, they say the same things when they go to bed, they say the same things when they're driving in the car together. There's kind of this autopilot that's happening where we're not really tapped into each other.

So when you start tapping in, you will notice what comes up for you and what comes up for that other person may be new and may be something that you haven't been discussing. And I want to encourage you to do it anyway, even though it may feel a little bit uncomfortable. Because I think what it can do is connect us on a deeper level and in a way that creates progress.

And a lot of times, what happens in our relationships is they just get stagnant because we're just doing the same thing over and over again. But

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we as people are always changing. We're either changing and growing towards something or away from something or deeper into something. And if we don't keep tabs on ourselves and we don't keep tabs on the people in our lives, we can miss an entire segment of what's going on in someone's life.

I just recently hung out with one of my friends who is going through some struggles in her relationship. And she sat down with her partner and told her partner how she was feeling. And the partner was completely blindsided. Completely shocked. Had no idea that this was how my friend was feeling at all.

Now, of course my friend didn't tell her partner. So there's no way that this person could have known what was going on, but also, they didn't ask is my guess. My guess is the asking was all very surface. And so here you have two people that have been together, that are together all day every day and they have no idea how the other person is feeling.

And so much of that is because we - our relationship with someone else is really just our thoughts about them. So we can be projecting thought onto someone and creating stories about someone that has nothing to do with what's really going on for them and what's going on in their brain.

And a simple question placed daily at dinner, when someone comes home, a moment in the car, where you grab some eye contact and you ask, how are you feeling? No really, how are you feeling? How are you feeling about us? How are you feeling about our life? How are you feeling about today? How are you feeling about you?

These are questions that we want to know the answers to, yes? For ourselves, ask them to yourself and ask them to the people closest to you. And then offer your feelings too. It's an amazing way to create intimacy, to create connection, and it's not hard in terms of it's simple. The question is simple, but if you don't have intimacy, it may feel a little bit awkward.

So I'm going to ask you right now, and I want you to think about the answer. I want you to go inside to answer. How are you feeling? How did it

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feel to be asked that? Very different than how are you. How are you feeling? How are you feeling about you? How are you feeling about your life? How are you feeling about your relationship with me and this podcast?

I want to know. I want you to know how you feel. Okay my friends, go out into the world, ask the people how they're feeling and see what changes. See what you find out. See what's new. Try it with your kids, even over text. I'm telling you, they will tell you some crazy stuff if you ask them that question.

Alright my friends, have an amazing week. I'll talk to you soon.

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