

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later



### 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 there, my friends. Let's talk about how cold it is in Dallas. I just spent 10 days in Scottsdale, which was warm and sunny and awesome. We stayed at a beautiful Airbnb to get out of the cold a little bit. It was amazing. Loved it.

We came back home. I'll be here for two days, and then I'll go to Miami, where it's 85. It's 29 here; 29, my friends. Still, doing great. Still took my dogs on a hike. So many good things are happening. I cannot wait to tell you all the things.

One of the things that I'm going to tell you about, because I just can't help myself, is that, for Scholars 2.0, which starts in January, all new content, we are doing cover models on the workbooks. What that means is we are taking people from Scholars and doing a cover shoot with them with my photographer and with my creative director.

And we have already done the first shoot and I'm obsessed with it. I'm obsessed with everything about it. It's so good. And we have all these options for covers and we're going to have all you guys voting on which one you like the best. I can't wait for you all to see what we have been up to.

This is the fun part of owning a business, y'all, being able to create beautiful things that highlight people that have worked hard in Scholars and kind of showcasing them in the work that we do. I love it. I love it, so I'm super excited about that.

Many other very exciting things that I can't tell you about quite yet, but I must say that I woke up this morning and I said to myself, "Girl, you won the lottery again." And this is what my life feels like because of all the work that I've done.

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

I often ask my students, would you rather win a million dollars or make a million dollars? And the ones that say I'd rather win it, I always tell them, "But then you have no control over the next million." If you make the million, then you can keep producing it. And that's the same for money, but it's also the same for mental health. It's also the same for creating goodness in your life.

And I feel like the goodness just keeps on coming. And it's not to say that my life isn't 50/50 because it is. It's 50% pain and 50% gloriousness. But I've made peace with the pain, which has made my life even more glorious. And that's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to talk about pain now or pain later and which is better.

And the first rule that you have to understand and the first truth that you have to understand is you're not going to get out of this life without any pain. No one gets to come to the world and have a painless life. And you may ask, why is that? There are people that are unable to feel physical pain and they are in danger all of the time.

It's a problem, not being able to feel pain is a huge problem, physical pain, the sensation of pain. I would say and argue that emotional pain and not being able to feel emotional pain is equally as problematic. First of all, if you don't understand and taste and feel pain, you don't get to appreciate its opposite.

And the more we allow ourselves to open up to pain, the more we can open ourselves up to all the other emotions and the more we embrace and allow and encourage the experiencing and processing of pain, the more alive we can become, the more action we can take.

When I look around at my clients, my kids, people, friends, I notice that many of us are anticipating and avoiding pain. And once pain inevitably arises, we try to avoid it. Many of us are trying to postpone it or prolong it. So instead of just saying that this is my thought and feeling right now and I will move through this, many of us try to avoid our current thought and

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

feeling by buffering or avoiding or doing something else right now and we end up having to deal with the pain later.

I learned this lesson, and it's so clearly depicted in the weight loss struggle, when I first started working on my body and I first started working on my emotions at the same time. I realized, "Oh, this is why I eat all the time. This is why I want to eat when I'm not hungry."

And so I started doing the work on differentiating between sensations and feelings. So I started noticing when my body was actually physically hungry. Now, for those of you who don't struggle with your weight, you think this is bonkers. You think, "What do you mean? You had to pay attention to that? It's very obvious when that happens."

But it's not when you're disconnected from your body, when you're disassociated with your body because you don't want to experience the emotions that are going on in your body. And for so many of us, this is a coping mechanism that we developed when we were children. And it's not something that's wrong with us and it's not something we did badly.

In fact, I think it is brilliant how we, as children, are able to survive by disassociating, by numbing out, by avoiding the pain that we don't know how to process at such a young age. And I know, for me, that was the case, the debilitating anxiety I was feeling and the fear that I was feeling as a child, I did not know how to process.

In fact, I think most of us, when we're very young children, are incapable of processing it in a way that serves us because we are so helpless in so many ways and we don't have the cognitive ability to be meta and understand and look at what we're thinking about. And so, for me, that's how I got through my childhood was by disassociating from my body and numbing out the pain so I could get through the day.

A lot of pretending, a lot of people-pleasing, a lot of ignoring my emotional life. When I started doing my work on understanding emotional eating and understanding why I was eating when I wasn't hungry, what I recognized

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

was that food was a very good way for me not to feel. So was alcohol and so is drama created in your life.

I did all the things. I didn't just pick one, my friends, I picked all of them. I created a lot of unnecessary drama, I moved a lot, I took a lot of action doing stuff that would upheave my family and our lives in a way that could get us focused on, "There's a lot to be done, we need to take care of this," instead of focusing on maybe grief or pain that we were going through or any kind of conflict that needed resolution.

I did this really clearly with food and anytime I had anxiety or frustration or fear, pain, I would just eat instead. And it didn't take away the pain permanently and it didn't solve for it because you can't solve for emotions. But what it did is it postponed it and it delayed it.

Now again, as children, we don't have a choice. We need to delay our pain so we can figure it out when we're older and process it as adults because, as young children, we can't do it if we've had a lot of circumstances in our life that have caused a lot of abandonment thinking, a lot of fear-based thinking that we don't know how to process or control. So it's actually brilliant when we're children.

As adults, it's not serving us at all because we're capable of processing pain right now in this moment as adults. Our brains are developed enough. We have the, let's call it cognitive aptitude, to be able to understand our thoughts and process through our emotions knowing that they will not kill us. But some of us don't know this so we keep the pattern of our childhood, which is constantly postponing the truth of how we feel.

And when we do that, we don't access our minds, so we don't get to find the thoughts that are causing that pain, so we're unable to question them because they're usually very irrational and we don't get to release the pain. We don't get to let go of the unnecessary suffering because we don't understand it.

So if you feel as if you spend a lot of time trying to get out of your body, to try to avoid the experience of any kind of emotional pain, if you feel like

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

things just don't affect you and that you're just super busy, you are probably postponing your pain.

Now, let's talk about the problem with this, because a lot of people think, "What's wrong with that? I'd rather have a cookie than experience pain. There's nothing wrong with that. I'd rather buffer than experience this pain."

Well, if I thought that you could buffer instead of feeling pain, I would be all for it. But what happens is you don't buffer and then the pain goes away. It's not like, option A or B, pick A and then B doesn't exist. You're not avoiding the pain, you're just prolonging it. It's going to be there. It's going to fester and it will show up in your life in many, many ways.

And pain that is there that is unprocessed needs to be continuously avoided and it's exhausting because you're always trying to outrun your own emotional life. And what happens is, it sneaks through. And the way that you know that it sneaks through is you have very complicated and over-reactions to very simple things in your life.

So it's like, all of a sudden, a guy driving on the freeway is causing you to be in a rage, and the emotion doesn't match the thought about the guy. It's almost like you have so many compounded thoughts that you're unaware of that bringing up all of those emotion that hasn't been processed. And what it does is it builds through vibration in your body, which I think is so fascinating.

So if you have a thought that causes you a lot of pain, that thought doesn't go away when you buffer. It keeps running in the background. It's kind of like on your computer system. It's still running its system still causing the vibration, which causes you to have to try to avoid it.

So what I wanted to do in this podcast is invite you to kind of reconcile this idea of pain now versus pain later and to always choose pain now, when possible. Always know that pain is a normal and good part of being alive and it reveals our thinking to us and it's part of being a human that's fully alive.

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

And when we embrace it, we actually get better at processing it. And when we buffer against it, we actually get better at buffering against it. And the more we buffer against something, the more pain we're avoiding, the more pain we're accumulating. And the better we get at processing pain, the more pain we can release, the better we get at processing it.

Now, people will ask me, okay, so what sounds great about this is if I process all this pain and identify all the thinking that's causing it, then I will have less pain in my life. But that's not what happens because what happens is you increase your capacity to process pain, you increase your capacity to be uncomfortable, and then your life expands because if you're not afraid of pain anymore, you will be willing to do so much more with your life.

When you've been pushing pain away and avoiding pain and preventing pain, your life becomes so much smaller because you don't want to go after that thing or you don't want to risk being rejected or you don't want to risk failing because you don't want to deal with the pain on the other side of that, even though you're the one causing it, so your life closes down around you and you start preventing and procrastinating and prolonging your pain.

Now, when you're in a lot of pain because you haven't processed it and your thoughts are running and producing a lot of pain in your body and in your life, the last thing you want to do is go out there and do something that would create even more of it, possibly.

But when you decide, "No, instead of overeating, I'm going to feel this. I'm going to access myself. I'm going to open up to this pain. I'm going to feel the discomfort. I'm going to allow this vibration for as long as it takes. I'm going to breathe it in and carry it around like a heavy purse," eventually what you'll notice is that the intensity of the vibration without resistance becomes softer.

Now, listen, it's not that it becomes pleasant. It doesn't. Pain is not pleasant. Pain is pain. It doesn't feel good. But it doesn't feel as bad as resisting it. It feels true. It feels open. It feels purposeful.

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

I've described this a lot of ways, but I think one of the best ways that I've been able to describe it is that when you go into the doctor's office to get a shot and if you're freaking out and resisting it and screaming at the doctor and they have to hold you down and restrain you in order to give you the shot, the experience is going to be terrible, and they may not even be able to give you the medicine that you need.

But if you go into the doctor's office and you know it's going to hurt, you know, needles don't feel good, you know you're going to experience pain, but you allow it to be painful, you don't try to make it less painful, you don't say to the doctor, please make sure this doesn't hurt. You know it's going to hurt. Getting a shot hurts. Being a human hurts.

But you're calm about it and you're allowing the pain and you're experiencing the pain on purpose and you know that it will process through. And it may be sore afterwards, but you've accepted it and you're open to it. It's a very different experience.

It's a lot, actually, less painful than if you had resisted it and required someone to hold you down and been restrained in order to get a shot that, you know, as you're moving, that needle's moving all around in your arm, it's causing you a lot more pain.

So when you have unprocessed pain, when you're postponing your pain, you're also building up tension and fear around the pain. So I want you to think about, "Okay, I know that I'm going to experience pain. I know right now I am in pain and I'm going to say yes to it. And not only am I going to say yes to it, but I'm going to breathe it in and pay attention to how it feels and I'm going to let it vibrate within my body and I'm going to let it be what it is and I'm going to accept that this is part of the human experience."

Another great example of this for women is labor, being in labor. We know it's going to be painful, and those of us who try to fight it and resist it cause ourselves so much more pain than those of us who breathe into it and allow it and expect it. So listen, I'm not a hero in this case. I got an epidural.

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

I was like, can we buffer this pain away, please? But what I realized – and this is so, I think, important for all of us when we're thinking about our own emotional pain, is that there is no epidural that can keep us from processing it because it's emotional pain. And we will keep recreating it with our mind.

And this is good news because we get better at awareness, we get better at connection with ourselves, and we get better with holding space and allowing ourselves to be in pain. Now, thoughts cause our feelings, but in order to access those thoughts, we have to recognize and allow the feelings to be there because if we start feeling a little bit anxious and we decide, I'm going to go to Starbucks and get a cookie and a latte with sugar in it instead of feeling these feelings, all of a sudden, we're jacked up on the sugar and we're at Starbucks and we had this activity going on.

We're not experiencing what's going on for us emotionally so we never access the thought causing it. So our awareness actually depletes. We actually get less good at becoming more aware of what's going on with us. And as you know, the formula for evolvment is awareness. We have to become aware of ourselves to learn what's going on with us. We have to understand how the human psyche and our emotional life and action works so then we can go out in the world and take more risks and risk being the biggest most alive version of ourselves.

So, if you think about the difference between pain now and delayed pain, you can see that experiencing the pain now, it's like the opposite of procrastinating your work. So let's use the example of procrastinating your work. Let's say you have a paper to write for school. And you could write it right now. You have an hour or two right now, you could write the paper, or you could write it in two weeks, the day before it's due.

The paper's going to take an hour. What is the difference between those two scenarios? Well, scenario one is you're doing it without pressure, so you don't have to get it done. You're not motivated by the anxiety. You can actually take your time and think about it and be in front of it. And you're

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

building up your ability to generate motivation to do something without having that deadline external pressure.

Once you've written it, then you have the next two weeks before it's due to not think about it, to relax and to be in a different space focusing on different things. Well, the same is true with our pain. The same is true when we delay pain by overeating or overdrinking or whatever. We have to deal with the consequences of the buffering and we've now kind of strung that pain out. It hasn't gone away. It's still under the surface and then it comes back with a vengeance, with a cherry on top, or a cookie on top, or a whole lasagna on top. And now, we have much more to deal with than we would have had we just dealt with it in real time.

Some of you, when you first start this work, will not be able to deal with it right as it happens because your awareness skill isn't there. And so people will say to me, "I didn't even know that I was buffering. I didn't even know that I was avoiding pain because it just happened so fast."

And for those of you that feel that way, it's really important that you push your awareness as close as you can to the incident as possible. So, for example, if you notice that you've eaten four cookies and you don't know why, spend the time, immediately upon recognizing that, to find out what happened. And eventually, as your awareness after the fact becomes more common, you'll be able to start anticipating it and being aware of it during the fact.

But it takes practice. When you're super good at avoiding and delaying and pushing away emotion, being willing and able to become aware of it and bring it to the surface immediately will be much more challenging. So the other thing that I want you to question and one of the things that I had to really question in my own life was the idea that pain is a problem.

And when we think of pain as a problem, then we want to solve it. And when we think pain is a problem and we want to solve it, the solution is to not be in pain, and so we misconstrue buffering because it takes us out of pain temporarily as the solution to pain.

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

So instead of asking what's a better solution to pain, I want you to go back even further and question whether pain is even a problem. And I want to suggest to you that it isn't. Pain, no problem, I've got you. I'm willing to experience pain on purpose in order to be healthy mentally.

A lot of people are willing to experience physical pain on purpose in order to be healthy physically. They'll hike up mountains and they'll run on treadmills and they'll go on Pelotons and they'll lift weights and they'll know that it's going to be painful physically temporarily. But it's almost like they start to enjoy a little bit of that pain because they know the benefit of it later is worth it. It's like taking care of that future self.

When you start thinking about pain as a problem to be solved, you're trying to immediately solve it. When you start thinking of pain as something that is here to increase your ability and your awareness to create the exact life you want, then you start softening to it and being open to it and allowing it to be there.

So stop thinking about pain as a problem to be solved. When somebody's crying, when somebody's in pain, a lot of us have the kneejerk reaction of saying, "Oh don't cry, it's okay, what can I do to help you? What can I do to help solve this?" Like, here, make this go away quickly, what can I do?

And I think this comes from when we're children, like when kids are crying, we're like, "How do we make them stop crying immediately?" Like, let's solve the problem. That's their way of communicating. But as adults, it's almost like we need the opposite tactic. We need to, like, let's not try to stop the pain. Let's try and allow it so it can run its course.

So here are some suggestions to managing your pain right now. First, say yes to it. Literally, say yes to it. When you start to feel pain, say yes because immediately you're going to say no. Your brain's going to be like, "Bad, pain bad, fix now." When you say yes and you allow it to come in, it changes the resistance in your body.

The second thing you want to do is describe it. I've given you guys a lot of this instruction when it comes to any kind of uncomfortable feeling. Your

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

awareness will be so increased, so much better increased, when you're able to describe it. Because as soon as you have to witness it in order to describe it, you've pulled yourself from being at the effect of it to being the witness of it.

And that gives you a reprieve and that gives you a release and helps you understand that when you describe it, it's not something that is so terrible that you're going to die from, it's simply a vibration in your body.

Number three, you need to allow the urge to delay it. So you may have an urge to drink something, you may have an urge to eat something. You may have an urge to pack up your house and move down the street. You may have an urge to call an ex-boyfriend or go on Facebook or go on Instagram or whatever. Allow that urge to be there too.

So we're allowing the pain, but we're also allowing the urge to escape the pain. Remind yourself that you're going to have to deal with it anyway. You're going to have to deal with it now or later, so you might as well deal with it now. You might as well process it now because if you deal with it later, what you're doing is you're prolonging your experience of it. Instead of the pain maybe being 10 minutes, now you're going to make it into three days. When you process it up front and release it, then you don't have to keep experiencing it.

Number four, remind yourself that you do have the time. Processing pain, right when you experience it, and understanding it gives you more time than prolonging it and procrastinating it. It affects you less the sooner you can acknowledge and process it.

My number five suggestion is three things that I find help tremendously are silence, being in silence while I'm in pain. Two, journaling about it, writing about it, describing it, being present with it on paper, getting it out of my head, describing what it feels like, describing the thoughts causing it. And the third thing is coaching. Obviously, I'm a huge proponent of coaching, being able to talk about your pain to a coach in a way that they can maybe

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

prompt you to access it on a deeper level and understand what's causing it without trying to change it is really powerful.

There's a lot of coaching organizations out there that want to get you out of pain too quickly. They want to solve for your pain too quickly. And I just want to say, there's nothing wrong with that, it just doesn't work for the longest-term involvement of you. When you are in pain, if you are allowed to be in your pain for as long as it takes to process it, the rest of your life goes so much faster, so it actually buys you more time.

Number six is don't hate or be afraid of pain. This is tricky. What, you want me to like pain? Yeah. Hating pain and being afraid of pain puts you as the victim to your own pain and then you will live your life trying to prevent, prolong, or hide from any kind of pain, which will make your life very, very small.

If we had someone that was born into the world that we needed to make sure never experienced pain, we would have to keep them protected at all times. They would not be able to go out into the world and experience the gloriousness of it because of that need and protection. And I feel like so many of us are doing this without even being aware of it.

We're dodging and ducking and hiding from the experience of pain because we hate pain and we're afraid of pain. So ask yourself, how do you feel when you think about pain? Do you allow your pain? Why or why not?

Number seven is compassion during pain. Now, this is different than comfort during pain. When you're in pain, the attempt to make the pain more comfortable, I think, is counterproductive. Pain isn't comfortable. So when you try to make pain more comfortable, you actually a buffering against it without realizing it.

But having compassion for yourself when you're having pain makes it, I think, almost a spiritual experience. To understand that this is humanness, this is what it's like to be a human, this is what it's like to be alive and it is painful and you can understand and have compassion for yourself as

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

you're experiencing that, I think that's one of the sacred moments that you have in your relationship with yourself.

And as you perpetuate that, you develop a closeness and a trust with yourself. And for me, this is how I've described it to many people is, I'm not afraid of doing big things in my life because I understand that the worst thing that could happen is pain. The worst thing that can happen is a feeling that is painful. That is the worst thing that can happen.

Death isn't the worst thing that can happen because death, you're dead. You don't even know you're dead. The worst thing that can happen is that moment before where you're having emotional pain about it. And so I know that I can handle pain. I know that I can process pain. I know that I can handle the worst thing that can happen so there's no reason for me not to try. There's no reason for me not to put myself out there.

So people will say, well you're just so fearless, but that's not true. I still have all the fear, I'm just not afraid of being able to process the pain. I'm not afraid of pain. I'm not afraid of feeling afraid. I will allow that.

And it's such a subtle distinction that people have a hard time understanding what it is that I'm talking about. So I feel like pain now versus pain later is a great way to kind of practice that and develop the skill of kind of this, "Uh-oh, this is going to hurt."

Like, if someone comes to you and says something like, I want a divorce, or I want to break up, or you're fired, or I don't want to be your customer anymore, whatever, it's like you can feel the circumstance coming in and the thought that you're going to create to cause pain.

And when you say, open, open, open to the pain, right, instead of breaking down, "I have compassion for my pain that's going to happen. I know I'm going to cause it with my thoughts. I know that's how my brain works, and yes, yes, yes to all of it."

## Ep #295: Pain Now or Later

So you have to ask yourself, what can you do to remind yourself to say yes to pain in the moment, to say yes to pain now instead of preventing it and prolonging it?

I've had a lot of clients come to me who have gained lots of weight or who have suffered many, many hangovers. And they're basically displaying their pain through their actions in their attempt to buffer it. It's almost like they're acting out their pain instead of just processing it.

And processing your pain doesn't look like an action. It looks like silence. It looks like a vibration in your body which doesn't look like anything. It looks like an experience that you're having internally. And the more that you can do that, the more confidence you're going to get in your life, the more action you're going to take, the bigger your life will become.

So I want you to look forward to the next time you're in pain. I don't want you to tell yourself you shouldn't be in pain, pain is bad, pain is wrong, especially those of you who are students of the model who know that your pain is caused by your thoughts.

You're the worst because you're like, "Well, if thoughts cause my pain, it's my fault I'm in pain, I'm doing it wrong." That is not the case, my friends. You are a human with a brain that has thoughts. And yes, your thoughts are causing your pain. And yes, that's what it means to be human and that's okay. Just don't delay or deny the pain. Allow it and process through it and evolve because of it. Use it to evolve.

If you think about all the changes that we have made as humans, all of the growth, most of it has been an answer to pain, a desire to get out of pain. And so it does propel us forward if we utilize it, if we listen to it, if we're not afraid of it.

Alright, my friends, I hope you have a very painful week. I'll talk to you next week.

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## **Ep #295: Pain Now or Later**

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