

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

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. How are you doing this holiday season? We just finished Thanksgiving. Everybody still intact? I had an amazing Thanksgiving. My kids were home. My family, my parents were here. We made amazing food. We had a neighborhood block party. We had a great time. Loved it.

I especially love holidays now that I don't drink at all because I feel great all the way through them and refreshed. I get up at almost 5, 5:30 every morning. Really enjoy the morning before everyone wakes up. Just loving it. Loving the holidays now.

So I want to give you all a little bit of an update on what I've been working on lately. I have been working really closely with my son. As some of you may know, he left for college. In fact, he was going to leave and go to DBU College, Dallas Baptist here locally and play golf.

And he got an offer from IMG Academy to go play golf instead. And he decided to go do that because he wants to improve his golf game so he can play division one golf. And he was having some mental struggles. Those of you who know about golf know that it's a mental game.

And so he spent a couple weeks with us and I have been coaching him. And in *Scholars 2.0*, we have a very cool video of me coaching my son and coaching him on his mind as it applies to golf and thinking about himself and thinking about the game and thinking about excellence. It's really good. It's really interesting.

And I've actually learned so much working with him because I'm not usually working with somebody or coaching somebody on a sport. I don't do a lot of one-to-one coaching anymore. I do - mainly the coaching that I do is on making money, losing weight, stopping overdrinking, relationships, those sorts of things, just because that's what most of us are struggling with.

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

I'm not doing a lot of coaching with teenagers on their sport. So I have been learning a lot. And learning a lot that I think we can apply to the problems that we're dealing with in our everyday life as well. Because how the brain works and how the mind thinks about life is very similar, of course, to how the brain thinks and as we apply it to sport.

So look forward for the next few podcasts for me to be sharing some of those insights with you. And also make sure you check out Scholars 2.0, which is now available for enrollment where I have that video in the orientation where we talk with Christian about his mindset and what's going on with his mind.

So fascinating of course how crazy negative our thoughts can be. And how just looking inside my son's brain, my son and I kind of went in his brain together. We were like, wow, there's a lot of negativity in there. So being able to uncover that and work on that has been really fun, especially to do with my own son, of course. I enjoy being able to take all of my work and have him benefit from it as it applies to his sport.

So one of the ideas that I've been talking to him a lot about, because he's working on his golf game but he's also working on his life. He's 19 years old, he wants to think about his future, think about what he wants to do for his life, think about playing golf, but also thinking about his career.

And so I've been trying to teach him all of the lessons that I know will have such a huge impact on his future, that I wish I knew, of course, when I was 18 years old. But I'm hoping that I can share them with him so he can start applying them.

And so I came up with this idea of talking about the adversity quotient when I read about it in a book. Now, there is a book called The Adversity Quotient that I have not read. I'm not going to be talking about that book here. I'm going to be talking about the concept of having the ability of overcoming adversity, and that is the term that I'm using.

You can go online and take a test and see what your quotient is, what your number is for adversity, how well you handle adversity, and that could be

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

interesting for you to check out. But for the sake of this podcast, I'm simply going to be talking about it as a concept because I think it's something we don't talk enough about, and I think it's one of the most important concepts for anyone, especially young people to wrap their mind around.

Because the way that we are trained in school is the exact opposite and what works in life is the exact opposite of what we're taught in school. And so I think it's important that these concepts get shared with all of our young people, but also with ourselves, that we remind ourselves of these things.

So what I want to talk about is how you deal with challenges and obstacles. It's a very simple concept and I've taught it from many different angles on this podcast but I want to teach it to you straight up this time and I want you to think about it in maybe a different way than you've thought about it before.

So basically, if I were to ask you the question, how do you deal with challenges, how would you answer that question? Would you say, "I'm really good with challenges. I look forward to them. I use them to get stronger. I overcome them pretty easily and I never give up?"

If you were to answer that way, I would say you have a pretty high adversity quotient. You are able to embrace and overcome challenges and adversity as part of your life. But most of you would have to really think about that question and the way that you'd have to think about it is in this way.

Some of you are very good at overcoming adversity, but only when you're forced to. And this is a super important distinction because there are things that are going to happen to you in your life that you won't be able to quit. You won't be able to give up on.

For example, if you get a medical diagnosis or if one of your children gets a medical diagnosis, or if you're in a financial situation that you have to overcome in order to feed your family, or if some natural disaster happens in your world, in your city that you have to deal with, this is a different type of challenge than the one I want you to evaluate.

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

Because challenges that we are forced to overcome require a different level of skill. A lower level of skill because we have no choice, we're forced into these situations. We must be able to handle them in order to overcome it. It doesn't mean that we do and it doesn't mean that we're good at it, but it also doesn't require us to be resilient in the sense of choosing the challenge and overcoming it on purpose.

When you're in a challenge that doesn't have the option of quitting, you're testing yourself less than when you're in a challenge that allows you to quit. So what I'd like to talk about here is I want to talk about both of them, but I want you to make sure you separate them in your mind, and here's why.

When you have adversity that you're forced to overcome, that does make you stronger. That does make you learn the skills of overcoming challenges. So it's not that it's not important or relevant. It's just not as powerful of a thing to do as overcoming a challenge that you're choosing, that you have the option of not overcoming.

And that's when I think it gets more interesting, is it's not only okay, here's life and life is going to be challenging and I'm willing to overcome the challenges that come at me. That's one approach. But the other approach is I understand that life can be challenging but I am going to live an even more challenging life on purpose because of my ability to overcome.

Because of my ability to handle adversity on purpose for the sake of getting stronger, or for the sake of having more agency in my life, for the sake of creating the results that I want and living a bigger life that I know will require me to overcome bigger challenges.

So not only how good are you at overcoming challenging, but how willing are you to embrace adversity? How willing are you to go towards it? And when you're in it, how willing are you to stay in it until you overcome it?

One of the things that I was telling Christian and talking to him about was his golf game and the level of golf that he's playing at is very high. And so he goes to these tournaments where there are lots of other golfers who play at a very high level.

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

And he recently went to a tournament where he had a round where he didn't play well, and he was really bummed about it, really upset about it. And one of the things I explained to him was there's a lot of people that don't ever feel as disappointed as he was feeling that day, as challenged, as upset as he was that day.

And one of the reasons why he was as upset as he was is because he's putting himself in the game. He's putting himself in the tournament at that highest level, where he is risking not doing well in front of all of his peers, in front of all of the coaches.

Someone who's not playing golf, someone who's sitting on the couch and watching Netflix isn't risking that. So even though they may have a lower grade of disappointment about not being able to do what they want to be doing in their life, they're not putting themselves in what I call harm's way, as often.

And I think about this a lot. I love watching football with my family. We watch it on Sundays. We just all sit on the couch and watch football. It's so fun. And I'm always worried about the kickers because it seems like many times during games, the outcome of the game will be determined on whether the kicker is able to make a field goal or an extra point.

And they often don't make them. They often miss those extra points and those field goals, and I always think about how they might be feeling and the level of disappointment they may have from not having made that kick. And I like to think about how it compares to how I feel in my life or how other people that I work with feel in their lives.

Is it the same kind of feeling that we get from just living a regular normal life? I think the answer is no. Because we're not on that public display, we're not taking that big of a risk in terms of what we're showing up to do. So I'm always challenging my kids and myself like, how can we put ourselves in those positions where we're risking that much and needing to overcome those failures so that we can come back the next game and kick the game-winning field goal, and then having that experience as well.

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

So I think sports is a good metaphor for us as to how often are we putting ourselves out there on the field to kick that field goal, knowing that we could lose the game, knowing that we could risk the fail, knowing that we could have a public epic fail.

So the capacity to come back again and again and be willing to be challenged by these complex problems is that adversity quotient. It is that skill that we develop. It's one of the most important skills that I teach in Self-Coaching Scholars is how do we keep coming back to the same problem or to a thing that we've already failed at?

How do we keep putting ourselves in harm's way on purpose? Because that is what is required for massive action. That is what helps us achieve all of us our goals. That is what takes us to the next level of our lives.

Oftentimes I'll sit down with people and they'll say, "How do you do it? How do you create so much success in your life? How has your business been so successful? How has your life been so successful?" And I always simplify it down to the only difference between my level of success and someone who isn't as successful as me is I just never gave up and I will never give up.

And I see it in my students too. The students that I have that are the most successful in their coaching and in their businesses are just the ones that keep coming back to the grind. They keep coming back and putting themselves in "harm's way." Continually willing to fail because when you claw your way through a failure, it makes you stronger.

It also makes you less afraid. It makes you less afraid of risking the worst that can happen, when the worst that can happen has already happened. When you've gone to a golf tournament and you haven't played your best and you put up a score that you're not proud of, it makes it less challenging to do it again if you use this skill.

So here's how this could work. If you go - let's say you're my son and you go to a golf tournament and you don't play well, and you put up a score that you don't like and that you're not proud of, and you decide, okay, golf's not

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

for me. This is too hard. I'm not going to put myself in this position again. This feels awful. I'm embarrassed.

All those things, and you decide I'm quitting golf, I'm going to go do something else in order to get that relief, in order to hide, in order to spare yourself from any kind of public ridicule, imagined or real. That's the stopping point.

When you give up there, that's the ultimate fail because you've said, okay, I can't handle this adversity anymore. And the difference between the golfers that actually end up going on and playing at the highest level are the ones that put up all those "terrible scores" and overcome them and keep playing.

And that's really it. Are you willing to keep playing? I was watching my son in his golf round and I could tell that mentally, he had lost it. He had started going down a negative spiral. So he kept hitting these shots that were not good, and not what he was capable of.

And it was fascinating to just watch how his mind affected where that ball went. It was totally fascinating to me. And we got to the point where it was just like, okay, this is ridiculous. Maybe I should just - this is what I was thinking. Maybe we should just call it a day. This is not going to get any better. Maybe we should just take a break and step aside from this golf round.

And I just watched him go to hole after hole after hole and continually play and hold his head up high and do his best on every single shot. And I pointed out to him that like, this game of golf - and before he used to be a goalie for soccer. And even that game really teaches us how to fail out loud, on purpose, and keep going, and to not let anything hold us back, regardless of what anyone else might think or what we might think of ourselves.

Can we keep going in the face of adversity? And clearly, there are extremes of adversity. You can't compare playing a sport to someone having a medical diagnosis in the sense of the severity of the consequences that are at hand. But you can compare them in the sense of

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

it takes the same skill, the same mental agility and the same mental focus and strength to overcome those challenges.

So I want you to think about this. When you are facing adversity, does it overwhelm you or do you rise to meet it? Do you have the strength to step into it? To own it? To be willing to be it, to risk falling down over and over and over again? And how many times are you willing to fail? Does failing make you more motivated? Does it make you stronger?

Now, what this will depend on is your mindset, is how you think about adversity. Do you use it as a trial to your benefit? Do you use it as something that's supposed to be happening for you to get better, or are you angry at it? Are you rejecting it? Are you thinking that it's something that should not be happening? Is it something that you feel entitled not to experience?

I find myself in my own life feeling entitled to being adversity-free. And this is not useful. When I start saying, "Well, this shouldn't be happening, and this challenge shouldn't be happening, and I shouldn't be having to deal with this, and aren't I over this already," whenever I have attitudes like that, that's when I get overwhelmed. That's when I get frustrated.

That's when I don't use my obstacles and use my adversity and my challenges to make me stronger, to make me grow, to use them as opportunities to coach myself. I have gotten to the point when my mindset is right that I can use adversity to fuel myself, to see it as part of the curriculum of my life, to see it as a trial that is there on purpose to make me stronger.

I think when you look at your history and you look at your life and you look at how you have treated adversity in the past, it will show you kind of where your quotient is. Are you constantly trying to escape adversity? I spent a lot of my life trying to change my circumstances to avoid any kind of adversity, to deny it, to move on from it, to bury it.

And what I noticed is when I did that, it actually made me weaker and less powerful. And the reason why is I was giving all the power to the

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

circumstance outside of myself. I was giving all of the strength away to the problem. And by running away from it, I left the strength with the problem.

But now, when I look at a complex problem and I see oh, this is a vitamin, that if I utilize it and I overcome it will make me stronger, it's like a weight in the gym. If I lift this up, I will become stronger for it, and then the next problem and the next problem will all be easier. As long as I'm avoiding and running away from problems, the world gets stronger and more powerful against me. As long as I utilize the problems as a way of strengthening my brain and my resolve, then I get stronger.

So again, how do you respond to adversity? And is it the way you want to be responding? Are you living your life in a way where you respond to adversity in a way that you want to? In a way that makes you stronger? Are you going out there and embracing challenges? Are you willing to go through the discomfort to create the results that you want?

Can you take the obstacles in your life and turn them into opportunities? When you think about your emotional life, when you think about the range of emotions that you have in a day, and you think about the people who are living their lives in a way that are extremely challenging, where there's a high risk of failure, do you see the difference in the emotional variety that is available to you and maybe someone that you aspire to be like?

Are they showing up and putting themselves out there in a way that maybe you aren't? And I think this is super important to be super honest with yourself about this because I think a lot of times, we tell ourselves, "I would love to be a kicker in the NFL," for example. I would love to do that.

But when you think about what they're dealing with emotionally, is that what you're willing to do? Are you willing to put yourself out there? Now, when I talk to my son Christian about this for golfing, he imagines, yes, I'd love to be a professional golfer. But when he imagines a professional golfer, he's thinking about all of their wins.

He's thinking about when they win the Masters and when they win the PGA tour. But you have to also consider all of the other emotional adversity that

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

they are experiencing at a level, at a higher level than most of us are. Because of how they're showing up and how they're putting themselves out there and what they're requiring of themselves.

So if you want a life that's bigger than the life that you have right now, you have to decide that you want an emotional life that's bigger than the one you have right now, which means you're going to have to learn the skill of overcoming the adversity, the problems with the negative emotion. Your emotional management is going to have to be turned up.

I think a lot of people do this backwards. They go after these huge goals in their life and they start taking a lot of action and as they're taking action, they are most likely facing adversity and failing a lot along the way. And if they haven't prepared themselves emotionally, it becomes emotionally overwhelming and that's where quitting just to get the emotional relief comes in as a solution.

And so what I'm suggesting is that we learn how to embrace the emotional management. We prepare for the negative emotion, we know that it's coming, and not only do we know that it's coming, but we're prepared for it as part of the process to make us stronger. The more we're willing to feel negative emotion on purpose, the stronger we're going to get emotionally. The more willing we're going to get when it comes to facing problems and overcoming them.

I often say that I think one of the worst emotions that I've experienced or that we can experience is humiliation. Terror and humiliation, I think are pretty close because I think humiliation is so associated to terror with us because of our tribal nature as human beings. And being ostracized from a group is equivalent to death.

That's why so many people have such a fear of public speaking. You're separated from the group. You're standing on the stage and there's all those people that can ridicule you that are in the audience. And of course, most of the time they don't do that, but that's our major fear.

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

So if you think about it, if you're willing to experience the emotion of humiliation, if you're willing to experience the emotion of terror, you all of a sudden have that emotional confidence that will drive you through adversity, that will take you to the other side of it. You won't always be trying to escape it and get relief.

So I think one of the best ways to measure your ability to overcome adversity is how quickly you utilize the challenge to make yourself stronger. Like I said before, your adversity will either make you weaker or it will make you stronger. And here's a good way of evaluating that.

If you go for the short-term emotional relief, you will most likely be making yourself weaker every time you face adversity. Because you'll face adversity, you'll want to feel better, so you'll quit whatever it is, or you'll hide whatever it is, you'll deny it, which gives all the power to the problem, gives all the power to the adversity and makes you weaker, makes you less strong because you're not utilizing the weight in the gym. You're just leaving it there. So the weight wins, so to speak.

But if when you face the problem, the failure, the adversity, you utilize that, you lift it up, you move towards it, you work through it, you keep coming back to it until it is solved, it will make you stronger. Remember that the definition of massive action is taking action until you get the result you want.

So what that requires is taking action, failing, taking action, failing, taking action, failing, overcoming the fail, overcoming the fail, overcoming the adversity until you get the result you want. Now, by the time you get the result you want, you've overcome so much adversity that your level of strength will be much higher had you not faced any of that adversity.

You are stronger because of it. You are better because of it. Your accomplishment of that goal not only gives you the goal, but it gives you more resolve, more resilience, more strength as a human being in terms of your emotional management. That is the reason to set big goals, my friends.

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

You set these big goals, not just to cash the checks or buy the smaller clothes or be free from the drinking or have the relationship, but because of who you will become in the process of achieving the goal. So if you go out on a golf round and you play perfect golf three rounds and you win the tournament, that will be fun and you will have won a tournament and you will get some recognition.

But you will mostly not have changed as a person in a significant way. But if you go out and you fail at a couple of those rounds and then you overcome that adversity and play a good round, you will have become stronger because you failed, because it was difficult, because it was hard.

So for those of you trying to build businesses or trying to save marriages or trying to build relationships, see the adversity as the ingredients to greatness. See it as the curriculum, as the stepping stone, embrace it, move towards it, accept it in a way that really incorporates and digests the idea that it's supposed to be hard.

Greatness is supposed to be hard. It's supposed to require you overcoming adversity. If someone goes into the MBA because they're 7'4 and they're just taller than everyone so you just throw the ball up to him and they dunk it, being tall hasn't required them to overcome the adversity, as if they were shorter and had to overcome that.

So the strength and the internal change that is required when there's more adversity can actually make your life so much richer. Here's the last thing I'll say on this. It doesn't matter what area of your life you practice this in. For my son Christian, right now, it's golf. And I love this sport for him, not because the sport is so amazing or because he'll become a pro golfer and make millions of dollars.

That's not it at all. It's because whatever area you're working on overcoming adversity, then you can use in every area of your life. So as he works to become a better golfer, he has to overcome his mind. He has to overcome adversity. He has to overcome his own challenges. And he will

Ep #297: Adversity Quotient

be able to take all of those lessons and all of that strength and apply it to all the other areas of his life.

His relationship with himself, his relationship with his loved ones, his job, his goals, anything he wants, he'll be able to use these skills. So that's what I want to recommend for you as well. Pick an area of your life where you are willing to go to battle with adversity.

Maybe it's developing an exercise program. Maybe it's losing weight and developing a protocol, or maybe it's making money in your business. Are you willing to go in and say bring it on? Bring on the adversity. Don't expect success and don't expect it early. Expect to work for it. Expect to overcome adversity to get there.

And here's something that's so important to remember. If you overcome adversity after adversity after adversity, if you overcome challenge and obstacle and you don't achieve your ultimate success, you don't achieve your ultimate goal, it doesn't matter because you will have become stronger in the going for it.

You will have become someone who is more resilient, who is stronger, for having had the goal, rather than just sitting on the couch. So you may never shoot that 65, you may never kick that game-winning field goal, but having been out there on the field, working as hard as you need to work to be able to be there, you will have become more of the person you're capable of being.

So be willing to sign up for adversity. Be willing to let it make you stronger. Use it for you, not against you. And never, ever, ever quit. Alright my friends, have a beautiful week. I'll talk to you next week. Take care.

Hey, if you enjoy listening to this podcast, you have to come check out Self-Coaching Scholars. It's my monthly coaching program where we take all this material and we apply it. We take it to the next level and we study it. Join me over at the TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. Make sure you type in the TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. I'd love to have you join me in Self-Coaching Scholars. See you there.