

Ep #299: Great Teachers



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.

What do you mean episode 299? Crazy town. So exciting. Next week it's going to be an exciting episode. Stay tuned. But this week, we are going to talk about teacher relationships. And I love this topic so much because I feel as if so much of my life has been treated and cared for and comforted by my relationships with teachers.

And one of the most interesting things that I've been thinking about lately is these relationships that are seemingly one sided, where I have these relationships with these teachers that have had such a profound impact in my life, that have been some of my most important relationships in my life, and yet these are people that I haven't ever even met in person. Or if I did, it was just basically like, hi, hello.

There would be no recollection. And yet this person has been the most influential person in my entire life. They've taught me the most. They've had the biggest impact on me. My relationship with them has been the most influential.

And so I've received many letters and many messages from so many of my listeners and from my students who are my clients, who have told me the same thing, who have told me that their relationship with me is one of their most important relationships. And what I've taught them is the most important information that they've ever learned and it's had such an impact on them.

And so I've been thinking a lot about this and especially because I think the teacher-student relationship is a sacred one. And I think it's such an important one for us to reflect on as we think about who are the most important people in our lives.

We so often think about our family and the people that we see every day as the most important people of our lives, and they are, but there's also these teacher-student relationships that become so important to us. So I feel like I

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truly understand when there is a student that I've never met before and they come up to me or they write me and they talk to me about how much they love me, and they talk to me about how important I am to them, I get it.

But I'll sometimes have someone with me, or I'll have a friend and they'll say, "Wow, that person has this relationship with you and you don't even have a relationship with them." And what I often say to them is, "But I do have a relationship with them. I have such an intense, intimate, deep relationship with all of my students in the sense that I understand what it is they want to learn and why they want to learn it because I've been there."

And so I wanted to take this episode to talk about these sacred teacher-student relationships and I wanted to talk a little bit about what I think makes a good teacher and how to be a good student. And then I wanted to share with you some of my favorite teachers in the world and some guidelines that I have around utilizing teachers in our lives.

Because I think sometimes, we can end up misusing our teachers and using them to buffer. Not that I've ever done that personally, but you may have struggled with this yourself. So let's talk about teachers and let's talk about what makes someone an important teacher to you and what makes you an amazing student.

I'll start with the fact that I think I'm an amazing student and I think the reason is I love to learn and I love being taught. I love great teachers. Now, what's interesting about most of my relationships with most of my teachers is that I haven't ever been in the room physically with them, having them teach me.

So being a good student isn't about how you are in the classroom. It's not that you're quiet and you're attentive and you're raising your hand and so the teacher sees you and gives you an A+. That's how what being a good student is in the way that I'm describing it.

So for those of you who are in school who had teachers tell you that you're a really good student, they may mean something like you're getting straight

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As, or you're participating in class or whatever. They may mean something different than what I mean here.

What I mean is that being a great student is about taking what the teacher is teaching you and utilizing it in your life. Taking it and applying it and changing yourself because of what they taught you. I think that is what it means to be a great student.

I feel like the best teachers I've ever had have a lot in common. One of the main things I look for in teachers is are they teaching by their example. So what I mean by that is they're not simply teaching facts or teaching ideas or teaching concepts to me that they're not living.

And it's always evident by the way that they teach. It's not like I'm watching them live their life. It's not like I'm spying on them at their house to see if they're actually living that way. I can tell if they're living by that example by how they share their stories, by how they show up in their actual teaching because they're able to give me examples of how they've experienced their own teaching in their own life.

Great teachers tell stories. As humans, we learn so well through story and through examples of the theory, examples of the content. And so when a teacher can tell a story about how they've experienced something, or they can tell a story about how their students have experienced something, the concepts and the theories and the ideas can come alive. And I feel like I integrate them much more into my life when there is a direct experience that I can reflect on and apply then to my own life.

Great teachers stay on track. And here's what I mean by that. If you are a great teacher and you're taking a concept and you're making it come alive with examples and stories, you're not getting lost in the examples or the stories. You're not taking them down a different - it's not like squirrel, and then all of a sudden you're onto a different topic, you're way off topic, you've lost where you started and we can't find our way back.

Great teachers give a concept, demonstrate with a story, come back to the concept, see how it relates, and they stay on track. I know that many of

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you, like me, have been in classrooms where the teacher - you're like, what are they even talking about? I don't understand where this tangent is going.

And I feel like when teachers go off on tangents, they often are indulging themselves. It's like they have an audience and they have a story they want to tell and it doesn't relate to what the student came there to learn, but they tell it anyway. That is a really frustrating thing for me. I think great teachers are aware of their audience and don't indulge themselves and lose their audience in that way.

They require their students to think and challenge them to think. Great teachers aren't talking at us. They're not telling us this is what you must know and this is what you must learn. They're asking us to consider ideas. They're asking us to try them on. They're asking us to apply them to our lives so we can see if they're resonating with us, if they are true to us.

Great teachers make concepts simple. One of the things that you've probably heard me say that I really believe is that it takes a lot more time to teach something in a simple way than it does in a complex way. When I'm doing my own teaching, I spend a lot of time trying to make a concept that's challenging to grasp simple to understand.

And I think the reason why I'm so good at this is because it's how my brain learns. I have a much harder time understanding complex ideas. I think my brain is less sophisticated than a lot of people, and so I need stuff spelled out for me. I need stuff simplified for me. And because I'm a learner in that way, that's how I teach. That's how I explain.

And I have found that the very best teachers take the time to make things simple. They take the time to repeat concepts, to make sure that their students are understanding those concepts and they don't feel like, oh, my students already know this so I won't talk about it. They take those concepts and they talk about them constantly and consistently until they make sure their students fully understand them.

I've taught coaches about teaching for years now and sometimes when I'm giving feedback to a coach on their teaching, they'll say, "Well, I already

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taught them that concept.” And I always giggle. I’m like, so what? What do you mean? One time? You taught them a concept one time? It takes our brain many times in order to learn something and understand it.

One of the feedbacks that I get so often from students is like, “I’ve heard you say this so many times but this time it just really resonated with me. I really understood it. You explained it in a new way.” So taking complex concepts and making them simple and repeating them often I think is one of the skills of a really good teacher.

Another thing that I think great teachers do is they put energy, preparedness, and thoughtfulness into their service and into their offering. When I have a teacher that comes to a classroom or comes to teach something and they’re clearly not prepared, they haven’t thought about what they’re going to teach, they haven’t practiced what they’re going to teach, I think it’s very obvious.

I get questions a lot of times when I’m teaching a webinar, my students will come to me afterwards and they’ll say, how are you so natural? How do you just flow so easily? How do you know what to say next? And I always tell them, well, I practiced it. I had an outline and I practiced before I taught it.

And they’re always so like, flabbergasted, like why did you practice the webinar? On the Model you’ve taught it so many times. I practice everything before I teach it. I feel like that is something that we owe our students. They are giving us their time. They are paying with their time and it’s our job to honor their time. And one of the ways we can do that is by practicing and being prepared.

The other piece of that is really bringing energy to what we do and making sure that we generate good, positive, exciting, engaging, interesting energy when we’re teaching something. When you feel like you’re low on energy, it is your job as a teacher to liven it up and to talk a little bit quicker and to be excited about what you’re teaching, to be interested in your own topic.

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All of us have been in a classroom where the teacher is clearly not interested in what they're teaching us and it makes us so we're not interested. They're droning on and on about concepts and ideas and just conveying and lecturing at us in a way that makes learning painful, literally. Great teachers are never like that. Great teachers find a way to be excited about their topic and they bring that energy and that excitement to the teaching.

One of the classes that I'm teaching this coming up year, one of the courses that I'm teaching that is open to the public is called How to be Interesting. It is my business workshop and I'm going to be talking a lot about the difference between boring and interesting.

It seems like such a basic thing. It seems like such a common sense thing, but I promise you, it's not. Most people are not naturally interesting. Most people are really, really boring and the thing that is frustrating for me is that they're not even aware of it. They're not aware that they're boring.

And so as a teacher, it's hard for me to be like, hey dude, you're boring, although I do say that if someone's boring. But I also say, "And here's how to make it more interesting and here's how to be a better teacher."

And I think I've learned how to be a good teacher by having great teachers. And I think paying attention to what makes them great has been what I've incorporated into my own teaching career in order to make my ability to teach so much better.

So let me tell you about a few of those teachers and what makes them great. And I want to encourage you to check out those teachers as well and then I'm going to give you some teacher rules. My most cherished teacher, the one that I think about the most often is my teacher, Mrs. Gabil. And she was my algebra teacher in high school.

And I adored her. She taught us very complex math concepts in a way that was interesting and exciting and full of energy. And she challenged me to think and she challenged me to do my homework and apply this work and to discuss it with her.

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And although I had very little interest in algebra and I didn't see how it would affect me in my life, she made that topic come alive for me. She made me want to work hard in that class. And when I had a concept that she was teaching that I was really struggling with, that I wasn't - it was like, quadratic equations, I'm sure something like that, I had a hard time grasping. I went in after class with her and sat with her and she gave me a lot of work to do.

She said, "If you're really interested in learning and making sure that you do this right, I want you to do all these problems." And I did all of the problems and I remember so vividly getting a test back after I'd put in all that extra work and I had done so well on it.

And she had made me interested in something that was totally uninteresting, and it had a positive impact on my life. And I think a lot of times, I think about her because when I first introduced the Model to people, I think it's confusing. I think a lot of times they're not interested. I think for some people it looks like algebra. They don't really get it.

And so I often think about how can I get them interested in it? How can I make it so it matters to them? How can I show them my excitement around the Model so they will then be interested in learning about it just like I became interested in learning about algebra?

The other thing about Mrs. Gabil that I think is important to note is that I vividly remember how she showed up to class. She was always impeccably dressed and very well groomed and very organized and very prepared for class and very energetic, and she knew everyone's name and she knew where we were in the class and she helped us through all of our individual struggles. I think that all of those things made her such an example for me of being a good teacher.

The other teacher that I think about a lot is Robin Norwood, and I talk about her a lot on this podcast because she had I think more influence on me than anybody else because she was the very first self-help book that I read. And what I learned by reading what she wrote about herself and her clients

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was that real people's experiences told in story form really make ideas come alive.

And relating them to me by telling other people's stories made it so I could make it real in my own life. And I really did apply everything that she taught. And she communicated in a way with such authority and such conviction and such belief in the possibility of healing that I believed her.

And I think oftentimes, our best teachers are the ones that believe in us harder than we believe in ourselves and show us the way and understand our doubt and understand our confusion and help us work through that so we can find our way to the other side.

And I will say that I think she did that for me first before anyone else had every done it. And when I realized that that was possible, when I realized that I could learn and be influenced so heavily by just reading someone's book, I started to understand the power of a relationship with somebody that I had never even met.

She had, at that time in my life, I think I was 19 years old, had much more profound impact on me than anybody ever had by teaching me what she taught me in that book. The book was called Women Who Love Too Much, and I was just coming out of a painful relationship and that book influenced me very heavily and it still influences me. It still has such a huge impact on my life.

And I think seeing the power of that made me fall in love with the idea of being a teacher and helping people manage their emotions and their emotional life. So I think without that book, I don't know that I would have ever started onto this trajectory.

The next teacher that comes to mind who had such a profound effect on me was Byron Katie. Byron Katie is an interesting teacher for me because I had such an intense relationship with her for a short amount of time. So what that looked like was I found her work and I literally read every single thing and listened to every single thing all day long until I was exasperated.

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Like, I studied her work and learned from her with an obsession mind. I could feel myself shifting under the power of her teaching. Katie really gave me this sense of the Model in a way that I hadn't had it before. I did not know until I met Byron Katie that my thoughts created my feelings.

I couldn't imagine that I'd never been told that. I couldn't imagine that I had a psychology degree and didn't truly understand that. She really demonstrated that in a way that rocked my world. And I feel like her demonstration of simplicity was one of the most important lessons that I ever learned from her.

She has four questions and a turnaround that she does in her work and that's it. There's no added fluff, there's no added exercise, there's no nothing. You just do four questions and a turnaround, and she just did it over and over and over and over again with people. And I learned so much from her example and her ability to teach.

And her intense kindness and obvious unconditional love for all of her students had an amazing impact on me. I will say that the other thing that Katie taught me that I use in my coaching practice all the time that I learned by just her example and just watching her was Katie always loves everyone who isn't in the room.

She always identifies and has compassion for anyone, even if the person in front of her is hating that person, she loves the person that her client is hating. And that had such a profound impact on my concept of unconditional love and helping people learn that. And I think I don't know that I would have learned it in the way that I did, at the depth that I have, without Byron Katie.

She taught me more about unconditional love. She demonstrated that more than any other teacher that I've ever had. I highly recommend all of Byron Katie's books. I highly recommend that you check out her work.

A lot of people have told me that her work is a little bit too intense for them and that it goes too far for them, and I think that's okay. I think everyone's perception of a teacher is fine. But I don't want you to negate all of her work

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just because there may be some intense stuff that you don't agree with. Expose yourself to her. She's amazing.

Another teacher that I've learned a tremendous amount from is Amy Porterfield. I know that some of you who are coaches or who are in the online business space know of Amy. Amy is a teacher of business and marketing who teaches courses online.

And I think Amy has taught me more about being a woman entrepreneur online by her example more than anyone. When I was first starting out, Amy was really my guide. I really saw that she was working from home, she was kind of a one-person shop. She was creating beautiful courses and products. She loved her students. She simplified everything that was being taught online in a way that I could understand.

And so I've used her as a role model in my life to see how to build a business and I've just had so much respect for her in the way that she's talked about how much money she makes and how many clients she has and how she creates her courses and how she runs her business. And she's really just opened the backstage to us so we can all learn from her.

I have so many memories of when I lived in California, going on walks and just listening to Amy talk about her business and just hearing myself, hearing my own thoughts believe, "Oh my gosh, this is possible for me." Amy made me believe by teaching me what she knew, that I could have an online business that could make millions of dollars.

And she also taught me by being an example of that and going out there and doing her job in the world, which I so appreciate. I listened to her podcast religiously. I think that she is one of the great examples of someone who brings energy and preparedness and professionalism to every single thing she does. She's impeccable.

And there are for sure worse teachers that you could emulate than Amy Porterfield. She kind of sets the standard for the level of good teaching I think in our online business industry.

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That being said, I'm also super grateful and have so much admiration for Russell Brunson. I think that what he created with his business and how he taught had a tremendous impact on me. And as a student, I learned so much about marketing by studying him.

He's written two extraordinary books that you can find by going to I think clickfunnels.com. You can find his books. He's written his secret books. And he taught me about funnels. He taught me about marketing. He taught me about creating value and how important it is to communicate that value to your customers and how creating an offer that is invaluable, how important that is.

I have listened to, I'm going to say, thousands of hours of him. His energy when he teaches is off the hook. His excitement about marketing, his ability to teach in a way that I understand and can apply immediately is profound. I never miss one of his podcasts. I think he is an extraordinary teacher.

I actually think he's one of the teachers that I have that's younger than me. I think Amy is younger than me too actually. They are younger than me, but I feel as if they're my elders. They've gone before me. They know so much more than me and they teach it in a way that is really easy for me to grasp. They're two of my most favorite business teachers.

Another teacher that had a tremendous impact on me when I was younger was Marianne Williamson. When cassettes were still a big deal, when we all had cassette tapes in our car and Walkmans in our pockets, I was obsessively listening to Marianne Williamson.

And what she taught me about loving unconditionally and what she taught me about being kind and compassionate and holding space for all things holy and spiritual, I think the repeated dialogue that she had in my ear when I listened to her, *Return to Love* or *A Woman's Worth*, I think programmed my brain in a way that taught me to respect myself.

It taught me a lot about how to be a woman in a relationship and how to be a woman who has self-respect and knows how to love other people and is non-judgmental. I feel like she taught that so beautifully. I saw her speak a

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couple times publicly, and I think that she also represents what I think most great teachers have is that professionalism.

Impeccably dressed, prepared, organized, new ideas, challenging ideas, and challenging concepts, made simple and clear. And always kind of inviting us to apply them to our lives. I dreamt about being more like Marianne Williamson my whole life. I wanted to be as graceful and impactful as she was as a speaker.

And although I'm far away from her level of grace, she never swears, I don't think. I haven't really heard her swear very much. She's only for impact. But she really, I feel like in so many ways, helped raise me. She taught me what I needed to know about my relationship with myself and I'll always feel very close to her.

It's kind of like when I see her having challenges in her life, when I see her struggling with anything in her life, I feel the same way as I would if it was a family member. Because I feel so close. I love her so much and even though she doesn't know who I am, I feel so much love for her and so much compassion for what she ever has to go through in her life. So I think that's what good teachers do is they create a relationship with their students without even having to be in their students lives.

Another one of my teachers was Geneen Roth. First of all, I just want to go on record saying that I think Geneen Roth might be the best writer on the planet. I think that her work and her writing is extraordinary. It matches like a key to a keyhole with what I love reading.

When I read a Geneen Roth book, I feel like I am having the most delicious experience on the planet. When she writes a book, I cannot wait to get ahold of it. I don't want it to end. I re-read paragraphs. I re-read everything.

Geneen wrote, back in the 80s, about emotional eating in a way that I had never understood before. And she talked about how punishing ourselves with food is the ultimate in self-destruction and how we can use other ways of taking care of ourselves besides food. And those lessons are so deep within me.

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And I've applied them and used them in my life, but I think the thing that Geneen did as a teacher to me more than anything is I felt so much love from her. I felt as if she loved me. Now, that sounds crazy when I never met her. I went to her workshop but I never met her one to one. But I felt loved by her.

I felt understood by her. I felt like she cared how I treated myself. She cared about us as women collectively healing ourselves. And there were many days where I did not feel enough love for myself but I borrowed her love of her students and utilized that to feel love for me, for myself.

Of course, it's my thinking that caused that, but I will say she was such an amazing demonstrator of loving and loving her students. And so I am literally in love with Geneen Roth and always will be. And I think it's so interesting to think that I don't have a deep desire to even meet her and I think that's so crazy.

Because people say, "You're so in love with her, don't you want to go and hang out with her for a day? Wouldn't it be amazing to have her on the podcast and talk to her?" And I want to say that when you understand that relationships are really just your thoughts about those people and you can feel as close as you want to them, I actually think that might have the opposite effect.

Having that personal relationship with her wouldn't be that teacher-student relationship, and that's the relationship that's so sacred to me is I feel like Geneen and Marianne Williamson helped raise me as a child. And so my relationship with them is kind of preserved in that timeframe of my life.

And although I don't necessary learn from them right now, I have just such a close feeling relationship with them. So I don't need to go get a selfie with them or anything like that. That's the opposite of what I need. I already feel completely complete in those relationships. Those teacher relationships.

And the last couple are Tony Robbins was one of my most amazing teachers. Talk about keeping you riveted and excited and his energy and the concepts that he taught will always have a huge impact on my life. And

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I constantly see what I learned from Tony showing up in my life. And it's so fun to talk to all my friends that are also students of Tony's and how so much of their success can be traced back to a lot of what they learned from him.

And the last one is Abraham Esther Hicks. I learned so much about the law of attraction by listening to their concepts and their ideas on deliberate creation and manifesting and managing emotions. And so I think they're a great example of kind of a weird type of teaching.

Like this non-physical entity that seems so alien and so weird, it just doesn't matter because what matters is the material that we learn. What matters is the concepts. That's what makes the relationship with the teacher so powerful is are they an example of the concepts that they're teaching. And the work becomes what matters.

And a lot of times, when students say to me, "I just want your autograph," or, "I just want to have you sign my book," or, "I just want to have a selfie with you, that would mean the world to me," I often want to say to them what means the world to me though is the work in your life, is the relationship we have that isn't about the surface selfie picture, that isn't about those moments that aren't as meaningful as the work that we've done in the world together.

Because even though maybe I haven't met you or we haven't taken a selfie together, the work we're doing together by you learning what I'm teaching and you applying that to your life, that is the sacred relationship. And even though it's fun to meet each other and say hi and talk about it, that's not the most important part. The most important part is the work that we've done.

So I want to end a little bit with giving you some guidelines as it applies to having teachers in your life. I think these are guidelines that I've learned the hard way that are really useful. And the most important one is to try not to have too many teachers at a time, especially teachers that contradict each other.

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So picking a few teachers to study at a time that complement each other I think is the best way to go. Take what resonates with you and leave the rest. I think a lot of times we start studying a certain teacher and they teach something that you don't agree with, or maybe they have a political affiliation that you don't agree with, or they eat a certain type of food that you don't believe in eating, or something like that.

And so you end up throwing out all the baby with the bath water. And what I want to suggest is take everything that resonates and feels good to you and makes sense to you and then just delete the rest of it. You don't have to choose between your teachers. You don't have to follow and believe one teacher at the expense of the others.

In fact, I think it's much more healthy for you to incorporate bits and pieces from everyone and to make your own teaching recipe, to incorporate what you learn from your teachers one at a time will end up - if you apply those to your life, it will end up creating something better than had you just followed and repeated what that one teacher had done.

I always encourage this with my students as well. A lot of them want to be really good students so they want to study every single thing I teach, even if it doesn't resonate with them. And I always tell them, just let that part go. If there's something - maybe you don't like to work on weight loss. Just because I teach about weight loss doesn't mean you have to pay any attention to that if what you're really focused on is relationships.

So pick your teachers carefully, but then also pick what you take from your teachers carefully. And lastly, I just want to suggest that you credit and honor your teacher relationships in your life. Those are sacred intimate relationships. Those relationships are just as important and real as the relationships with the people that are in your real life, that are in your physical real life is what I mean.

A lot of you have told me that you feel silly that you feel so close to me, or that you feel kind of embarrassed that you feel like I'm such an important person in your life. And I just want to let you know that there is absolutely

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nothing silly about that. That is real and powerful and all of those teachers that I just told you about are significant, huge, important people in my life.

And I do not diminish them just because I don't know them. I do not think that - and I mean know them in the physical sense because I do feel like I do know them in the most important sense. I feel like I know them so much deeper and more than I do a lot of people in my physical life.

So I want to encourage you to honor those teacher relationships. And even if it's a teacher you had long ago, notice how much they're still impacting and influencing you. And just take a minute to kind of give them a nod in your mind and to be grateful for them because those relationships really determine who we end up being in our lives.

And always seeking out teachers who challenge you and ask you to grow because I think those types of teachers are the ones that will keep encouraging you to take your life to the next level.

Alright my friends, I hope you have an amazing, beautiful week. I'll talk to you next week for episode 300. Talk to you then. Bye.

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