

## Ep #312: Feeling Awful



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With Your Host

**Brooke Castillo**

## Ep #312: Feeling Awful

You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo episode 312.

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. Today, we are going to talk about the most amazing topic. We're going to talk about feeling awful. You're welcome. So many of you are human that listen to this podcast, which means from time to time, you are going to feel awful. And it's not something I think we talk enough about. And it's something that I think a lot of us feel shame talking about and shame about feeling awful.

So, recently, I was talking to one of my friends, and I hadn't talked to her in a while, and I was telling her and sharing some of my business success with her and bringing her up to speed on how incredible the business is going and how fast our industry is growing and what's been going on for us personally and financially and all of the goodness that is going on in my life.

And a lot of times, because we attribute feelings to circumstances, we think, "Okay, well, all of these amazing external things are going on. That must mean that you're feeling amazing," right? Because external always matches internal. And that hasn't been my experience recently.

I have been kind of going through the grind emotionally. And I'm always up for it. I always know that that's part of my human experience and I know that sometimes my anxiety is worse than other times. And I don't take issue with it. I allow for it and I move towards it and it's good.

And that's something that she was kind of laughing about. She was like, "Even when you're going through it, you're, like, laughing about it. Even when you're struggling emotionally, it doesn't seem like you're struggling emotionally because of the way that you talk about it, in a way that makes me feel like you're going to get through it."

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And I think so many of us, we hide feeling bad from other people because we think it means there's something wrong with us and that it's something that needs to be fixed. And so, in this podcast, I kind of want to share my experience with feeling awful and I want to give you all some insight on how you might get better at feeling awful. Because listen, if you're a human on the planet, it's going to happen. It's going to happen and it's okay.

There's a big difference between pretending to feel good all the time and genuinely feeling good about not feeling good. When you don't feel good, when you feel awful, when you have a lot of negative emotion, the goal isn't to pretend that you don't. the goal is to just be at peace with that being part of the human experience.

Now, sometimes we feel bad long enough that we genuinely need coaching, we genuinely need expert help from the outside to come in and help. But a lot of times, it's just the ebb and flow of being alive and it's just part of the human experience to allow for negative thought and negative emotion to be there. And I want to talk to you about what you can do when you feel awful emotionally.

Now, I want to also offer that the same work applies to when you feel awful physically. One of my really good friends right now is going through a lot of physical pain, a lot of physical discomfort. And we were talking about how I'm handling my emotional discomfort, and she's talking about how she's handling her physical discomfort.

And I realized, wow, it's really, really similar because the way that we deal with our emotional discomfort, when we're allowing for it and paying attention to it, it almost makes it so it's a circumstance. It almost makes it so it's something we have created and are holding space for.

So, what does it mean to feel awful? What does that look like? What does that feel like for some of us? I can't describe it specifically for someone else, even though I've coached thousands of people on it. but I can describe it very specifically for me.

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I feel it in my stomach, in my gut. It feels heavy. It feels deflating, I think is a really good word. A lot of the time, I feel buoyant and excited and light. And then sometimes, I feel heavier and denser, I think is a good way of describing – it's kind of like that emotional foundation of what's going on.

And it's very challenging when your life is going well from the outside, you almost don't feel justified in feeling this heaviness. It's like, "Well everything is going great. What do you have to complain about? Life is beautiful. Life is going great."

It's like you almost have to either ignore that you're not feeling great or you have to justify it. And this is something I see from a lot of my colleagues and even from my students is, "Well, if I feel this way, there needs to be an external reason for it. It needs to be because of something that's going on in the world. It needs to be because of something that someone has done for me."

So, we actually go hunting for the awful reasons, which actually makes us feel worse because we feel like we need to justify feeling bad. And what I want to offer is that step number one is simply not being upset about being upset, not being upset about not feeling great.

Now, this is different than indulging in it and justifying it and creating reasons for it. This is simply just allowing for it with a nod is how I like to think about it. Like, "Oh, this is what is today. It doesn't mean I'm going to not take action. It doesn't mean that I'm not going to get up and shower. Doesn't mean I'm not going to go through my day. It does not mean there's something wrong with me. It does not mean that I'm unworthy. And it's not a reason for me to have a complete temper-tantrum about myself.

It simply just means that this is how I'm feeling today. And I can notice it from a place of pure compassion and understanding without trying to fix it. We are taught, from a very young age, that we should try and fix when we feel bad, right?

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What is the reason that you're feeling bad? Let's solve for it immediately. And especially when it comes to thought work, a lot of times we think, "Okay, I'm feeling bad, there's a thought causing it. let's change the thought immediately." And when I was new to thought work, I used to feel this way too.

I used to always be trying to swap thoughts so I could feel better. But what I learned is, when you really truly understand that your feelings are caused by your thoughts, there's no rush to feel better. It's fine that you're not feeling good, as long as you're not indulging in it. as long as you are not giving up and giving into it and avoiding it and buffering. There's absolutely no harm in processing through an emotion; no harm at all, and allowing it to be there, allowing it to be part of your human experience and allowing yourself to process it.

So, if step one is not being upset about it, step two is not giving into it and avoiding it and buffering. And so, when I say, "Give into it," it's like we give into the reaction to it. So, if we're feeling depressed, then we think, "Okay, well I'm feeling depressed, so I'm going to justify all this negative action to avoid that feeling. I'm just going to give up and I'm just going to justify it." Very different from having compassion for myself for feeling depressed, allowing for it, understanding it, listening to it and being with it and still going throughout my day.

I want to recommend that we all learn how to be in an emotion, we learn how to be in our current state of what we're actually feeling instead of trying to get away from it or change it or bypass it and skip it.

I think a lot of life coaching is misinterpreted. I think that in some life coaching circles, the idea is to think positive so you never think negative, to think positive thoughts all the time so you can feel in positive emotion all the time and that positive emotion will always lead to the life we're supposed to have.

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And what I want to offer is that when we allow for our negative emotion without reacting to it, without indulging in it, we are open to taking back all of our power because if I'm not afraid of feeling an emotion, then I don't have to avoid or resist it, then I can just feel awful with acceptance. I can just feel awful with compassion.

A great example of this is when you get the flu. And when you get the flu, you can kind of can gage where you're at. Like, are you able to get up and go to work? Are you able to still function? Do you need to get in bed? Like, where are you at?

You don't need to get mad at yourself or beat yourself up for having the flu. You don't get angry at yourself for being a human being. You try and solve for it, but you know when you have the flu, you have the flu. There's no rush in it. You're going through it. you're going to feel awful.

Now, you can beat yourself up for it and make it worse emotionally, or you can just allow for your body to process through and heal itself. And that's how I like to think about emotion. And for me, and for many of the people that I talk to, negative emotion comes in waves of uncontrollable unpreventable thought patterns.

And when you add to that our monthly hormone cycle and the things that trigger us in the world and our own human tendencies, you have a formula that could create a lot of tension and resistance. And what I want is to genuinely teach you how to get better at feeling awful.

If you can be good at feeling awful, you will have so much more control in your own life, so much more power in your own life. It's almost like the opposite of what you think. Sometimes, when we feel awful, we think, "Oh, we need to take control of this. We need to go workout. We need to think positive thoughts. We need to think positive information. We need to destroy this negative thinking. We need to resist it. We need to avoid it and pretend like it's not there, not even acknowledge it."

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And I don't think that's the case at all. I've spent too much of my life trying to do that. It doesn't work. What I've learned is, like, "Oh, come on in. I have room for you. You want to feel awful, let's go. I'm going to open up to it. I'm going to breathe it in. I'm going to understand it. I'm going to look at it from all sides. I'm going to take a gage of how I feel and how this is affecting me and what I need to do in order to move forward. That's what I'm going to do. I'm not going to be the victim of my negative emotion. I'm actually going to be the experiencer of it." It changes everything.

When you spend time with an emotion, when you spend time with feeling awful on purpose, you start to understand the reasons why it feels bad. What is it exactly about feeling awful that makes us want to avoid it? Is it that heaviness in our stomach? Is it the barrage of thoughts that go? Is it the tension we create by trying to resist it? Is it the feeling of numbness that we create by trying to avoid it? What is the worst part of feeling awful?

When you really try to describe this, it puts you in an altered state because what you have to do is observe yourself. You have to become the watcher of yourself. You have to look at yourself from a perspective that you may not be used to doing. And when you go into that watcher mode, you are relieved in that moment of the experience of being that emotion and you're able to witness yourself having that emotion.

And in the witnessing, there is relief and there is compassion and there is love. And that is a very subtle skill that my students learn very slowly. So, the most simple way I can describe it is you have a thought that creates an awful feeling inside of you. And if you stay with that awful feeling and you watch it and you describe it and you notice it, you have this experience of watching yourself experience something.

It's like this dual experience. So, you're the experiencer of it, but then you're also the watcher of it. And this subtle shift between watcher and experiencer makes it so you're able to stay with it longer. You don't feel buried by the awfulness. You don't feel at the effect of the awfulness because you're also interchangeably observing the awfulness and you're

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going to a state where you're describing it, you're observing it, you're watching it, which releases you from it.

And if you get skilled at this, you will no longer be afraid of feeling your own emotions. You will no longer wake up feeling awful and start panicking. You will be, "Oh, today this is what we're going to do. We're going to go in and observe and we're going to process and we're going to feel."

I want you to notice how easy it is, when you wake up feeling awful, or when you start to feel awful during the day, how easy it is to spread that awfulness throughout the rest of your life. So, let's say you wake up and, for me, sometimes it's just this uneasy feeling of anxiety that I wake up with. For others, it's you wake up and you get on the scale and that triggers a bunch of negative emotion, or you get up and you get a phone call or you read your email or you look at your bank account or you look at your relationship or your house, whatever.

And this one area triggers you into a slew of negative emotions. And then it's so easy to spread out between everything. So, let's say you stand on the scale and you're not feeling good about that. And then you look at your relationship with your spouse and then you cause a lot of drama there. And then the kids are yelling and the house is messy and the business is a mess. All of a sudden, we spread it around.

Now, if we wake up and we recognize, "Okay, I feel awful. I'm going to have a tendency to look for reasons to justify this, which will actually cause me to start having negative emotion about everything. I'll look at the news and I'll have negative emotion about that because of my thoughts, and then I'll have negative emotion about my relationships."

Just be aware of that. Just be like, "There's no reason to spread this around. We're just going to go dee and process this in this one area." And you'll notice the thoughts causing it may not seem justified, may not seem important. You may not even be conscious of the thoughts. You may need to open up to the thoughts.

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And if you allow that to happen without having to spread it around to the rest of the parts of your life, you're going to be able to feel much more in control of what's going on for you emotionally. You want to be careful to not compound the drama.

A lot of us are afraid that if we allow ourselves to feel an emotion, that we'll never be able to get out of it, that it's such a deep dark hole, that it's such a pit that we'll never be able to pull ourselves away from that emotion and experience life again.

And one of the reasons why that is, first of all, is we haven't allowed ourselves to do that, so we don't really understand how easy that can be. But we also, because we're compounding the drama and indulging in it, everything becomes dark, everything becomes heavy. And when everything is kind of glommed together, there's so much unnecessary suffering, and it's also very challenging to be the witness, very challenging to get into the observer mode because everything feels like it's coming down around you.

And the best way I know if how to stay out of this kind of dramatic compounding is to simply stay with describing the emotion. Until you're able to describe the emotion in a way that helps you understand how harmless it is, finding the thoughts causing it will not be useful because you'll start finding thoughts everywhere.

No, let me ask you this; what is it like to feel okay about feeling bad? What is it like to feel okay about feeling bad? I want to give you some examples. Sometimes, we go workout really hard, and the next day we're sore from it, physically. We're typically okay and understanding and allowing for the soreness.

Sometimes we drink too much and the next day we're hungover. We allow for it. We understand it. We have an explanation for it. We let it be there. There are certain things that we do on purpose that cause us discomfort, that we know are going to cause us discomfort, but we allow for it.

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We feel okay about it not feeling okay. We plan on it hurting a little bit. We're all in, in it being something that frightens us, right? It's like, we know when we go on a rollercoaster we're going to be afraid, and we allow for that. So, it makes the fear less scary.

If we go on a rollercoaster and we're afraid about getting afraid, we're going to be a mess. But this is something we can apply to our lives, right? We can feel okay about feeling awful. It seems like a very simple concept.

It seems like something that may even be obvious. But what I want to offer is that most of us are very bad at this. We reject feeling awful. We reject negative emotion. We reject when things in our brain make us feel bad, especially when things outside seem to be going well.

Now, here's the other thing; sometimes, we wake up feeling bad and we look for the reasons that we're feeling bad and we attribute them to the external things in our lives, and then we try to fix the external things in our lives so we can feel better.

And although there's nothing really wrong with this, it just doesn't develop our skill of emotional resilience. It doesn't develop the skill of being okay with not being okay. And so, what I want to offer is that instead of trying to control the world, to make the world better so we can feel better, regardless of whether what's going on externally is, quote unquote good or bad, always try to come from the inside out. Always try to start with being okay with feeling bad.

Don't reject it. Be with it. Open up to it. Breathe it in. Let it be there. Allow it. Let it go to every cell in your body. It's totally fine that I'm a human being. It's totally fine that I don't feel 100% today physically or mentally. It's totally part of the experience. I want to be here in the reality of this moment and the reality of this moment is that I don't feel happy and that's a beautiful thing. I don't feel successful. I don't feel beautiful, and that's okay.

It's okay. where I'm at right now is okay. I'm going to breathe into it, move into it and allow it to be there. Process it through. And on the other side of

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that, you will feel powerful about not feeling good. You'll feel good about not feeling good.

I want to tell you that this skillset alone is the ultimate in confidence because you're no longer afraid about feeling awful. The worst-case scenario in our life is being afraid about feeling bad, because then we're always trying to avoid those parts of life that we think will cause that. But we're not afraid of it and we're willing to go into it. We can allow for it.

So, if you are someone who woke up feeling awful today, I got you. I feel you. I feel awful today too. But I don't feel awful about feeling awful. In fact, I feel pretty good about it. I feel pretty good about feeling awful today. I feel pretty good about my human experience.

I know that I signed up for half the time it being awful, and instead of compounding the drama by feeling awful about feeling awful, I feel just fine about it. I want to invite you to do the same.

Have a beautiful week everyone. I'll talk to you next week. Bye-bye.

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