

Ep #317: Mind Visibility



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo, episode number 317.

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 beautiful friends. What an amazing day it is today. I got up this morning and took the dogs on a walk and listened to the most beautiful music, and now I'm here with you. And it's almost like the world hasn't gone mad. It's almost like we're not in the middle of a pandemic for me right now, and it's just been so peaceful and wonderful today.

I hope that you are finding some normalcy, some appreciation, some gratitude in your day today. And by the time you listen to this, I hope you have found a way to kind of settle in with your shelter-in-place, to find a way that works for you.

One of the things that I want you to consider during this time is that we have an opportunity that we normally don't have. And in all other worldly situations, there are different triggers. There's different things that happen in your brain.

For example, if someone jumps out from behind a wall and says, "Boo," and spooks you, your mind is going to be triggered to have a certain thought, certain reaction. If someone says something to you, that will trigger your brain. If something is happening in the world, that will trigger your brain to have a thought.

When we have something huge and big and disorienting and pattern and habit changing, we have an opportunity to get visibility into our minds that we normally may not get. And this is something that I teach with any kind of individual crisis, which of course, happens regularly in our human lives.

We're having a collective crisis right now all together, so I'm able to speak to you that collective crisis, but for many of us, we just have individual

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crises throughout our lives that don't affect everyone in the world but affect us, in a way that triggers our brain to cause us a lot of suffering.

But collectively, all of my students have an opportunity during this time to go through this crisis process, which is an opportunity to look inside of your brain and see things that you normally wouldn't see. It almost turns up the volume on your thoughts, so you can see them more clearly.

A lot of times when I'm coaching people during really good times, during times when there's no crisis and nothing is really negative happening in the world, it's hard for people to get access to their thoughts. It's hard for people to have visibility on what actually they're thinking because it just seems like a hum that's going on in the background.

But during these times, it's almost like we have an increased alertness. Our brains have been startled into paying attention. Now, I want to warn you that when this happens, the tendency is to take that alertness and to use it to look at the world, to look outside of ourselves. And that's how the brain was designed. That's the survival mechanism of the brain is to turn on all the senses.

The brain has been startled, pay attention, look around, look for danger. And that is a beautiful thing when you are trying to protect yourself from immediate physical danger. That's a very important function of the brain. But during a crisis like this, that can backfire. So if your brain gets startled, which most everybody has gone through some sort of trauma as we're experiencing this.

For some people it's been a mild form of trauma, for some people it's been pretty significant. It's affected them in a pretty significant way. But what you want to notice is that your brain has been turned up and turned on. It's much more alert than normal. And you can direct that alertness.

You can direct it out into the world and a lot of you have told me that you've been hyper-consuming the news and hyper-consuming information about the virus and the economy and paying attention to every single number and

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every single stat and combing through the internet trying to find out more and more and more information.

This doesn't mean there's something wrong with you. It just means that your brain is looking for evidence. It's looking for information to provide it with kind of any danger signal that it needs to have so you'll know what to do to protect yourself. What I want to recommend is that that is probably to a certain extent, not serving you. And in fact, it's probably having the opposite effect of protecting you and taking care of you and helping you work on a solution to whatever problem it is that you're experiencing.

I want to suggest that you take that alertness and put it on your mind. You have an opportunity of increased mind visibility right now because we're in this pandemic, because we're in this crisis, that you can see thoughts that you normally wouldn't be able to see.

One of the things that I've talked a lot about with my friends especially is when I'm talking to them, sometimes they'll say to me like, "This is a new issue I'm having because of the virus, because of the pandemic. This is a new problem that I'm having." And I'm like, "I don't know, you had this problem before all this happened. In fact, you had it significantly before all this happened and it was a problem. This crisis in our world has accelerated it and made it bigger and more visible to you, but it's always been there."

And they can usually go back and see, oh, you're actually right. I was already obsessing about this; I was already worried about this. This was already a thing for me. Now it's just bigger and louder. And what I've said to them is this is beautiful because when things are bigger and louder, you can see them more clearly. You can think about them more clearly, and you can solve them more easily.

So if my premise is right and that the thought that you're having right now during this time are very similar flavors to the thoughts that you normally have, the least effective thing you can do is ignore them and say, "Oh,

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these are caused by this circumstance. They will go away when the circumstance is over.” I think you’ll miss an opportunity if you do that.

But if you say, “Okay wait, this has been a thought that I’ve had more quietly before, now it’s louder, and maybe I haven’t felt the effect as acutely as I’m feeling it now, but this is my opportunity to work on it, this is my opportunity to see these sentences,” and I want to offer that many of you may not feel compelled to do journaling. It may feel like something you don’t have time to do or you don’t want to do, or it’s uncomfortable to do, but this is the time where you can really get that visibility.

And I want to say, even if you don’t do the work on your thoughts right now, even if you wait a couple months and do the work on these thoughts later, you will see the patterns. So I want to highly recommend that you take the time in the morning or in the evening before you go to bed to do a thought download. And that simply means filling up one page of your journal with thoughts.

It’s what we do every day in Self-Coaching Scholars. We do a thought download. So basically, it’s like we clean out the closet. We take out all the sentences of the brain and we have a look at them. We look at them outside of our brain and then we decide if we want to put them back in our brain on purpose or not.

What you’ll notice is that your thoughts that you’re having right now are probably more intense, more significant, more infrequency than they normally are. That’s very normal. Nothing to be alarmed about there. Just notice that. Notice that in your thought download.

And one of the things I’ve noticed when I do my thought downloads is, I look at the thoughts that are in my brain, I’m like, well of course I feel the way I feel. I keep telling myself I’m feeling this way because of what’s going on in the world, but that’s not the case. I’m feeling this way because of all these thoughts that are swimming around in my brain on volume 10. They’re turned up right now.

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So there's peace for me in seeing the complete connection between how I'm feeling and how I'm thinking. And so notice that your world, the facts that are happening in the world and your thoughts about the world are separate things. They are different things. They are not the same things.

It's kind of mind-bendy, but it's really important. A sentence in your mind about something in the world is not the same as the thing in the world. So if I say, "This is a glass of water," there's the actual glass of water and then there's the sentence, this is a glass of water. And it's really important for you to separate those two things from each other. Those are not the same thing because when you do that on the simple things, you'll be able to do it on the more complex things.

So there's a crisis or there's a virus in the world right now is a sentence that I just said and that's in my mind, but that sentence is not the same thing as the actual virus. Those are two separate things. Just because I'm talking about it doesn't mean it's the same thing.

So it's like, there's the idea of my dog, Rory, and then there's my actual dog, Rory. Separate things. We don't remember that those are separate things. We think that thoughts about things are the same as the things themselves.

A great example of this is that most of us have not been affected physically by this virus. And I can say that confidently. Most of us do not have the actual symptoms of this virus. We haven't experienced the symptoms of it. But we've experienced the thoughts about it, and that's had a huge impact on our experience in the world.

But the only thing most of us have experienced is our thinking about it. We haven't experienced the virus. We've experienced our thoughts about it collectively. So when you're doing your thought downloads and you're reading your thoughts, you need to make sure that you're seeing them as completely separate things. There's sentences in my brain and then there's things in the world.

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When you look at your thought download, you want to ask yourself the question, why does your mind think the sentences that it does? My mind thinks very different sentences than my kids' brains and my husband's brain and my friends' brains. We're in the same world, in the same circumstance as the world, and yet so many different thoughts for so many different people. So many different sentences.

So when you look at your sentences, it's really interesting to ask the question, I wonder why I think the way I think? I wonder why I have the sentences that I have? So for example, some of you may have the sentence, "I'm afraid I'm going to get sick." Others of you may not have that sentence even in your brain at all. It may never even occur to you that you would get sick.

For some of you, you're really thinking more about the economy and how that's affecting you. For some of you, you're thinking about just being alone in your house. Some of you, you're thinking about the inconvenience of all the stores being closed. Those sorts of things.

So it's interesting. Without judging yourself, to ask yourself, I wonder why I think the way I do. Why do I think more about money than I do about health? Or why do I think more about my mother's health or my children's health more than I think about my health? Or some of you are really thinking about maybe the election. Something like that.

So no judgment. Every thought is valid. Every thought is fine. Your brain is going to think thoughts. But ask yourself why you're thinking the thoughts that you're thinking. Now, it's really important to know that you think your thoughts are true.

So people will say, "This really feels true to me. This really feels like a true thought." I was coaching a woman in Scholars the other day and she owed her mother some money. And she said, "My mother owns me." I said, "No, humans don't own other humans. Your mother doesn't own you." And she's like, "No, but it really feels like she does."

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And I explained to her, I said, “It feels like it does because you keep thinking the thought that your mother owns you, and so you think that’s a reality, but really, it’s just a thought.” So when you’re looking at your thoughts, be careful not to label them as true. And then what happens is when you say that thought is true, when you make that sentence the same thing as the reality when it isn’t.

Instead of saying a thought is true or not, say, “I believe that thought, or I choose to believe that thought,” because that’s what makes something true, whether you believe it or not. Then it’s true to you. Your belief system about it. It’s a really important distinction between the two things.

Because what happens is when we have thoughts that are going on in our minds that we think are true, they become unconscious because we think we’re just observing the world. We mix up our sentences with the actual world so we stop questioning those sentences. We stop evaluating them, we stop being conscious of them.

But when something like this happens, the volume on those sentences go up, so we can look at those sentences and decide, okay, if it’s true or not true isn’t the question. The question is do I want to keep thinking this way? Do I want this to be the unconscious rhythm of my brain tone that’s going to continue to go on?

Because all of our power is in our decision of what we decide to believe and to think that nobody can take away from us. But if we’re doing that unconsciously, we’re thinking thoughts that we’ve just believed to be true without questioning them, we’re going to miss the opportunity to have more control by making decisions - remember, all of our power is in our decision, deciding what we want to believe and what we want to think. Just because something is seemingly true doesn’t mean it’s a thought you want to keep thinking. It may not be useful to be thinking about it all of the time.

The other thing that you may find out when you ask yourself, why am I thinking this thought, is because of the inputs that you’re allowing. Now

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remember, we have a cognitive bias. We like things to be familiar and we like our beliefs to be confirmed. So we're going to seek out places where we can confirm our beliefs.

So for example, if we believe that the economy is going to be fine, for example, the economy is going to be fine, all of this will bounce back, it's not a problem. If you believe that, then you will Google information, you will look for news outlets, you will look for information that will confirm that for you, and then you will build evidence for that thought to believe that it's true.

Nothing wrong with that at all. That's how the brain works and that's how we function. I just want to make sure that you understand that that is the mechanism that's going on in your brain and you're doing it consciously. Because if you think something is just true, you'll think you got it from the world instead of from your brain. And then you'll think you're getting input, you're getting factual input from the world, when really, you're producing it by filtering everything that's coming at you.

Remember, there's way too much input coming at us in the world, so we have to filter it. And we filter it based on what we think is important, what we need to pay attention to. And remember, first thing's first, your survival brain is always looking for danger. So whatever you're afraid of, your brain will find more of. Very unfortunate.

So if you are feeling overwhelmed with fear, you have to ask yourself, what is my brain looking for and how am I finding it? What inputs am I letting in? I like to encourage all of my students, and I've talked a lot about this over the past couple weeks, is to give equal airtime to both things.

I do this as a practice for myself always. I give equal input on the case for something and the case against something. I like to understand where both sides are coming from on any type of argument. And then make a decision based on that.

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That is the opposite of automatic consciousness. That is deciding on purpose and being willing to make a decision about what you want to believe. Not based on how you were raised or what people tell you or the constant input you have from one single input source, but by exposing yourself to all of them and seeing, what do other people believe? Without constantly judging that other input, that other idea.

So if someone is saying this certain thing about the virus, what's the alternative view about it and then where can I find what I believe, instead of just believing one area of input. I've seen a lot of that. When people get afraid, they hang onto their beliefs as if they are facts. And they get very mad at other people who do not believe in what they believe.

And there is no consideration of the alternative. Zero. Other people are dumb, other people don't know what they're talking about. Other people are reckless, other people are stupid if they don't believe what I believe, which just continues to confirm the thought. Now, sometimes that's super effective and works, but sometimes it causes so much undue suffering because all you want to do is change all the other people, which is completely ineffective.

So the last thing I want you to consider here is that all of your power comes from deciding what you want to believe. And you can see how that will determine how you live your life. You can see it if you look at your life right now, whether you believe in religion or not, whether you believe in your own success, whether you believe in yourself, what you believe about money, what you believe about your health will determine your life.

And a lot of us are living on automatic belief systems that we don't even understand our belief systems because the volume has been so low on them. And so now that the volume has been turned up on your belief systems, it's a great time to question them. But it's also a great time to decide what you want to believe and start inputting them, and doing it actually quite aggressively.

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No, no, this is what I want to believe. This is what I think is true. This is how I choose to live my life. So I'll coach someone who will say, "I've never been able to do that." And they'll just say, "That's true. I've never been able to do that, so that's a thought that I think all the time because it's true." And I'll say, "Okay, maybe it's true that you've never been able to do that, but is that thought useful? Who cares if it's true? Is that thought useful to you? Does it produce anything of value for you to think I've never done that before?"

And most people will say no. In fact, it gives them the opposite effect of what they want. So if you switch a thought from, "I've never been able to do that before," to, "I'm going to try this as many times as I need to try it to make it work," equally true thoughts, equally true options of what you want to believe, but one is going to give you a lot more energy and momentum, and one is going to shut you down.

But if you don't know that, "I've never done that before," is an optional thought, you think it's just a fact in the world and something that you're actually required to believe because it's true - that's the other thing people think. "Well, because it's true, I'm required to think it." No. You don't even have to think anything you don't want to think, especially if it's not serving you.

What you focus on you will create more of. What you choose to think about will give you results based on that. So you can decide not to think a thought. Now, it's really important to remember, you have to process the emotion, become aware of it, be fully aware that it's a thought you're thinking and an emotion you're creating and process it through.

But once you've done that, I'm not talking about denial here, I'm talking about awareness. The opposite of denial. Awareness of that thought and feeling it through, and then deciding that you want to think something different, you want to believe something different.

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And it doesn't have to be in reaction to a negative thought. You can just choose a brand-new positive thought and practice believing it right now. Your brain is turned on. It's alert. It's ready. It wants new information. You should be the one providing it. You can tell it what you want it to think.

So you decide right now, what do you want to think and believe about the world and about yourself? The world is not changing. The world just is what it is. And without any thoughts about it, you're in a neutral place. So look inside your mind. Get visibility on those sentences and decide on purpose what you want to believe.

And I'm going to leave you with this; the coolest thing about being a human in the world is you can choose to believe anything you want. And people might tell you that you're delusional, but here's the truth. You're delusional anyway. Any thought you choose to think is a delusion, is an illusion anyway. You might as well choose to think something that gives you the feeling and promotes the action and gets you the result that you want.

So open up those mind eyes and look at your brain and get to work on deciding, what exactly do you want to believe about yourself and your life? Have a beautiful week everyone. I'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

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