

## Ep #318: Future Self in Uncertainty



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Brooke Castillo**

## Ep #318: Future Self in Uncertainty

You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo, episode number 318.

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.

Hello, my friends. What an amazing day. Starting to feel like we're blooming again. Well, even if you're not feeling that way, mother nature is feeling that way. Everything is glorious outside. I look out my window and there is blooming and there is beauty and there is signs of life. And I love to see all of that.

So, I'm super-excited. I love this time of year. It's beautiful for taking the dogs on a walk and breathing fresh air. So, I hope you're getting a little bit of that safely.

One of the things I want to tell you about is, within Scholars, I'm doing private podcasts with my friends, conversations with my friends, and posting them there in Scholars. I have been reaching out to many of my friends and asking them if they will talk to me for an hour and let us record it and share it with you.

So, I've done one with Kara Loewentheil. I've done one with Frank Kern. I did one with Ryan Moran. I'm recording several more. I think I have Jody and Katrina and Kris. I think I have those on for this week. And I think we're going to be posting those in Scholars. But I'm also going to post little segments of them at the end of each of these podcasts. So, make sure you stay tuned until the end to hear a little snippet of me and Kara.

If you don't know Kara, she is so funny. Her sarcasm and humor and the way she talks makes me laugh. She's one of those people, like I have a conversation with her and an hour later I think about something that she said and I just bust out laughing. She's so witty and intelligent and funny and I love her. So, anyway, please enjoy.

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I've had her on the podcast before. We did a podcast – I can't remember, but you could search for it – on body image and everybody loved it. And she's just great. So, we had a great conversation and talked about some things that I normally wouldn't talk about on the podcast, some personal things about me. She talked about some personal things about her and we laughed at each other. It was a great conversation. It's not a typical podcast. It's much more just kind of an eavesdrop. So, please enjoy that.

In this podcast, I wanted to talk about our future selves in uncertainty. And I feel like I've gotten a new perspective on my future self. I've taken my work on future self, with myself and my clients, to a deeper level since we started going through this uncertainty, this major viral, literally, uncertainty.

It's viral in our minds and it's viral in many people's bodies and I think the concept of the future self has really come to a questionable forefront for us to reconsider. And here's what I mean by that. I was coaching a woman in Scholars who was telling me that she was having a hard time picturing her future self. She was having a hard time imagining her life because she didn't know what was going to be going on in the world.

And she said that she had done work on her future self before and kind of created her goals and been thinking about her goals and what she wanted for her life. And she had been visualizing it and had a very clear vision of that. And then, all of a sudden, all of this happened and she feels like the world changed tremendously. And now she doesn't know how to envision her future self.

And when she said that, I was a little bit puzzled because I was starting to think, like, "Why am I not challenged to imagine my future self? Why is that not an issue for me?" Just because all of this happened didn't take away my vision for my future. And I know for many people, it did. They're like, "We don't know what's going to happen. We need to wait and see what happens."

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And what I realized is that a lot of us see the world that way. We see the world as something that happens and that we simply respond to. And in many ways, that is true. But in many other ways, it's not true.

It's not true that we can't create our world. But when something happens to us that we don't have control over, significantly and collectively, we start to feel completely out of control. We think, "Oh my gosh, this one thing is out of control, therefore my whole life is out of control."

And I've seen that happen with many of my students right now, where areas where they were very in control and disciplined and methodical, now they're having a really hard time staying in control because they've kind of translated the out-of-controlness to their whole life.

And I think this could really show up and you can know if you're experiencing this by just imagining your future self; imagining yourself three years from now.

So, if I ask you the question, "Where do you think you'll be three years from now? Can you picture yourself? Can you picture your life and your experience of your life?" And if you feel like no you can't, it's most likely because you are identifying yourself based on what happens in the world, based on externals.

You look to the outside world to define you now, but you also look to the outside world to define yourself in the future. And it's very hard to look at the outside world in many ways in the future right now because of all the uncertainty. So therefore, it's hard to define yourself.

So, what I said to this client is I said, "Okay, here's how you do it. Here's how you imagine your future self without having to know what's going to happen in the world.

What do you know will be true about you no matter what? It doesn't matter what happens in that C-line. What do you know will be true about you?"

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And I had done a pretty intense coaching call right when we were being ordered to shelter in place and everyone was kind of in shock and a little bit of trauma about what was going on in the world and I little bit freaked out. And so, there was a lot of, like, freaking out concerned clients on this call and I was coaching them.

And I remember what I said to them was, “Listen, I will always find myself being an example of what is possible and asking the most of myself no matter what is going on in the world; no matter what the financial situation, no matter what my housing situation, no matter my health situation, no matter the situation with my family. I am true to that value that comes from within me. So, no matter what’s going on out there, that’s who I will be.”

And who I am is not determined by anything external. It’s not determined by my job or my clients or how much money I make or don’t make or what people say about me or don’t say about me. Who I am is determined by the decisions I make internally. And that is true for all of us. We just sometimes don’t acknowledge that.

We think sometimes that the external things are developing our identity. When people hate on us, then that develops our identity. Or if lots of people love us, that develops our identity. Or if we have a great job or make a lot of money or have a lot of success, that develops our identity. And that is not true because it’s always our thoughts. It’s never what’s happening externally.

This is why you can have a lot of very successful people who are very miserable, and you can have a lot of successful people who are thrilled. Because the success isn’t determining what is going on with who you are with your identity.

So, if you’ve been with me for a while, you know that the way that I define identity is the collection of thoughts you have about yourself and your life. That is what determines, literally, who you are in the world.

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Your identity is not a separate truth that came imprinted on you. Your identity is how you see yourself, who you are to you. So, if you're having trouble imagining your future self, my guess is it's because you're defining yourself by that external world and you can look at how you're defining yourself right now and you can see how much of it may be determined by your experience, your circumstances.

Your circumstances do not determine your identity. So, if I say to you, "Who are you?" and you say, "I'm a mother," or, "I'm a healthcare worker," or, "I'm a life coach," or, "I'm a waiter," or whatever it is that you are and that's how you define yourself, by what you do externally, I want you to take that to a deeper level.

How do you define yourself when all those things are taken away, when you can't work at your job, when you're not around your family? How is the value of your life and who you are as a person unchangeable by the circumstances?

And when I asked my client this, one of the things she said is that she was a creator. And she knew that no matter what happened in the world, no matter what happened with all the people, no matter what happened with all of our health and the pandemic and all of that, she would always be a creator.

And she may not be able to imagine that vividly and specifically because she's having a hard time imagining what the world will be like. She thinks the world is going to change significantly. And I think that's okay. I mean, obviously, question all your beliefs. Make sure they serve you. But you can always rely on the identity that you've created for yourself as a creator.

So, "Who I am will be a creator, no matter what is happening." We were laughing because she's like, "All I can imagine is this terrible dystopian society where, you know, like zombie land and there's no people. There's only three people left and it's desolate." And I said, "Well it's a good thing

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you're a creator because you're probably wanting to be creating a baby if there's only three people left in the world."

And we were laughing about it, but it's also true, right? Your matter, your purpose on the planet is not contingent on the current opportunities. It is contingent only on who you decide to be in any situation, not just in specific situations.

So, if you identify yourself as a kind person, you say, "That's one of my purposes in life is to be kind," but your kindness depends on the circumstance, it depends on people being nice to you or you being in a certain kind of environment, right, you're not always kind, you're only kind in conditional situations, that is not your true identity. Do you see what I'm saying? It's dependent on something outside of you.

What is true for you no matter what is happening? What is consistently true for you? And again, this is not something that you necessarily need to go discover within yourself as it is something you need to define and create.

So, what can you be certain about? The truth for me is the only thing I can be certain about are the decisions that I'm going to make about what I'm going to think.

I can't be certain about what I'm going to be able to do in the future because I don't know what the rules will be. I can't be certain about the results that I will necessarily create depending on the rules changing. But I can be certain that I will always have the decision to decide, the ability, the power to decide what I believe.

No one can take that away, no matter how many circumstances change. I get to decide what to think and what to believe and therefore what to feel. That is always within my power.

So, I did a podcast called What You Can Control. And we talked a lot about, within this environment that we're currently in, we can control a lot.

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And we start thinking that we can't, but I gave a bunch of ways in which we can control.

But no matter what your crisis is, no matter what your situation is – I've coached people who are terminally ill. I've coached people that are in very dangerous situations. I've coached people who are in amazing situations, wonderful – quote unquote, we're all just defining it that way – situations.

And all of those people have one thing in common; they can control what they believe. They can control what they think. They can't always control what they'll do, but they can always control what they believe. And so, that's what I want to encourage all of you to do as you're thinking about the future.

You get to choose what you want to believe about your future. This is what's so interesting. Nobody really knows what's going to happen in the future, now or at any time actually. So, what we choose to believe is really just made up.

Think about this with your kids. Maybe you have kids and you believe they'll go to college; you believe they'll get married, you believe they'll have kids. You don't know that that's true or not, but you choose to believe that because that's your right to choose to believe that and you can believe whatever you want – or some version of that for the people in your life; that they'll be okay, that they'll live to be old-age.

We believe that even though we don't know. We're just using our imagination. And we feel a lot of, I think, power to be able to believe that because it seems realistic, it seems like, yeah, we're allowed to believe that because a lot of people believe that for their children or for their own lives.

But when we start believing that, "Hey, everything's going to be okay," or, "I'm not going to get sick," or, "The economy is going to bounce right back," people say, "You don't know that." True. But it doesn't prevent me from believing it right now and you can't tell me what I can believe because you don't know what's going to happen either.



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So, if I have a choice on what I'm going to believe, I'm going to believe the best thing I can believe and I'm going to live into that. Then, if I'm wrong, I'm wrong. It's just like you're going to believe that your kids are going to be healthy until they have children and grandchildren and great grandchildren. And you're going to believe that with all your heart until you don't.

And that's it. And nobody's going to begrudge you for that. But when we start believing the bigger things and the bigger dreams and the more impossible, quote unquote, things, then people say, "Oh no, you're not allowed to believe that." But I want to give you permission. You can believe whatever you want about your life.

So, does your purpose in your life, your identity, stand up to change? Does it stand up to uncertainty? Does it reflect that it doesn't matter what's going on in the world, it only matter what's going on with you?

So, put yourself in any circumstance and here is what you know. Are you fighting reality, or are you using it to fulfil your purpose? Are you fighting reality or are you using it to fulfil your purpose?

So, I want you to imagine you're sitting at a table at a casino. Don't freak out. There's social distancing. You have the whole table to yourself, okay, except for the dealer who has a mask on. You have a mask on too. Okay, so, everything's safe, and you're dealt a hand.

Now, you don't know what that hand is. You don't know what you've been dealt. You haven't looked at your hand yet. But you do have a goal of winning. Regardless of the hand that you're dealt, your goal is to win.

So, if you study poker players or you study people that are really good at poker, they can't control the hand that they're dealt. That's random. They can't control it. But they can control what they do with the hand.

And no matter what hand is dealt to them, they are going to be the best poker player they can be in that moment. And they are going to go after

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winning. They're not like, "Oh, this hand is terrible, therefore I give up and I'm not going to win and I'm no longer a good poker player."

They know that being dealt unfortunate hands is part of the game of poker and that you can still win. So, if we can approach our lives that way, that all of the circumstances are just hands that we're dealt and we're still committed to being the best version of ourselves regardless of that hand, we're still committed to winning the game, then we use those hands, those deals, for our purpose instead of throwing them away or rejecting them or being mad or upset about them.

Which oftentimes leads us to go against our purpose. The circumstance doesn't determine who you are and how you show up.

My struggles in my life, my quote unquote bad hands have made me more of who I am, not less. The challenges have changed me into more of who I am, not less of who I am. They've made me stronger and more aware and more empathetic and more sympathetic and more in love than anything that I have done that's created success.

Success has contributed too, but nothing like my struggles. So, it almost makes me think that the reason that there's struggles, the reason that there's challenges, the reasons that there are problems and negative things, quote unquote, in the world is for us to use them to evolve, to become, to grow.

They are not given to us to beat us down and make us smaller and make us wait out until we can be more successful. They are actually the curriculum that we are to utilize to become our future selves.

So, when you imagine your future, I want to offer that you can imagine yourself stronger, more capable, more value-creation, more contribution, more of who you are, regardless of what your circumstances are. And you can imagine any goal you want.

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I just did a call with my Millionaire Mentoring group. So, everyone in this Millionaire Mentoring group is making a million dollars at least this year. And I hadn't seen them since we'd been the Cayman Islands before COVID-19 had presented itself in the way that it had in America.

And so, I asked them, "So, are the goals that you set in January, are those still the goals that you want to stick to?" And a few of the mentees in that group had told me, "Yeah, I kind of want to change my goal now. I want to adjust it."

And I asked them, I said, "Why are you letting the circumstances cause you to adjust it? And do you like that reason? Do you think that that's a valid reason for you to change the goal that you want? What is your relationship like with your goal?"

And one of the things that we were kind of playing around with is I said, "Think about your relationship with your impossible goal. Think about that relationship as a relationship with, like, a romantic partner. And if your relationship with your goal was like a relationship with a romantic partner, how would you describe it?"

And one of them said, "Well yeah, I'm not really texting back right now. I'm kind of ignoring it. I'm kind of not paying attention to it. I'm kind of freaking out about these other things and not really intimate with my romantic partner or my big goal."

And I said, "Hey, listen, it's really important that you work on that relationship, your thoughts about that big goal and your future self and your future self as someone who has accomplished that." And the reason why that's important is because as you do that work, it will bring up all the obstacles in the way of it, and that's the work that we need to do.

We don't want to shy away from possibility because our circumstance changes. We want to open up to possibility. And the trick is not doing that in a way that's forceful or angry or hustley or uncomfortable in a way that doesn't serve us.

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But we want to open up to it in a way that's uncomfortable in a way that does serve us, that allows it to open and move towards instead of shutting us down and moving away from.

So, ask yourself this question; how does this current circumstance give me an opportunity to serve, contribute, and achieve my goals and my purpose? How can I be more of myself in the future, regardless of what happens in the world? How can I be who I want to be in every moment, in every circumstance?

Now, listen, I am not saying that I'm perfect at this and that I show up as the best version of myself all the time. Very, very, very far from it. But I will say that when I don't, I do not blame my circumstance.

I know that when I'm not being the best version of the identity that I see for myself, it is because of my thinking. It's because of my choices. It's because of my decision, not because of anything that happened in the world.

And if I don't achieve my purpose, if I don't achieve my goals, if I don't achieve what I have laid out for myself, it is not because of the world. It is because of me and my thinking.

And I'll go to battle with anyone over this that disagrees with me because I've seen it way too many times where people have the exact same circumstance and very different results because of very different ways of thinking about it.

So, I want to make sure that everybody who's listening to me, everyone who's learning from me is knowing that that is their choice, that you aren't sitting around saying, "Well, because this thing happened, I can't be who I want to be." That is never true.

You can always be who you are and who you want to be with whatever circumstance is present for you. So, finding your future self in uncertainty in

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the world is all about just being certain about who you decide you want to be and then living into that no matter what happens outside of you.

Please commit to that for yourselves. Use this as an opportunity for that. Alright, my friends, have a beautiful week. I'll talk to you next week. Take care. Bye-bye.

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Brooke: First of all, I think everyone knows who you are. But everyone may not know who you are. So, juts introduce yourself.

Kara: My name is Kara Loewentheil. I obviously did not know this would be on video, or I might have washed my hair. And I'm...

Brooke: You look amazing.

Kara: I'm a master coach and I coach smart feminist women who do not feel as good about themselves as they think they should.

Brooke: There you go. So, let's talk about that a little bit, like, if we could be tactical with it. Because I think our thesis here is, okay, we have this crisis. It's taken everything that was already brewing and exploded it and brought it to the vision and made it more intense and obsessive. And the answer is, for me, I'm like, "Laughter and resilience will get us through." And so, we talked a little bit about, like, it's okay to laugh. Don't muffle your laugh, please...

Kara: If we can't have pandemic humor, what are we going to really...

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Brooke: Exactly...

Kara: I feel like that's like Jews. We're, like, very good with the dark humor, you know. We have Holocaust jokes, like, we will show up...

Brooke: You are good at it.

Kara: Yeah we're like, "This is nothing. At least this is happening to everyone."

Brooke: Oh my gosh, Kris Plachy sent me the funniest thing today. It was basically about how all of the advice we're getting is completely contradictory. It's like, "Stay inside, but go out, wear a mask that doesn't really work," like all the things, "We have no treatment except that there may be one." I love it. But what can we say to people in terms of being resilient to get them through? What are you offering to your students that maybe my students would benefit from?

Kara: I mean, I feel like this maybe seems like a straightforward answer, but self-coaching is really the way you get resilient. But I think also, one of the things that's been interesting for me is I grew up not reading – I wasn't allowed to read anything that was written after, like, 1900.

My parents had some interesting educational theories. Of course, if my father was listening to this he'd be like, "Yeah, and you turned out so terrible; Yale and Harvard Law School. Obviously, we did a bad job..."

Brooke: He's like, "Yeah, you're welcome."

Kara: Exactly, totally, he's like, "You're welcome..."

Brooke: Complaining about your childhood...

Kara: Exactly. I'm not complaining. I think it's true. I think one of the reasons I'm a strong writer and communicator is I did a lot of reading and wasn't allowed to watch TV. But what's interesting is, like, I think that because I spent so much time doing that kind of reading and, like, I was

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reading about life before 1900, I just had a totally different perspective. Like, in a Jane Austin novel, people ride their horse in the rain and then they die. Like, they get a cold and then they die.

Brooke: My leg is hanging off of my knee and it's fine. It's a little green but we're going to be fine.

Kara: People get tuberculosis and then they have to be bed-ridden for like three years. Like, you read people's childhood true stories and it's like, "Oh yes, 1818 to 1820 I don't know what happened at school those two years because I was bed-ridden because I got pneumonia and we didn't have antibiotics."

Brooke: And we're like, "I have to sit on the couch for two weeks and watch Netflix?"

Kara: Right, I just feel like I have just a different perspective and I think – and possibly also growing up Jewish and you hear obviously a lot about all the historical traumas that Jews have gone through. I think, for me, I never had this belief that – I was like, "Man, I can't believe anything crazy hasn't happened yet. I've been alive for 38 years."

Also, if you listen to the news, there are people living through pandemics in other countries all the time. So, I just feel like I never, for whatever reason, had this belief that it's all supposed to be smooth sailing. I was kind of like, "Wow, there hasn't been a genocide in life 50 years in America at least. That's something..."

Brooke: It's time...

Kara: Yeah, basically. Jews are like, "1945, it's been two generations."

Brooke: There's a lot to that. Like, we're laughing, but...

Kara: But it's real, that historical perspective. Because so much – of course, you teach this. All of our spiritual teachers teach this; our suffering comes from our resistance to reality and thinking it should be different. And

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so, having the belief that your life should always go along this predictable path where there's no war and no famine and no pandemics and no genocide and no...

Brooke: But we do have that. We think this is how the world is supposed to be. Even just the statement, "We need to make the world a better place. There's a better world that's supposed to be happening and this ain't it."

Kara: Yeah, and I think that's such a – for my work and my people, like, there is a way, I think, to accept the world as it is and also want – and it's interesting, in Judaism, there's this concept called Tikkun Olam, which is the idea that the world is broken. It doesn't have that negative connotation almost as much, but it's just like it's everybody's job to try to put it back together.

And so, it's not quite – I don't know how to explain it in the sense that, when I was taught it, it never felt like, "Oh the world's terrible and depressing." It was just always like there's this world, which is amazing, then there's also a way that we can all contribute to make it even better. It's the same way you teach – it's so fascinating. I had such an interesting conversation with my boyfriend about this because it's so foreign to his brain that, like, we can love something and want something different. Like, this can be great, and this would also be great, and I want to do that.

Brooke: It doesn't mean we have to hate this to want something else.

Kara: Exactly, yeah. But I think having that historical perspective helps with resiliency because it's just like humans have gone through so much.

Brooke: Yeah, and the world, for me, evolving is a word that really helps me. It doesn't mean that our world is terrible. But it doesn't mean it's not going to evolve to something better too. It's not like, "We're so much better than we were when we were living in caves. That was so awful."

Kara: "So passé, living in caves."



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Brooke: Like, “That was wrong and bad.” No, that was then and we’re going to keep evolving, but we don’t have to keep rejecting what is in order to evolve to that next thing.