

Ep #320: What to Do About Your Mother



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo, episode number 320.

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. So let me tell you what's happening. I am doing conversations with my friends and we have already started posting them in Scholars. I've recorded a bunch of them already. We're going to be posting them probably every other week in there.

The first one we posted was with Kara. That's already in there. So if you go to private podcasts, you can access that if you're in Scholars. And the next one we're going to post is with my friend Ryan Moran. We had a really amazing conversation about money and goals and his mind was blown a lot on some of the stuff that we talked about, which was really kind of fun for us.

And so I share a little clip at the end of this podcast so you can get kind of a little taste of that, but I think that that one went on for about an hour and 20 minutes. And that will go - if you're in Scholars, it'll just pop right into your podcast feed or you can access it on the site. So please, enjoy that.

This podcast that I'm recording, *What to Do About Your Mother*, was a special request from quite a few people on a live coaching call that I did in Scholars recently. Someone was like, "Please do a whole podcast just on mothers so we can figure all of this out and have better relationships with our moms."

So I've talked about all the different components and the different tools that you need to apply to your work with your mom, but I haven't talked about just your mother specifically as a focus. And so that's what this podcast is going to be. I'm going to reference a lot of my other tools and of course, you can find those other podcasts if you don't know what those are.

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But the main thing I think a lot of us struggle with is trying to define relationships with our mothers and even our fathers that are different from the way that we were raised. And this is super challenging because the way that we're raised and the way that we are taught to be and taught to believe is in large part from our first relationships that we have.

Our relationships that we have when we're the youngest. And so that imprint that we have, especially on our relationship with our moms is very hard to change in any of our relationships, let alone with our own mothers. So a lot of people talk to me about how they go home and they struggle with not reverting to be 10 years old.

And I know this used to be true for me. I would go home and start having temper tantrums and freaking out and yelling and being rude and being ridiculous because I would kind of revert back to that old relationship that I had with my mother as a child and not kind of re-establish a relationship with her as an adult.

And I do think there needs to be a re-establishment for many of us. For many of us to improve our relationship with our parents, we have to do a reset and we have to decide, "Okay, this is how things used to be, and this is how things are going to be now."

And that is much easier said than done. That is, for me, it was very challenging to kind of reset those expectations because my whole history was based on something completely different. But I will say when I did this work and on my relationship with my mom, it was really life-changing.

Because so many of us, me very much included, have a lot of resentment and anger about how our parents behave and how our mothers should be different than they are. And as long as you have those belief systems, as long as you're going around thinking that she should behave differently than she does, she should be different than she is, you're going to be struggling in that relationship.

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All relationships are about allowing other people to be who they are and managing your own thoughts about them. So I want to take you through this process and help you look at your relationship with your mom and question everything, and then do a reset and create the relationship that you want.

The best news that I have for you is this does not require you to go and have a conversation with her where you tell her what you're doing. And in fact, it's way better if you don't do that. Because if you're approaching this as we're going to have a better relationship, which means "you're going to change too," you're always going to be left disappointed.

This is about you changing your relationship with your mom, without her needing to change. She is the C line. Now, before we get started, I just want to remind you that for whatever reason, most of us have this idealized idea of what parents should be like, what they should have been like when we were children, and what they should be like now, and how mothers should behave.

And this isn't something that's wrong with you because you have this idea in your mind. This is just normal in almost every single person that I talk to, that there is this idea about how moms should be. And so the first thing I want you to do is make a list.

What should your mother be like and what should she do and why? And do not hold back. Go for it. Go for the best mother would do this and she would say this and she would call this often, she would come over this often, she would say this to the kids, she would be this way with my husband, she would be this way with me, this is how she would be on holidays, this is what would happen.

Everything you wish for, everything you want for, and why. Why do you want your mom to do all these things? Why do you think she should do all these things? What is it that she isn't doing that you want her to do? Don't focus on what she shouldn't do.

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So if there's something she does that annoys you, just write down what the opposite is. What should she do instead? How do you want her to behave? And I like to get really crazy here. Like, dream big. Set your expectations high. What would you really love? And sit back and ask yourself why you want that. Why you want your mom to be this way when she isn't. That's the first process.

And what you will find is that that is your manual for how you want your mother to behave. And a manual - and you can study more about what a manual is and listen to that podcast, but basically, a manual is this is the operating instructions for how I would like you to behave and if you don't behave this way, I will be disappointed and upset that you're not following my manual.

And it's really good for you to see it all written down, what your expectations are, what you want, and then to look at the reality of what is and notice the discrepancy that you're creating. What we do is we blame them for creating the discrepancy. We create the manual that we want them to follow, and then when they don't meet up to that manual, we get angry and upset and are disappointed that they're not fulfilling that.

And many of you make the argument to me when I coach you is you say, "Yeah, but my manual is reasonable. My manual is good. My manual isn't out of control. It's all very justified." And the thing that I want to tell you is it doesn't matter. If it's not how your mom actually is, you will always be left wanting because you'll always be comparing the mom you do have to this idealized version of who you want her to be.

And you'll say, "But other moms are like that, but that's what reasonable people do, that's what I'm like as a mom." It doesn't matter what your reason is for your manual for how you want your mom to behave. It doesn't matter what it is. It's going to cause you pain.

Your manual, when it doesn't match up to how she is, causes you pain. But then you blame your mother for causing you pain and you end up feeling

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powerless. Many of you end up avoiding your moms, disconnecting from them, not talking to them at all because they're not fulfilling the manual that you have for them.

Here is the truth, my friends. There is your mother as she is. And allowing her to be exactly who she is without trying to change her is where all peace and connection lies. And you must know that whatever she does, whatever she says, however she acts is neutral until you make it mean something, until you believe something about it.

And then your brain causes you pain and blames your mother for it. And by putting it down on paper and seeing how your mom really is compared to how you want her to be, you will see how much pain you are creating for yourself. And my goal is to show you that the way to overcome the pain and the disappointment and the resentment is to let go of the manual and accept your mother exactly how she is.

Now, why is this so hard for so many of us to do? Why is it hard for us to just accept our mothers when we have this idealized version of how they could be and the potential of what they should be? Why is it so hard for us to just accept what is?

Now, people will say, "It's just so disappointing." And what I try to point out is it's not disappointing to accept your mother as she is if you're not comparing as she is to something else. If you're just appreciating and accepting as she is, there's nothing to be disappointed about. There's no expectation that she's not meeting until you include your manual.

One of the easiest things that I've been able to do in my work and that I recommend that you do is to try and understand your mother for how she is exactly as she is. So understanding her models. Why do you think she sometimes says those things or does those things or acts in a certain way?

When you compare her behavior to your manual, you're getting disappointed. But if you drop your manual and try to understand where she's coming from and why she might be doing that and how maybe she

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was raised and what her models are and what she might be thinking, it'll be much easier for you to drop into compassion and understanding and neutrality versus frustration and anger and resentment, which is what many of you have told me you feel.

And this applies of course to mothers and mother-in-laws and fathers and father-in-laws and aunts and all of it. But it's most intense with our mothers that have raised us because the patterning is so deep and the resentment sometimes is so long-lasting from all of the things we blame our mothers for.

Notice how sometimes we blame our mothers for how we are in our lives, because of how we were raised and how powerless that leaves us. It leaves us feeling so powerless over our own lives because we make our mothers so powerful.

And really, the truth is they did what they were able to do with what they had, and we all had the exact childhoods that we were meant to have, which of course are 50/50. And as long as we blame our mother for any of it, we are going to be left powerless in that area.

So by dropping the manual and taking responsibility for our own emotions and our own lives, and really accepting our mothers for who they are, we drop into a whole new relationship with them. And what it looks like is just allowing them to be exactly who they are.

And noticing that what they say and what they do has a reason for them. And that reason is theirs to own and for you to give back to them. And so you may say, "They're just so rude. They're just so mean. They're just so unaccepting." And that may be true as your opinion of them, but just notice it's not serving you to believe that.

And notice, many of you are judging your mothers so harshly for judging you. So you're doing the exact thing back to them that you think they're doing to you. And instead of judging them for judging you, one of the things I want to recommend is that you try to understand them. Why they might be

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judging you. Because then you'll be able to understand why you're judging them as well.

So many of you just want your parents to approve of you, to be proud of you, to accept you, to support you. And it all sounds so lovely. It all sounds like a reasonable thing to want a mother to do, and yet it's causing you so much suffering because you want them to be and do something that they're not being and doing.

And what's so fascinating about this is if you - so many times when you ask a mother, "Do you support your child? Do you love your child? Are you proud of your child?" They will say yes, I am. But because of the way that we're interpreting how they show that, we don't ever get to experience it.

So your relationship with your mother is really based on all of your thoughts about her. And so when you look at the manual of how you want her to be, and then you look at the judgments that you have of her because of how she is, you will be left feeling exactly how you're thinking.

And so if you want to change the way you feel about your mother, the answer isn't to change your mother. The answer is to change your brain. So what does that mean to allow someone to be exactly who they are and to stop blaming them for how you feel?

It means you simply notice the facts of what they're doing and then you notice the thoughts that you're having about it, and you separate them out. And what you will notice is that what they're doing is completely neutral and all your judgments are completely painful.

And without them changing, you can change your judgments and feel more connected and feel more compassionate, and ultimately, act in the way that you want to act towards your mother. Because if you're anything like me, you don't approve of your own behavior towards your mother. You don't like who you are when you're with your mother.

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And until you are in a space where you're not judging them and you're not wanting them to act in a certain way, it will be very challenging for you to tell them the truth. It'll be very challenging for you to set boundaries because you will want them to take responsibility for what's not working in the relationship instead of you.

So for example, if you need to set a boundary with your mother, say, "Hey, I don't want you to come over on Sundays or I don't want you to yell at me on the phone and if you do, I'm going to hang up the phone and if you come by, I'm not going to let you in," or whatever it is. And then just recognize that how she responds to that boundary or how she responds to that request is perfect, is what you allow her to do and be in a way that you're not judging her for.

And you're not expecting her to behave in a different way so you can feel better about yourself and you can feel like you made the right decision. You want to be able to allow her to have her feelings and let her take responsibility for those, and you have yours and you take responsibility for yours.

Now, when I refer to boundaries or communicating with your mom, I'm never talking about threatening them, meaning like you need to behave this way, this is how I need you to do that, and if you don't, I will never talk to you again. That's a threat.

Basically saying, hey, this is what I'm willing to do, this is what I'm willing to stand for, this is what I'm willing to experience. You get to do whatever you want, but here's how I will respond. That is a proper boundary. We're not trying to control our mothers or have them follow our manuals when we're setting boundaries.

We're simply noting what we will or will not allow into our lives. But that doesn't mean we're not allowing them to make that choice and be whoever they want to be. And that's where I see so many of you have challenges with that because you so desperately want them to change.

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They don't need to change. They get to be who they are. You're the one that needs to change. Taking back responsibility for how you feel towards your mother is a very courageous act because you may have been going around telling yourself, "I can't love her. She's not lovable. I can't have compassion. I'm filled with anger and resentment and it's her fault."

It's never her fault. It's always on you to own your emotional life and to decide how you want to feel about things. And when you allow her to be who she is and when you take responsibility for how you feel, that makes it way easier to drop into unconditional love for yourself but also for your mother.

And unconditional love means love without conditions. It means that your mother doesn't have to follow your manual. She doesn't have to act the way you want her to act. She doesn't have to behave in a certain way. She doesn't have to love you for you to love her unconditionally. She just has to be there for you to love her.

And when you take responsibility for how you feel, feeling love becomes so much more available. And when you love someone unconditionally, you stop people-pleasing them, you stop lying to them, you stop pretending with them, and you allow them to be disappointed with you and frustrated with you and upset with you without taking it personally.

You are able to say I love you and no. I love you and I'm not coming over. I love you and I don't want you to come over here. And however you want to behave and however you want to be is okay. I will love you anyway. That's power. That's where we are most powerful.

Sometimes we feel powerful when we stand up and yell and scream and boss them around, but that blaming is coming from a place of weakness. Not power. Power is always being able to tell the truth, allowing someone else to be who they are and taking full responsibility for how you feel.

So when you stop comparing your mom to the version of the person you want her to be, you really do get to meet her where you are. And you'll

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understand that she's just a human, just like you. She's fallible, she makes mistakes, she does it wrong, just like you. And that's okay. You can love her anyway.

And you can set proper boundaries from a place of love, not anger, and you can communicate from a place of love, not anger. Your work to do on your mom is to find that place of unconditional love. From there, you make decisions. From there, you have communication. From there, you set boundaries.

When you feel justified in your anger, you're still just angry. When you feel justified in your resentment, you still feel resentment. And when you feel like disconnection is protecting you, you're the one causing the pain. You're not protecting yourself from anything, especially not your own pain when you disconnect from someone.

Connection is the highest form of power, especially when you do it from a place of love. So I'll leave you with this; your relationship with your mother only takes one of you to make better. It only takes one person who's willing to drop into unconditional love and tell the truth and drop the manual and set proper boundaries and be who you truly are and risk disappointing your mother.

You show up as you really are. She may be disappointed in that. And that's not to blame her for. That's to allow for her to feel because of what's going on in her brain and what she makes that mean. Likewise, you may be disappointed in how your mother is because she doesn't match up to your expectation of who she should be. And when you allow for that disappointment and then release it, you get to have a genuine relationship with your mom based on who she is and based on who you are.

So, that, my friends, is what to do with your mother. Simply love her for exactly who she is. Have a beautiful week, everybody. Enjoy this little clip with Ryan Moran.

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Ryan: So, you really blew my mind when you were talking about – the example you used was The Life Coach School, or the life coach industry, and you seeing it as on fire. And the confidence with which you say that because you believe it, I start seeing evidence for it too.

Brooke: Right, and it creates that. Yeah.

Ryan: And you're saying that...

Brooke: What you're asking is, "What if all of a sudden I lost all my clients?" And I was like, "Well, I was wrong."

Ryan: No, not necessarily. What I'm questioning is the difference between the creating and the observing. This insight that this person had where, when you say it, it sounds like an observation, but it's really a creation.

Brooke: But all observations are decisions on what to think. That's why you and I can look at the exact same thing and think something completely different, even if it's a fact.

Ryan: Because what you – you're basically, you decide the filter through which you can make observations.

Brooke: Exactly. Everyone thinks their observations are facts. That's what's so fascinating about the human brain, right. I look at something, I'm like, "No, this is what happened." And you're like, "No, this is what happened. This is what's true." So, this is why I asked you in the beginning, like, what is the truth? Is there a truth that exists outside of our brain?

Ryan: And if there is, I don't think there's any way we would know.

Brooke: Well, I think the answer is no because, without our brain, there is no outside. And that's why choosing to believe something and believing it with all your heart, if the only reason you don't want to do that is because you're afraid you might be wrong about that, that's ridiculous. Who cares if you're wrong? Believe it as hard as you can, your whole life. You wouldn't even question, "What if I'm wrong about it?"

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Ryan: You can't see video. I literally have my face in my hands doing, like, the Home Alone scream. I'm like... My mind is melded.

Brooke: It's so good, right?

Ryan: Right, because without the human judgment, there's no need for truth. There's no...

Brooke: There's no truth without your brain to interpret it.

Ryan: Right.

Brooke: So, here's where this is handy. Can I share where this is handy? And let's bring it...

Ryan: Please, because my whole world feels weird right now and you need to tell me how to apply it.

Brooke: But here's what's interesting. So, let's say you believe something like, "Okay, my business is going to make \$20 million this year." Let's say that's your belief about your business. And you believe that and you choose to believe that and you're not going to let anyone stop you from believing that. And then you go and you do something.

You're like, "I'm going to launch this product," or, "I'm going to do this thing," and it totally fails. So then, you get to the point where you can say, "Oh, I was wrong. I'm not going to make \$20 million. Look at the facts."

And then you give up on that belief system because you think, "Well, the truth is out there on the table," right? We're just looking at it, "I can no longer give myself permission to believe that thing." That is the difference between me and everybody else that hasn't made \$25 million, is I never give up on the belief, no matter what the data says.

Ryan: So, would you just roll that into next year?

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Brooke: Well, it depends on what month we're in. Do I still have time? I mean, if it's in December, yeah, I would just roll it.

Ryan: So, in that scenario, does that not conflict with the idea of observation versus creation?

Brooke: No because now I'm observing it anew, right?

Ryan: Please keep talking.

Brooke: Well you tell me.

Ryan: This is my favorite phrase with Brooke, "Brooke, I need you to keep talking," because talking with you is like a constant cliffhanger. Speaking with you is like a constant brain-gasm...

Brooke: You're so funny.

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