

Ep #323: Looking for Thoughts



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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 323.

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. I'm really excited to talk to you today about some work I've been doing with my clients and some work that I've been doing on my own brain that has me really excited, really looking forward to all of the awareness and all of the uncovering that is ahead of me.

And I wanted to share with you my process and what I'm going through and talk a little bit about how I'm using my work and the model to uncover some thoughts that I haven't even known to look for. And so, I'm calling this podcast Looking for Thoughts.

Because I feel like the whole process is about going into our brain and finding our unconscious thoughts, finding thoughts that we have been programmed to believe through our culture and through our education systems that we may not even be aware that we have, and we may not want to have. And so, I'm hoping that the process that I'm going through and that some of my students are going through with me will also benefit you.

So, as most of you know, I have hired a coach who is helping me with finding my own internal biases, educating me on diversity and inclusion and equity and lots of topics that I haven't studied before and that I haven't had a lot of knowledge in. And I'm very committed to this work because it's really important to me to become the best possible coach that I can be.

And I know that awareness is one of the most important things that any of us can do in our own work. And it's awareness of our own thinking, awareness of the differentiation between what we think is just real and what are actually our thoughts, and how those affect our behavior, and also

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understanding how we are influenced by the people that we're around, by the way that we're educated and how to undo some of that.

I've talked a lot on this podcast about mental health and about how the way that we are taught in school and the way that we are educated has caused us so many problems, as just humans. I've also talked a lot about how specifically women and the way that our history has been taught to us and the way that our history is, and how that has influenced the way that we show up in the world and the things that we believe.

And I'm learning now about a lot of the racism that has been woven into our education and that we have been taught that we may not even realize is there. And so, uncovering all of this, for me, has been really powerful, really painful, and has me really motivated.

So, I thought I would start with talking a little bit about sexism and how thinking about that has really helped me in doing some of this work on myself. And what I'm always teaching on this podcast is stuff that I have learned and applied to myself, and then I go and teach.

So, that's what I'm going to continue to do always on this podcast, and so, that's what I'm sharing with you here. I know that there's a lot of men that listen to this podcast, and I actually think this will benefit you to listen to, just to understand, in a way that might blow your mind a little bit.

So, I have been a very successful businesswoman in this online industry. And as I've gone through the past 10 years in Corporate America and also in this online business, I have experienced a lot of very sexist stuff. And I've seen it in a lot of the men that I collaborate with, my mentors and the people that I work with.

And it's something that's kind of always just been there. I've always kind of noticed it and have just gotten used to it. I just kind of assume that it's going to be there. and I do my own thought work on it because one of the things that I had realized is that some of those messages that I had received through my own education about the difference between men and women had been internalized for me as well.

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And so, I was believing – it was almost like I was believing things about myself without even realizing it. And I've seen this with a lot of my clients. We've done a lot of work on our own thoughts about being women and what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man, especially in business.

So, I'll give you an example of how this happened to me just recently. I was talking to a new friend of a friend and I was talking about my business. And you guys know that I'm very open about my business. I'm very open with the amount of money that I make. I'm very proud of the students that I have and all of the money they make and I feel like we're making a really good impact in the world by the work that we're doing and also the examples that we're setting for younger woman coming behind us about what is possible.

And so, I was really excited to talk to this woman because she had a very successful business as well. And we were talking to each other about our businesses and just having a great time. And then she said, "You know you're kind of like a man. A lot of your tendencies are like a man."

And I was like, "What are you talking about?" And I don't think she meant it in, like, a derogatory way. I think she was referring to maybe my ambition. She didn't really specify. But I replied back, like, "No, no. I'm like a woman. This is what a woman is like."

And I think that just that little thread is something that I have heard over and over and over again, which is like, in order to be successful, you have to be like a man or you have a lot of masculine energy, or, "I'm afraid to make more money like you because then I'm afraid that I'll become more like a man."

And those comments and those ideas are something that we just want to really look at and we really want to evaluate. Even when I'm in a group, there's been so many times in masterminds where I've been the only woman in a group and comments will be made, something like, "You know Brooke, she's just one of us," or, "She's just like us. She's not really like other women."

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And I was like, “I am exactly like other women.” I am a woman. And we are the same and we all have the potential to do what it is that we want to do. And I can hang onto my femininity and hang onto my strength and not make that mean something derogatory about me.

And I see this a lot with comments that are made about – like, here we are in 2020 and some of the comments that are made, some of the assumptions that are made, when we walk into a room, about me being the assistant, or, “Are you the assistant? Can you help me figure out how to fill this form out?”

It’s fascinating to watch, kind of, like, all these ingrained stereotypes that we have about women and men and why a woman would be in a room with a big group of men, or that if she is then she must be more manly than womanly. All of those things kind of threaded throughout my experience as a businesswoman, as an entrepreneur.

And I want to offer – I’m doing a whole podcast on women and money because that’s a whole other topic that I want to address and talk to all of us about because I think it’s really important. But I want to bring it back to so much of what happens is very subtle. And if I were to say to one of my guy friends, “You know you’re super-sexist? You know that when you say that I’m just an exception or that I’m a unicorn or that I’m different... it’s like, you’re not really just a woman, you’re just different...”

Those kinds of things that are said, I see them very clearly for what they are. It’s based on our belief systems, our underlying belief systems. And kind of, “Well, you’re different, you’re extra-intelligent, you know, you’ve had different kinds of experiences that make you...” literally, what they’re saying is, like, less of a woman. And it’s women saying this to me as well, many times as well.

And one of the things that I’ve heard too is, if you become successful, if you make millions of dollars, you will become more like a man, almost like men are the ones that have cornered the market on money. So, in order to make money, you have to be like them.

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And I'm always telling my students who are struggling with wanting to make more money who are afraid of this sort of thing, is I'm saying, "That's the exact reason why we need to make more money. We need to change that narrative. We need to put more money in women's hands, a lot more money in women's hands."

And I'm going to talk about that a lot more when I talk about money next week. But one of the things that's really helped me in looking at my own self and looking at my own thoughts is to consider, like, men that I really love who are very loving people who are very sexist and don't even realize it and don't even mean to be.

It's really clear to me that that's not their intention and yet they can't see what they can't see. And so, when I have used that example for myself, it's been much easier for me then to turn it back on myself to look for my own unconscious biases, my own upbringing, my own lack of education and awareness where I may be showing up as sexist in my own life or racist in my own life, so I can uncover that and change that. Because I can see how much that limits growth and conversation, when we are buried in thoughts and ideas that we aren't even aware that we have, that are showing up and affecting how we live our lives.

As you know, I teach and I believe that our thoughts create our feelings and our actions. So, if we have unconscious thoughts, unconscious bias that is affecting how we show up in the world in a negative way that we don't even recognize that we are part of, that we are creating, that we are contributing to, I think we miss out on a huge opportunity to grow.

And I'm always open for growth because the purpose of my life is to evolve and become an example of what is possible. So, I want to share with you how I have used that example in my life to kind of dive into my own mind and uncover, you know. Because I haven't experienced racism as a white woman, I've found it challenging to wrap my mind around some of the things that I was hearing.

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But, when I was able to say, “Yes, but I definitely experienced other isms, right, and sexism is definitely one of them that I’ve experienced, I had this crazy a-ha moment to just start to listen differently, with a new lens, and be open to that awareness and to be open to asking myself the question, “What am I missing here?”

That’s such a powerful question to ask. What am I so involved in, so embedded with, so educated and programmed to that I literally can’t see it with my own brain yet? And the other question is, what are the thoughts that I can’t yet see because I don’t even recognize that they’re thoughts, I just think that they’re reality?

And when I ask those questions, I understand how important it is to understand how the education system and our society perpetuates ideas in our head and reinforces them and reinforces our bias so we can’t even see it.

And one of the other profound moments that I had is, like, your intention doesn’t sanitize the impact. So, even though you may be like me or like one of my male colleagues and just be like, “I would never intend to hurt you. I would never intend to be racist. I would never intend to be sexist,” doesn’t mean that we aren’t, right? It doesn’t mean that we’re not showing up that way just because we’re not aware of it, doesn’t mean that we’re not responsible for it.

And so, my goal is I don’t want to perpetuate anything unconsciously. If I’m going to perpetuate something, I want to make sure it’s a decision and that it’s conscious and that I’m powerfully doing it and not just kind of following along with an outdated form of education that has been given to me.

And the other way is, I just want to make sure that I’m not internalizing things and not seeing them because that will make me ineffectual as a coach. So, for example, if I have a bias towards something that I’m not aware of and I’m coaching another person with a bias that they’re unaware of, I can’t hold space and help them find it. They’re going to perpetuate something that may be having a negative impact on themselves or on the

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world and, as a coach, I haven't helped them discover that because I haven't discovered it in myself first.

So, when I see that, one of the ways that I've really seen that is in talking to my Black women coaches and hearing their experience, hearing things that they experience as Black women that I haven't been aware of at all. And how now, with some of that knowledge, hearing some of those concepts that I wasn't aware of how much better it makes me when I think about coaching them and the ideas that I have and how to make it so there's an environment, a much better environment in the long-term of inclusion and making sure that all of those thoughts, we're all aware of them so we can find them and utilize them to make our coaching better; our self-coaching better and the coaching with our clients.

Now, I want to say that one of the ways that we may end up being resistant to kind of becoming more aware of some of these thoughts that we have inside of us is because of that cognitive dissonance. So, when somebody points out something to you that maybe you're doing that is racist or sexist or derogatory in a way that you weren't even aware of, you may immediately feel a resistance to it, a defensiveness.

That's really normal because of how cognitive dissonance works. It's, all of a sudden, you have two thoughts that are contradictory. You have something that you've always believed to be true and it's coming up against a new thought that you want to consider. And that discomfort, for many of us, requires us to retract and resist, especially if we haven't learned how to process or move into emotion.

And what I've seen happening with many of us is that you have this cognitive dissonance, and instead of resisting it, maybe you're opening up to it, but then you're going into shame and self-loathing and self-rejection. And you may feel like, "Well, I didn't know I believed this. This has caused harm, therefore I'm a bad person and I will now beat myself up," which does not serve anything.

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Processing through pain is very important. We absolutely need to do that. We need to go through that, but not the unnecessary suffering of then hating ourselves and beating ourselves up and treating ourselves terribly. That doesn't serve anything.

I want to encourage you to simply process the pain, find the thoughts, and then think about them consciously, change them, and take action in your life that feels authentic and true for you. This is very different than following some script to try and cover up the shame. That will not serve you in the long run.

So, if you feel resistance, which many of you have told me that you can relate to feeling resistance to uncovering thoughts that feel really painful and scary, is just ask yourself, why? Why aren't you willing to evolve and hear and listen to what's going on in your own brain?

My guess is, for so many of us, it's just fear and the fear of the discomfort and the fear of the shame. But just remember, you're the one causing all of those emotions and you can move through them. Do not avoid cognitive dissonance because that is the currency to change.

I teach this with all of our goals. In order to change the results that we're getting in our own lives, we have to give up thoughts that are creating our current results. So, if your current results are giving you your current life, you have to change those thoughts eventually in order to create a different life because your thoughts ultimately create your results.

And that's why it's so uncomfortable. Because we have to, for a period of time, go through the river of misery where we're holding two competing thoughts at once. This isn't any different than any other thought work that we've had to do when we're confronting our own limiting belief systems, our own internal bias, our own miseducation.

What we've been told, what we've been taught, what we have assimilated is not our fault. It's how we were raised, especially as small children. But it is our responsibility now if we choose to accept responsibility for our own brains to have a look and to change it.

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So, I'm going to give you the process for doing this and you're going to be surprised because it's very similar to what I've always taught you. But I do think starting with the thought, "What have I been missing?" and then educating yourself a little bit is the way to start. Because you can't see what you can't find.

You need a map, so right now, I think the top 10 books on the New York Times are all on racism. The movement right now to become educated in this area is huge. You are not alone in this. This is work that so many of us are doing.

So, finding a book that talks about race and talks about systemic racism, that talks about internal bias, that talks about where we're falling short in evaluating our own minds is a great place to start. And so, picking up one of these books or taking a class and reading it and just staying aware of the thoughts that are coming up and the feelings that it creates, and writing them down for yourself.

And this is work that we need to do with ourselves, but it's also work that I highly recommend that you do with a coach, someone that is trained in this work and someone that is understanding to what your experience has been and that can compassionately take you through the process of uncovering this.

And obviously, I'm a huge proponent of coaching and I believe that everyone should have a coach. And in this instant, finding a diversity coach, someone who is trained in this specific area will be really imperative, someone that's had a lot of training in this area, to be able to help you through this.

So, as I've been getting coached and having these discussions and listening and reading, I've been pulling out my thoughts from my own brain with courage and saying, "Yep, that's what I've believed. Yep, that's what I've missed. Yes, it never even occurred to me. Yes, this is what's happening for me. Yes, I recognize myself in this."

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And I've also been saying, "No, I don't see that. I'm open to seeing it, but I don't see it yet. I want to understand it more, but I don't feel like that does apply to me and I don't feel like that's a belief system that I want to question right now," but I write it down for later.

Staying really true and honest and not blindly agreeing with everything you read is very important to me. I need to make sure that I'm evaluating against my own critical thinking, but also recognizing that some of my critical thinking is very biased too. So, it's a real trip to be able to kind of step out of your brain and be open to something that doesn't make any sense, but it could make sense, but I'm not just going to accept it blindly ever. I need to understand it.

I've, from my history of being a people pleaser, being involved in some pretty intense organizations, I tread slowly and question everything. And I want to encourage you to do that, to be honest.

One of the things that super-important for me is I want to internalize new thoughts. I don't want to memorize new thoughts. And I think that that's really important to think about because you could just say, "Here's all the right things to say. Here's all the right things to believe," and then memorize them and kind of be performative in how you show up.

And I've seen people do this in all sorts of areas of their life, and that disconnect, that feeling of inauthenticity, it wears us out, right? It causes a lot of kind of incongruency in the way that we're showing up in our lives. And I coach a lot of people on that.

But when you internalize something and genuinely allow yourself to absorb and believe something, and you'll know that you do it because it will feel true and you will experience the emotion of certainty when you believe it, then that's when you don't need to keep questioning how to show up in the world because you'll just show up based on your new belief systems.

And that takes a while, right? If you've done the work with the model before, you know that that takes a while to get through that cognitive

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dissonance so you really do believe and, you know, these new thoughts that you want to integrate in your life.

Now, the model doesn't need to change at all. Just because we're increasing our own awareness of our own thoughts, we still are going to run those thoughts through the model as it's always been. We're always going to put circumstances that are very specific in the C-line, we're going to always put our thoughts that we're thinking in the T-line.

And all we're going to do here differently is we're going to find thoughts that we didn't even know that we had. And that is the process of coaching, right? When we are coaching with someone, they can hear us say thoughts that we don't even hear ourselves saying, often.

And if you get someone that's more educated than you in certain areas, they can point out thoughts that you didn't even know were thoughts because of the way you were educated. And that's when I get super-excited and that's when the magic happens.

But it requires us to change our own awareness of ourselves and to reprogram our minds based on what we've been taught. So, for example, most of us have gone through an education system that has taught us to seek approval outside of ourselves. It has taught us to do work so then a teacher can grade us and tell us how we've done.

We have been raised in an education system that has told us, it's very important for you to comply with the group. It's very important for you to do what you're told. It's very important for you to not question what we tell you but to tell us back what we teach you. And to stay part of the collective group-thinking.

And most of us, from very small children, have been taught this. and a lot of the work that we do through coaching is to question all of those things. What were the things we were taught? What were the things that we believed? And like, really redeciding for ourselves that that's what we want to continue to believe anymore.

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And so, we can have a new commitment to the thoughts that we've been taught, or we can question and change them. I see this a lot with religion when I'm coaching people in a religion that they've been raised in and what they've been taught in that religion and how they've interpreted those lessons and are they serving them to have a deeper connection with God, to have a deeper connection with their religious communities? Or have they built up resentment or questioning or confusion about it? And how can we re-question what has been taught to them and make sure they're seeing it with the eyes that they want to see it with?

When I do this work, a lot of people are afraid of losing their identities. They're like, "Well, if I start questioning everything I've been taught, who will I be?" It feels so discombobulating. It feels so scary to do that because of all that dissonance.

And I always say, like, "Listen, you can question everything and redecide everything and never change anything in your life. I just want the thoughts in your mind to become conscious for you so you can then decide on purpose if those are thoughts that you want to keep thinking, or are those things that have just been in your mind that you don't want to keep thinking?"

Self-awareness can come from being exposed to an understanding or programming and then deciding what you want to keep. And one of the things that I think is really important in this work that I talk about a lot and I think is important to reiterate here is, we have been taught, through most of our history and in storytelling and in playground socialization that there are villains and there are victims. And you are either one or the other.

And that if you recognize which one you are, then you have to identify as that and feel that. So, if you identify as the villain, you're going to feel terrible. If you identify as the victim, you're going to feel terrible. And we do so much work on unraveling that in our minds.

Now, of course, there are times when you literally are the villain and there are times, whether it's consciously or unconsciously, and there are times

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where you are the victim. And that is something that we want to acknowledge and pay attention to and really look at.

What I'm talking about is the mentality of that afterwards, after instances where perpetuation has happened on something or there's been a crime or there's been something that's happened to you or something that you've done to someone else is, afterwards, how will you process that experience in a way that doesn't put you in a victim mentality that doesn't serve you, or that doesn't put you in a villain mentality that doesn't serve you, so you're so filled with shame and regret that you can't move forward. That is the work that we do.

And having an education to be able to unravel that around the areas where you want to grow and learn more about yourself will bring up those – we call them invitations. There will be an invitation to see yourself in a very negative light, to see yourself in a very diminished way if you aren't aware that your thoughts about circumstances ultimately affect whether you take something and use it to evolve, or take something and use it to hide and be afraid.

So, for me, my process has been to read materials and become overwhelmed with all the stuff in my own brain and to write it all down and to see, through my own models, how I have been acting on unconscious thoughts and how that has shown up in my personal life, how it's shown up in my business life, how it's shown up in my coaching, in my coach trainings, and become more enlightened about what I can do differently.

And any time I feel more enlightened and more aware, I feel more excited. I feel motivated. I feel determined. And I want to encourage you all to consider that that's how you can look at it too. You can look at this, this kind of excavation of thoughts on any topic that you're afraid to go in and check out because they're unconscious, and just see it.

But when I find thoughts that I didn't know, I will be more enlightened than I was before. I will be able to be more conscious. I will be able to make

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change and be more deliberate in the person that I want to be in the world. And that is what my work is all about.

So, I want to encourage you to read materials that maybe you're resistant to reading, evaluate them with a critical mind, look into your own brain, see what you find. Be really courageous and honest about that. And then decide from that moment, if you're willing to give up the part of you that has been going through life unconsciously and make it more conscious.

I have a belief that this will never end the rest of my life, that I will always be finding layers of things that I can question and change and be critical about and decide about. And for me especially, understanding that I get to decide who I want to be and what I want to believe, no matter what anyone else tells me I should or shouldn't do. And that that's going to ultimately be my destiny if I don't just fall into unconscious patterns but I make my life conscious and deliberate.

That is how I will evolve to the best version of myself on purpose. And I'd love to invite you all to do this work with me, to do similar work on all the areas of your life where you may be unconscious, because even though it's really difficult work, it's absolutely worth it.

So, go in there and find those thoughts. See what you can do. Let it be uncomfortable. I'll talk to you next week. Bye.

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