

Ep #26: The Self Coaching Model



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

Welcome to The Life Coach School podcast, where it's all about real clients, real problems, and real coaching. Now, your host, master coach instructor Brooke Castillo.

Hey, everybody. What's up? Welcome to the podcast. I'm stoked to be here today. I'm going to be talking to you guys about the model, self-coaching, the self-coaching model. I'm just really excited. I obviously have talked about the model all throughout all of the podcasts up to this point, but I wanted to do just one all-encompassing call about the model.

Before I get started with that, before I do the overview and give you a taste of it, I want to make sure that you know that you can go to TheLifeCoachSchool.com/26 and download a visual of the model, so you can look at it as you're going through this session. If you're on your iPhone, like I usually am, you can just look at the artwork for this session. It has the model right there on there, on the artwork, so you can have a look. I think it really helps to see it visually.

Before I get started, though, I want to address an email I got from Kara. I'm going to read you her email, and then I'm going to address it, because I think it goes along with what we're going to be talking about in the model. Here is her email.

"Hi, Brooke. I'm one of your students from weight school, and I listen to your podcast regularly. I have a question I'm hoping you'll consider addressing in one of your podcasts. You talk a lot on the podcast about having faith or a conviction that things were meant to happen the way they did. That's a concept I struggle with. I know that you're a person of religious faith, or at least faith in a divine creator, as you mention on the podcast sometimes, and so I can see how in that world view, things can be meant to happen.

"I believe that the core teachings of noticing your thoughts, managing your mind, learning from your experiences, etc. are all things that are useful and true and work no matter what you believe about religion or spirituality. But for someone like myself, who doesn't believe in God or fate, the idea that things were meant to happen a certain way or that they happen for me doesn't resonate. For the record, I have had

spiritual experiences, and I believe they exist. I just don't personally believe in a divine creator or that there is a fate or divine plan.

"This comes up most strongly when I'm trying to make peace with what is, or what has happened in the past or my circumstances, or situations in which I worry that I did or said the wrong thing, or regret or second-guess my actions. I don't feel any peace or relief thinking things were meant to happen the way they did, and it feels like that makes it harder to accept what is.

"The only thought I can use is simply to remind myself that no matter what I think now, I did the best I could at the time, but that's not quite as liberating and as peaceful as 'it was meant to happen that way' sounds like it must be if you did believe it. Do you have any thoughts about how an atheist can interpret your teachings on that 'it was always meant to happen that way' front? Many thanks for your wisdom and guidance, Kara."

Okay. Great question, and really well asked, I might add. I want to clarify that "It Was Always Meant to Happen That Way," it's actually a title of my book. It's something I really believe in, but notice that it's in the past tense. I do not believe that our lives are predestined and that we have fate that's unchangeable. I do not believe that. I don't believe that everything in my future is already predesigned and that I don't have any control over it. That's not what I believe when I say "it's always meant to happen that way." I don't think we have some scripted life, that it's going to happen that way no matter what.

I do believe that so many of us spend so much time arguing with our past, and resisting our past, and actually, literally, trying to change it, that it doesn't serve us in any way. When we think about our past, how we choose to think about it is either going to serve us or not. I've actually had quite a few of my students say that "it was meant to happen that way" doesn't give them freedom, it doesn't give them relief.

First and foremost, I want to say if a thought doesn't work for you, if the way of thinking about something doesn't work for you, then don't try to make it work for you if it doesn't. It works for me, and it's a thought and a way of thinking about my life that has completely

transformed it and released me from any kind of argument I have with the near past or from the long past. I really have to credit Byron Katie for all of this teaching, because she's the one that really taught this to me in a way that I feel it in my bones.

First of all, I don't think it has anything to do with being religious, this idea that the past is over and it's unchangeable. I believe that things happen the way they're meant to happen because that's what is. When something happens a certain way, there's no point in debating whether it should have happened differently, because it's over. You can't change it. Just from a logical perspective, the idea "it was meant to happen that way," how do I know? Because it did happen that way. That's the concept I really got from Byron Katie, really just understanding, "I know that that's how it was supposed to go down, because, well, that is how it went down." When I try and argue with things that happened, and I try to reconcile them or make them be something different than they were, I never ... Like Byron Katie says, you can argue with the past, but you're going to lose 100 percent of the time. I totally agree with that.

By believing that things happen exactly the way they should have happened, and believing that they happened for me, and making peace with what is in the immediate past, I have released, I would say, about half of the tension, and anxiety, and worry, and frustration that I had in my life. It really did set me free to believe that, but I really do believe it.

Every belief we have is a choice. You can choose to believe in God, if that brings you peace and that makes your life better, or you can choose to believe there isn't a God, if that's what brings you peace and feels more true to you. I'm never going to say that one belief is better than another. It's better for you if it works for you.

You do say here that "I did the best that I could at the time' is not quite as liberating and as peaceful as 'it was meant to happen the way' sounds like it must be if you believe it." It sounds like there's a part of you that wants to believe that the past is perfect, that everything happened in a way that can be used to serve you and can be used to make your life even better.

I would suggest to you that you just look for a way of looking at your past that does feel true to you but also sets you free. That is what works for me. I believe that there are no mistakes. I believe that if something were supposed to happen a different way, it would have. It would have happened a different way if it were supposed to happen a different way. I also believe that everything that's happened in our lives can be used to serve us. That's just my personal choice.

I would recommend that you play around with different ways of looking at your past in a way that might serve you. Again, it's just a thought. It's just a way of looking at things in a way that makes you feel the best way you possibly can. If my suggestions don't work for you, find a way that you can reconcile it in a way that does work for you. I hope that helps. If you have any questions any more you want to talk about that, Kara, please go to the comments section under this episode 26, and let's chat some more.

Okay. Now let's move in to the self-coaching model. Hopefully, you have a visual of it in front of you. This is a model that I created based on all of the studies that I had done with all of my teachers in my life. It's a model that I use on myself daily, and it's also a model that I teach to my students and I use with my clients. It has been such a blessing for me and so many of the people that I know and that I've worked with.

I want to be really clear that the basic concept of the model is not something that I invented. It's a basic truth. What I invented was just a way of looking at it, a way of organizing your brain around it. It's just a tool that I created. The concepts behind the tool are universal truths. There are many models that are very similar to this one because it is based on a universal truth.

I've had people come to me and say, "Oh, you must have studied the work of so-and-so," and I laugh. I say, "No, I didn't, but they created a similar model because this is the truth." I love that we've all come up with very similar ways of looking at the world and coaching ourselves, because it just confirms to me that we're all on the right track. I have found that this model has been really, really useful as a tool for me, because it's visual and it's something that I can use to write down everything that goes on in my brain. If you've been listening to this

podcast for a while, you know that I feel really strongly about having a look at your brain and supervising your brain, and how important that is.

Let's talk about the components of the model and what they mean. We have circumstances, which are the things that happen in the world that we can't control. One of the things that goes under the circumstance category is our past. Our past has no control over us. Nothing that we've done or said, nothing that was done or said to us, has any power over us until we have a thought about it.

Circumstances also include other people's behavior. Circumstances include what's going on in the world. Circumstances are the facts of our lives. They are neutral until we have a thought about them. That's our next category, thoughts. We want to think about thoughts as sentences in our minds. There are so many of them all throughout the day. We have about 60,000 sentences that go through our mind. We want to look at those sentences individually, and we want to evaluate those sentences. If they have any subjective terms, any adjectives, any descriptive words, we know that they're thoughts and not facts. Facts go in the circumstance line. Thoughts, which are sentences in our minds, go in the thought line.

Understanding the difference between a circumstance and a thought is one of the most important pieces of the self-coaching model. If you learn nothing else but the difference between a thought and a circumstance, you are well on your way to understanding how your brain works and how it affects you.

Remember, circumstances are neutral until we have a thought about them. Circumstances are something we can all agree on. "That is a white door." "This computer is on." "That person said this." "This happened in my past." When you start adding, "This horrible thing happened in my past," "This wonderful thing happened yesterday," any time you start adding clarifiers, any time you start adding descriptives and opinions and judgments, now you've moved into the thought line. Only facts belong in that circumstance line.

When you are going throughout your life, remember that. Nothing that happens is painful, nothing that happens is wonderful, until you have

a thought about it. When you choose a thought to have about something, that's when you're going to determine how you feel. That's the next line in the self-coaching model, is your feelings. We like to have your feeling be just a one-word descriptor. So often, we'll ask someone how they're feeling, and they will give us their thoughts. We want the feeling line to just include happy, sad, mad, anxious, fabulous, wonderful, loving, caring. Whatever it is that you are feeling based on what you're thinking, try to keep that to one word. The thought should just be a sentence, the circumstance should just be the facts, and the feeling line should just be a one-word feeling that's describing how you're feeling in this moment because of the thought you're having.

The next line is actions. All of your feelings will drive certain actions. We've talked a lot about that on this podcast, but I really want you to think about, when you're feeling caring, what you might do, versus when you're feeling angry, what you might do. Those actions are going to be very different based on what you are feeling. Your actions will always determine your results. What you do is going to create a certain result.

Let's go through the model quickly so I can explain it to you. Circumstances, facts. You have a thought about those facts. That thought is always going to create a feeling. The feeling is always going to create an action, an inaction, or a reaction. That action will create a result. That is how the world works, folks. That just sums it up for you right there.

When I first teach this to people, they're sometimes like, "What the what? What are you even talking about? I don't get it." We have to go through a lot of examples and a lot of practice. Understanding the terminology and what each one of those terms means really helps when it comes to starting to apply it.

The first thing you can do is think about anything that's going on with you right now. Just write it down. It can be something wonderful. It can be something horrible. It can be whatever you want. Depending on how you wrote it down, you're either going to classify it as a feeling, a thought, a circumstance, an action, or a result.

Let's go through some examples. I have a client come to me and say, "I can't stop overeating." That would be an action. Overeating is a verb. I would put it in the action line. Someone will come and say, "I hate myself." That happens more often than not, I will offer that. "I hate myself" is a thought. It's not a circumstance. It's not factual. It's a thought. You're thinking about yourself.

Some people would argue, "But it is really true. It feels true that I hate myself." Because it's subjective, because the word "hate" is subjective, what does that really even mean? Because when you say that to me, I may think, "Okay, you're going to kill yourself," and someone else may think, "Oh, she's just kidding." It's so subjective that it has to go in the T line. If someone says, "I'm so anxious," that would be a feeling. We put that in the F line.

The reason why the model is so awesome for coaches is that any time a client comes to us and has any problem, we can categorize it into the model. There is nothing that can't be categorized into the model, and so there's nothing that becomes too overwhelming to talk about because we don't know what to do with it. It's either a circumstance, something that happened in the past, something that happened earlier in the day; a thought, which is a sentence, a thought the person's having about that circumstance; a feeling; an action or an inaction or a reaction; or a result they're getting. The client comes to you and says, "I weigh 350 pounds." That would be a result. You could also put that in the C line as a fact.

Once you've categorized whatever it is you're dealing with, then you can look at the model and see the cause of it. The cause of all of our feelings, actions, and our results, is always going to be a thought. That's why I'm so insistent that you guys are always paying attention to what's going on in your brain, because if your brain and your thoughts are responsible for everything that you feel and everything that you do, and all the results you get, it's probably a really important thing to keep an eye on. Most of us don't keep an eye on our brain, because it takes effort. It takes effort to use your brain to watch your brain. Most of us would rather go into default mode and not pay attention to what we're thinking.

That comes at a huge cost, because just because you're not paying attention doesn't mean that you aren't thinking. You're probably thinking on autopilot. If you're thinking really positive, wonderful thoughts that give you great feelings and actions and results, then that's a great thing. For many of us, we're running old patterns that are creating results that we don't want. That's when we start having to pay attention to our brains.

Okay. Once you've categorized whatever it is you're dealing with, then you fill in the rest of the model. If you presented with, let's say, a circumstance, "My boss laid me off from my job." That's a circumstance. We can all agree that that's what happened. That can be proven in a court of law. We all know what that means. You're laid off.

What is your thought about it? You think the reason you're upset is because your boss laid you off, but really you're upset because of the thought you're having about it. There are so many options. You could think, "Wow, that's awesome. Can't wait to get a new job," "Wow, that's awesome. I hated this job anyway," "Oh, that's just the kick in the pants I needed to start my own business," or you could think, "My life is over. This is devastating. My family's not going to be able to eat." Look at all the different thoughts you could choose to think in that moment. Most of us don't take the time to think about what we want to think about. We just let our brain pick something by default. Whatever we choose to think in that moment, whether it's consciously or unconsciously, will create how we feel in that moment. How we feel in that moment will determine what we do. If we think a thought like, "This is great. I'm so excited. I can finally start my own business," you're going to be feeling excited. You're probably going to take action to get that business going. If you have a thought, "This is the end of my life. My family's never going to be able to eat again," you're probably going to feel depressed. The action you're going to take is probably inaction, probably nothing, which will of course prove that you can't get a job, and that you can't feed your family, and that your life is over. The result you create is always going to prove that original thought.

Notice, if you present with a fact, then you want to look at what are your thoughts you're having about that fact, what are the feelings that

thought is creating, and then what are you doing because of those feelings. Be really careful here when you're asking yourself the question. What do I do when I feel disappointed? What do I do when I feel depressed? Make sure that you're capturing the action that is driven by that exact emotion.

Sometimes people try and switch models. They'll say, "Oh, I feel depressed, so I want to go out and cheer myself up." That's a different model. You need to find out what do you do when you're feeling depressed, what action do you take or what action don't you take when you're feeling depressed. If you want to change the feeling of depression, then you'll think a new thought, new feeling, new action. That will be a different model. Don't be mixing up your models there. Then, what result will that get?

When you spend some time understanding your mind, when you start looking at your thinking and you start seeing the feelings that you're creating for yourself and the actions that you're taking because of those feelings, it can be overwhelming and mind-blowing, because you can see, "Wow, I can see that because of the thoughts I'm choosing to think, I can see why I feel the way I do, the way I act the way I do." If you have a lot of negative thinking, you're probably going to have a lot of little negative results in your life.

You might decide, when you start using this model and understanding yourself, that it's really overwhelming to look at that and it's really frustrating to know that you have so many negative thoughts. What I want to offer there is just be curious and just be compassionate, because when you start understanding your mind, you may not like what's going on in there, but that's a beautiful thing. It means there's so much potential for you to change your feelings, and change what you're doing in your life, and change your results. It can actually be really exciting.

I want to offer that, as you go through this process of unlayering your mind, that you plan on finding things that you don't really like, that there's going to be things in your brain that you're not really amused by. That's okay, and that's not a bad thing. That's actually a really good thing, because it gives you an opportunity to really make some amazing changes.

I want to offer, too, that when I introduce this model to people, and they start looking at their thinking, and they start seeing all of the negative results that they're creating in their lives, they immediately say, "Okay. That's fine. How do I change it? I want to change it immediately." I often ask them to slow down, because until you really see the current patterns, until you really understand what you're doing and why you're doing it and the thoughts you're choosing in a really deep way, in a really compassionate and observing way, it doesn't usually help to just try and thought-swap or just try and come up with a new thought and be happy all of a sudden.

It's much more useful to really understand the patterns, and see the effects of your thinking, and really understand it's not the things happening in your life. It's your thinking about the things that are happening in your life that are causing you to have negative feelings, actions, and results. That can be alarming, but it can also be really liberating to understand how much power you have in your life and that, wow, all these things you thought were just happening to you are really not happening to you. You have control by what you decide to think about those things that are happening to you.

Once you really understand those patterns and you've taken some time to really be in the space of understanding, then when you move on to try to create new models and try to adopt some new thinking, you're going to be in a much better place, because you'll understand the power of your thinking.

Let's talk about it just a little bit. When you notice that you have a lot of negative thinking and you decide, "Okay, I want to start thinking some more positive thoughts. I want to start cultivating new thought processes in my brain, and I know that that's going to take some effort," one of the things that I recommend is that you ease yourself into a new thought. Instead of going from "I'm so fat and ugly" to "I'm beautiful and lovely and thin," you go from "Oh my God, my body's so fat and ugly" to "I have a body. My body is capable. My body is healthy. My body is functioning."

You go to a more neutral thought, and you practice that new thought. It has to be believable. It has to be something that you really genuinely believe, and it feels slightly better than the previous

thought. As you practice that new thought, it can become more dominant than the previous thought. That's how you move away from a really negative thought to a less-negative thought, and then maybe to a neutral thought.

Then and only then, when you've practiced it and seen the power, then you move to a positive thought, because affirmations are really powerful, but only if you believe them. So many of us try to do affirmations. We try to think new thoughts, but because we don't believe them, our brain just says, "Yeah, no." We're saying these positive thoughts to ourselves, and we're not believing them, so they're not becoming new patterns of thought in our brain. There has to be a level of belief there. I have found, for myself and for my clients, it's much more powerful to shift the thought just slightly to a more neutral thought first, and then practice that one, and then ultimately move on to a more positive thought.

You can play around with the positive thought. If you try on a thought ... Let's say, for example, you go from "My body is so fat and ugly" ... That's a thought. The circumstance may be "I weigh 175 pounds." It may be "I weigh 120 pounds." I have clients that have this thought that has no basis on what they actually weigh. I've had clients that weigh 300 pounds that have this thought, and I've had clients that weigh 100 pounds that have this thought. When you have this thought, "My body's so fat and ugly," you may feel discouraged, and you may feel shame. The action may be, ironically, to overeat. Then the result will be that you gain weight, which of course proves the idea that your body is overweight, fat, and ugly.

When you change that to "I have a body" or "I have a healthy body" or "I have a capable body," that's going to change the feeling slightly. It may change it to acceptance. It may change it to just neutral. It may change it to ecstatic, who knows. You have to check in. How does that thought make you feel? When the feeling changes slightly, then the action is going to change. It's going to be a different feeling, which is going to cause a different action. You may still overeat, but it just may be less. You may overeat with more awareness, or you may just stop overeating altogether, which then produces a different result, which will give you different evidence for the original thinking that you had.

Your brain wants to prove itself true. That's what the model demonstrates. The brain is looking for evidence for whatever it's thinking. The brain likes to be efficient, and it likes to be right. When you go start trying to change your thinking, you're going to have this cognitive dissonance. You're going to have this discomfort of adjusting from one thought to another. Most people don't like the feeling of that discomfort, and so they give up on trying to adopt new beliefs.

I want to offer to you that if you're willing to go through the discomfort and you're willing to make the effort, once you've thought the new thought and believed the new thought enough times, then it becomes the easier thought to think. That's where you want to get with yourself. You want to get to the place where thinking really positive, nurturing, nourishing thoughts comes naturally. You can't get to the point where that habit of thinking comes naturally until you practice it over and over and over again.

It's really worth the effort, and I promise you it's worth the initial discomfort of being in a space where you've proven yourself wrong. If you're willing to be wrong, then you're going to be willing to adopt new thoughts. You're going to be willing to adopt new ways of thinking about yourself, which will ultimately change your entire life, because it will change the way you feel, it will change the way you act, and it will change the results you get.

If this is your first introduction to this model and this is the first time you've ever even heard about it, I want to offer that you may be like, "What are you talking about?" I want you to be willing to stay with it long enough, because if you're willing to practice and learn the model, and you're willing to see it as something that you could use in your life to change how you think, I promise you it can change your life in all the ways that you want it to.

If you need any help, please go to the comments section, and write a comment and ask me any question you want about the model. If you want to practice doing a model, I will help you, and correct you, and give you a chance to be new at it so you can really dial it down and start utilizing it in your life. It has been one of the biggest gifts I've ever given myself, and I want to offer it to you. I hope that you will

take the time to really understand it before you give up on it so you can utilize it in your life.

All right. That's all I have for now. I'll see you guys at the comments board, and I'll talk to you next week. Bye, everybody.

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