

Ep #28: How to Set Priorities



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. And now your host Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Hey everybody. What's happening? So glad you're here. Today we're going to talk about priorities. Before I get started I just literally hung from a call that I did for all of my community. I did a coaching call where I coached clients live on the phone. It was absolutely free. Anyone could enroll that wanted to enroll and listen to some coaching.

So if you want to check that out, head on over to my site and look at our class schedule and you will see that I have some classes listed on there if you want to join us for a coaching call. We also have a recording of the coaching call I just did if you're interested in listening to me coach someone live. So head on over there to the LifeCoachSchool.com class schedule.

All right. Let's get started for today. One of the things I coach most of my clients on is their priorities. I would say at about a rate of let's say four out of five people come to me that want coaching that I work with, especially through the school, we talk about lack of time.

We talk about how busy everybody is and how they don't have time to do all the things that they want to do. So one of the ways to get more time and yes, there are ways to get more time, is to get your priorities straight. So you make sure you're spending your time on the things that you want to be spending your time on.

When you do that you notice that you have a lot more time because you're not wasting time doing things that you don't necessarily want to do long term.

So what is a priority? A priority is what is most important in your life, what should be first in your life. So I like to look at priorities from a global perspective first. So looking at your entire life what is the most important thing to you and are you giving it enough time?

What's the second most important thing to you and are you giving it enough time? Now, it doesn't mean that because something's your

number one priority that you have to give it the most time, because that's typically not the case. Typically we give most of our time to making money and making a living and going to our job and sleeping. Right?

But the most important thing to you may be your health. That may just require you to give an hour a day. Right?

So when you look at your priorities, you want to see are you giving it enough time for what you want to be giving it. OK?

The other way that you can use priorities is by taking a specific area of your life and prioritizing that down. So when it comes to your health, what is your number one priority when it comes to your health? What's your number two priority when it comes to your health? What's your number three priority when it comes to your health?

So for example, I work a lot with clients who are trying to lose weight and it's really important to prioritize their goals within that one priority. So their priority is health, but what's their number one priority?

For many of them it's getting enough sleep. For some of them their number one priority has become getting thin and sometimes when your priorities are out of whack like that you can do crazy things to your body. So someone will say to me well, my number one priority is health and I'm taking diet pills.

Or my number one priority is health and I'm eating a lot of highly processed diet food in order to lose weight. So they're going about losing weight in a very unhealthy way. They don't feel good in their body and so we have to kind of resettle it in in saying well, is being thin more important than feeling good?

Is being at a certain weight more important than your body thriving and being healthy? Priorities can be used in the global sense, which I think you should do and then within each one of those priorities how do you prioritize the activities within them?

One of the things that I teach that I get a lot of push back on is this idea that there is no such thing as balance and it shouldn't be an attempt for us to try and balance.

I personally don't aim for a balanced life. I don't necessarily think that having a balanced life is having the best life where everything gets equal attention and everything runs very smoothly all the time and everything gets just enough attention to be mediocre is kind of how I look at it.

The way that I like to prioritize is I like to choose certain times of the year to prioritize certain things and I like to choose certain times in my life to prioritize certain things.

Like for example, when I went to college. I went to Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, California and my priority when I was in college was to work on my schoolwork. That was my focus. I went to every class. I didn't skip classes. I paid attention in class. I did all of my homework. My priority was school. That was the most important thing.

I was also working and I was also riding three day equestrian, but my number one priority was always school, so when it came to making a decision it was very easy for me to make decisions because I always chose school first.

So that was for that particular time in my life. Now, I love learning now and I love school now and I would love to go to school. I would love to go back to college. Wouldn't you guys? This is what I want to do.

I want to go back to grade school, like maybe sixth grade and go back through it because it's so interesting like when I'm working with my kids who are in seventh and eighth grade, I'm totally fascinated now about what they're learning. When I was in school it was such a drudgery for me.

So I actually think we should go to school when we're adults. Right? We should be able to have the freedom to go to school as adults.

But anyway, I would love to go back to college right now. I think that would be such a luxury. It's not a priority to me in my life right now, so it's not something that I do even though it would be super cool.

Chris and I talk about how when the kids are gone, we both want to go back to school. We want to go to culinary school. We think that would be so fun to go to culinary school and we want to open a restaurant called Lunch that serves only lunch because we don't want to have the restaurant hours but Chris has always wanted to open a restaurant.

He's the perfect person to run a restaurant. He's so organized and he's so efficient. His work ethic is amazing and he loves food and wine and beer. He's totally into what it would be like to run a kitchen.

So that's kind of going to be a priority for us later in our lives, but it's not a priority to us right now. We don't even spend any time learning how to cook or anything right now because it's not a priority to us.

So having certain priorities at certain times of your life I think is important and in fact I think it's much more effective than trying to balance everything.

I see so many of my weight loss clients who try and fit in weight loss, they try to fit in taking care of themselves to all the other things they're doing.

One of the things that I suggest is you have to make it your number one priority for enough time as it's going to take for you to get the momentum going with your weight loss.

If you try and fit it in after everything else and it's not a priority then you will not get the results you want. So I think it's OK to tip the balance and to focus on weight loss and focus on why you're overweight in the first place and all of your energy on that for a concentrated amount of time in order to make that significant change.

It's kind of like when somebody is out of control with their drinking. All of a sudden getting sober becomes their number one priority. Many of

them go away to rehab. Right? They get out of their lives so they can focus on that being their number one priority.

It's a completely imbalance, right? They're not balancing getting sober with taking care of their kids and their job. It's their number one priority.

I have found in my life when I pick a priority and I let that be what I focus my attention on, I don't let everything else go. You know, I don't stop working out, I don't stop eating healthy, I don't stop looking at my kids.

But my number one priority is really focusing on that area then I really get the results that I want to get. It's also true like Chris and I were just doing our schedule for 2015, we were just going through and scheduling everything that we're going to do at the Life Coach School and all the courses that we're going to create. We put it on the calendar and we were going through December.

We looked at the weeks that the kids are going to be out of school and I told him, I said I don't want to do any work during those two weeks. I want us to put our computers away, not have to do anything that has to do with taking care of the business and I want to focus solely on the kids during Christmastime. That will be our number one priority, so it will shift during that time in our lives.

I like thinking about priorities that way. I like thinking about the more imbalance they are, the more result you're going to get for the number one priority and thinking about all the areas in your life that you want to prioritize as important.

Are you willing to move one of them to the top to get that momentum going? To lose the 50 pounds so the next 30 will be easy. To focus on that being the number one priority for you until you get the result you want.

I think it's a good idea to call it a priority period. Like pick a certain amount of time that you're willing to focus 100% in that area.

If you've never done that before, you should try it out. It is super amazing and I think it's OK to put other things on hold while you focus on that one area.

Now, when you write down your priorities, when you write down, I like to do them in fives, so you write down your top five priorities. You need to separate out what seems important or what you think should be important from what you decide is important.

So a lot of people feel like taking care of their kids and spending time with their family should be their number one priority. Now, that may be true, right? It may seem like that should be the priority, but check with yourself. Is that where you want to put your time and energy right now?

For some of my clients they feel like that should be their number one priority and so they put it number one and then they feel resentful that they've spent so much time focusing on them.

I've had clients that have switched those priorities and said no, my number one priority right now is going to be my health. I want to get my health in line.

If that means I spend less time at my kids' soccer games because I'm working out or I spend less time with the kids because I'm preparing a really healthy meal for myself or I'm going to the gym or whatever, I'm willing to do that for this period of time.

So really pay attention to is it a priority because I really want it to be a priority or do I just feel like it should be. Make that distinction for yourself.

The other distinction that you want to make that's really important is the difference between priorities being urgent and being important.

Now for those of you who read *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey, if you haven't read it, you absolutely should. Amazing, fantastic book. But one of the distinctions he makes is between things that are urgent and things that are important.

Most of us get confused. We think things that are urgent should be done before things that are important and in this day and age it seems like everything is urgent. For example, if a phone rings, that's requiring an urgent reaction for you, but is it necessarily important for you to answer that phone?

One of the things that people know about me who know me know that I never really answer my phone. It's not something that I react to. When I hear my phone ring, I don't think oh my gosh, I must answer the phone immediately.

Yet, I watch people do this. Their phone rings, like you could be right in the middle of a conversation with someone, talking about something and their phone rings and they completely neglect your conversation and go to the phone call making it more important because it's urgent than the conversation that they're having with you.

Now they may not answer it. They may see who it is and say, "Oh, I don't need to answer it." and then come back to the conversation, but in that moment they've made that ring be more important than that conversation with you.

I'm always curious about what if you just finished the conversation and then later went to the phone and saw who it was and responded to it. Now I can understand if your kid happens to be skydiving at the time and says they're going to call you when they land. Then that's a different thing, but that's not what most people do.

Most people respond to urgent things, "Oh my gosh, someone posted something on Facebook. I'll have to look at my phone. Oh, someone text me. Someone called me. I have to look at my phone. I have to do this. This is urgent."

Even though I'm having a conversation with you in person that is important to me, but I respond to what's urgent over what's important. OK? If this is you, just take a note of it. Just see, is this what you do in your life? Right?

Do you respond to things that are urgent over what's important? So when my phone rings, I let it ring, I usually can't even here it ringing,

right, because I don't have it on and I get to that, but it's not more important just because it's urgent. Just because it's noisy at the moment.

That's the same thing when it comes to emails. Right? When you're working on your business are you focused on your strategies, your goals, creation? Or are you focused on getting through your emails that have come in?

Those are urgent, but not necessarily important. It's the same with your family life. It's the same with your career. It's the same with exercise. Everything.

Do you get confused between what's important to you versus what is urgent? One of the things that I encourage my clients to do is to keep a time journal. To keep track of things that they do throughout their day and what they spend their time on.

When you look at this list do you notice that a lot of your time is spent on things that are urgent? Right? Are you constantly reacting to urgent things?

The more urgent things you have in your life, the less planning you have done typically. The less planning you have done means the less attention you've been giving to what's important.

For example, if you're out of milk, if you're out of eggs and you're constantly having to run to the grocery store and take care of the kids and the homework assignment that's due tomorrow that was assigned a week ago, we're just responding, reacting, putting out fires constantly.

When we plan for the week ahead, when we grocery shop ahead of time and we take care of those things because we have focused on what's important ahead of time, we reduce the amount of things that are urgent.

We schedule time to respond to emails instead of just constantly responding as they come in. Right? When we schedule time for phone calls, when we schedule time to take care of the things ahead

of time and have a planned time for them, then we're not constantly responding. That's much easier for us to then keep our priorities in line.

Think about what is the single result you most want right now? Remember from the work that we've done previously on this podcast that when you think about things that you want, you need to include things that you already have.

I would say for me the single most thing that I want is a responsible, managed, emotional life because I know for me that will determine my relationships with my family, which is another priority for me.

It will determine my relationship with my body and my health, which is another priority for me. I know that everything comes from how well I manage my mind and my emotional life, so I need to focus on that first so then I can focus on the other areas of my life.

Now, that's something that I already have. I feel like I manage my emotional life pretty well and that is the most important thing to me.

So I need to focus on that being a priority, I have some momentum there. I would say it's my number one priority.

I don't do anything that takes the place of my mental sanity, so I make sure I take time to write down my thoughts and feelings, to do the self coaching models on myself, to take walks and let my mind go, to do yoga so I can clean my mind up. Right?

All of the things that help with my mind are my number one priority. Now if I want to focus really strongly like say on business and build up some areas of my business, I don't make that my number one priority because if that becomes more important than taking care of myself physically I know that I won't be able to show up for my business as well. Right?

So my number one priority is my emotional and mental well being, basically. Then my number two priority may be during a certain time building a class for my business and I may be willing to spend less

time with my family, go to less of their activities so I can get that done.

Then at other times I may switch those priorities. This is my time to focus on my family and I'm not going to spend a lot of time working on my business, but I'm very conscious and deliberate about those things.

I don't try and keep them balanced all the time because when I try and keep them balanced all the time I feel like I never make any momentum, any progress, any full result with either one of them. So think about a result you most want right now and think about the things you already have, include the things you already have

Now that can be your number one priority, OK? then keep going down the list. What is the second result you most want right now and are you willing to make that a higher priority than something else? Do you want it more than something else in your life?

OK, so once you get those top five things that are most important to you written down and have a look at them and see what they are, then what I want you to do is keep that time journal that I mentioned.

Spend an entire day paying attention to what you do. Make little notes throughout the day and at the end of the day write down how you spent your day.

Now for some of you might say "Oh, well that wasn't really a typical day." It doesn't matter, just pick a day and see how in line that was with what's more important to you and find out are you really far apart from living in line with your priorities or are you pretty much on the money? Right? Are you living in line with what's most important to you?

One of the things to remember when it comes to this time journal and reconciling it with your priorities is the fact that you don't have to do anything.

This is something that kind of rocks people's world when I talk to them about it because people will say well, I'm not living in line with

my priorities because I have to take care of my kids and I have to go to work and I have to do this, that or the other thing.

I tell the story about when I realized I didn't have to do anything. I had two toddlers pretty close together. My morning sickness had been so awful that I had told my husband that hey, if we're going to have another kid we better have it right away, so I had these two kids that were both in diapers. My husband was working full time. I was spending every day with them at the park.

They were just so physically demanding and when you have toddlers you just are constantly always having to pay attention because they will kill themselves. They will eat things, they will jump off things, they will kill each other. Right? So there's no rest when you have two toddlers.

So I remember thinking I was sitting at the park one day and I was thinking I have to take care of these kids. I hate having to take care of these kids.

I remember thinking wait a minute. I don't really have to take care of these kids. I could really just leave them here. No one's forcing me to take care of them. I was like, I can't even tell you. My mind exploded.

I was like I could hire someone to take care of these kids all the time. I could put them in daycare. I don't have to take care of them. In fact there are very few things I actually have to do.

The truth was that I wanted to take care of them. That's why I was taking care of them. Just that shift in the truth, just acknowledging that truth to myself changed everything.

So I remember coaching someone on the same thing where she said, "I have to pay my taxes." I said, "You don't really have to pay your taxes. You know that, right?"

She said, "What do you mean? You have to pay your taxes?" I'm like, "No, there's a lot of people that don't pay their taxes. You do not have to. You want to pay your taxes and you want to do your taxes so they're accurate."

It was the same thing for her. She was like, "Oh my gosh, you're right. I want to do my taxes. I don't want to be fined. I don't want to deal with penalties. I don't want to go to prison. I want to do my taxes."

And it changed her energy so much around doing them that she was really able to shift how she was feeling about getting her taxes done on April 15th. Right?

Remember that when you're doing your comparison between your time journal and your priorities. Nothing on your list of how you spend your day do you have to do. You do not have to go to work. You choose to go to work because you want to get the money to pay your bills. Or you choose to go to work for whatever reason it is that you go to work.

Acknowledge that it's something that you want to do and that you're choosing to do. Then you can reconcile it with your priorities and if there's changes that need to be made, you're not going to feel locked into this have to.

Now here's some questions that will help you consider what you really want your priorities to be and whether you're really living in line with them.

So I want you to think about if you had six months to live. How would your priorities change and why? Does that change your perspective at all?

If you have five years left to live, how would your priorities change and why? Right? Because the truth is none of us know. We may only have six months, we may only have five years. Then when you look back on your life, when you are in the rocking chair at 100 years old, what will you most regret not doing that you're currently not doing?

What will you want your do over to be? It's kind of cool to think about your do over when you still have a chance to do it. Right? When you look back what do you think you'll most regret doing? Is it not writing that book? Is it not going after the job? Is it not reconnecting with your long-lost sister? Is it not creating a painting? What is it for you? What

will you most regret not doing and are you willing to live with that regret or is it something you want to make more of a priority in your life?

One of the things that I have found to be true is that when I am living in the line with my priorities, when I've really deliberately considered what's important to me, the results I most want to get and I live in line with them, I live a more invigorated, energized, powerful life because I've taken charge of it.

I'm living in line with what I most value, what I most want. I'm not living on default. I'm not living in a responsive way where I'm basically doing what I think I have to do.

I'm telling myself the truth, this is my life. This is my property. I was given this. Right? I don't know who gave it to me. You know? Some version of the universe and God gave me this life for whatever reason and I'm in charge of it and I don't want to live it by default.

I want to live it on purpose. I want to create it. I want to direct it. I want to decide and I want to be, at the end of my life, proud of the decisions I made, proud of the effort I made to live the life that created the results and the legacy and the contribution that I wanted to make.

I want to know that I didn't take the road most traveled. I want to know that I took the road that was challenging, but worth it. That's what getting in line with your priorities can do.

So write down your top five priorities. Keep a time journal. See if you're living in line with them and make any of the changes that you need to make in order to get those as close as possible and literally watch your life explode or bloom, if you'd rather look at it that way. It's a really powerful practice.

All right everybody, if you're interested in joining me on the call, make sure that you go to the LifeCoachSchool.com and look at class schedule and join me for that coaching call. Otherwise, I'll talk to you all next week. Take care. Bye bye.

Thank you for listening to The Life Coach School podcast. It would be incredibly awesome if you would take a moment to write a quick review on iTunes. For any questions, comments or coaching issues you would like to hear on the show, please visit us at www.TheLifeCoachSchool.com