

Ep #119: Emotional Manipulation



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.

Hello, my friends. How are you guys? I'm doing amazingly well. I haven't talked to you in a while. It's been three Stop Overdrinking episodes and now I'm back. I'm thrilled to be back. I'm thrilled with all of the amazing feedback from Stop Overdrinking and the membership site and everything that we have going on there. I'm super excited about that. I think we're going to be able to help a lot of people with that work. It feels like such a huge accomplishment for our team here at The Life Coach School. I'm beyond thrilled with that.

I'm also really excited about our upcoming workshop that we're doing in El Dorado Hills here in July to really dive into some thought work and take it all to the next level. Hopefully you will be joining us for that. You can find out more by going to TheLifeCoachSchool.com.

In this episode of the podcast, we are going to be talking about emotional manipulation. One of my good friends actually requested this topic. It's actually been really interesting to research it because there are so many ways of looking at it and understanding it. A lot of times you may hear this concept of emotional manipulation. First what I want to do is define it. Second of all, I'm going to say that it's somewhat of a misnomer because manipulation makes it sound like we are able to manipulate other people's emotions and I kind of want to start with the whole caveat that that is not entirely accurate.

We are not able to manipulate other people's emotions and they are not able to manipulate our emotions without permission. Now, a lot of us do not have the emotional awareness to really stop ourselves from believing what someone tells us. We aren't able to kind of create that pause or interrupt that model in order to take responsibility for what we're thinking. That does not mean that we are not responsible for what we're thinking. As I go through and talk about this concept with you, I want to make sure that you understand that no matter what anybody says to you, no matter what thoughts they offer you to think, you are 100% in control of whether you believe or take on those thoughts.

If you feel like you have someone in your life who has the ability to emotionally manipulate you without your permission, you are very confused. Now, it doesn't mean that it's not challenging and it doesn't mean that the person may not be convincing or something like that. I'm not saying that. I just want you to know, and this is very good news, that you are always 100% in control of what you choose to think and believe. That is your choice.

Let me define what emotional manipulation is. Emotional manipulation is the attempt to control how someone feels by manipulating what they think and believe. For those of you who this may be your very first podcast, you may be a little bit confused by some of the terminology that I'm using in terms of the self-coaching model. I want to highly recommend that you listen to the podcast on the model before you proceed if you haven't listened to that one yet because a lot of this won't make any sense unless you have that basis of understanding. The basis reveals that our thoughts create our feelings. When somebody is attempting to manipulate our emotions, the way that they do that is by trying to change our thinking. Our thoughts create our feelings.

Most people don't understand that this is what they're trying to do. They don't understand the components of the model and how our thoughts create our feelings. If somebody's into emotional manipulation, they know that they can convince you or talk to you in a way that will make you think a certain way and therefore feel a certain way. When you have this awareness going into it, then you can be very clear about how you think and decide to feel because of that.

What I want to offer you here is that somebody will tell you what they want you to think, somebody will tell you what they think about you, somebody will say something to you as if it is the truth and expect you to believe it and take on those thoughts. If you do, then you will feel the way that they want you to feel.

Now, what is the point of somebody who's into emotional manipulation? Why are they trying to create your thoughts and your feelings in a different way than maybe what you are thinking and feeling? Ultimately, the attempt to control how you think and feel is to control how you act because your thoughts create your feelings and

therefore your actions.

Emotional manipulation is really about changing how somebody feels so it will change the way they act. If you aren't aware of how the world works and you aren't aware of the self-coaching model, this can be something that happens beneath your awareness. This can happen without you even recognizing what's going on. Why is that so important? Because you inadvertently are advocating responsibility for how you're acting. In many times, you may end up blaming that other person for how you're acting which will create a lot of negative emotion unnecessarily.

Here's what happens. Somebody tells you something or talks to you in a way or convinces you to think in a certain way. When you take on that thought, then you start to feel a certain way and then you act in a certain way. That is emotional manipulation. They haven't just controlled the way you are feeling, they've controlled the way you are thinking, feeling, and acting. Now, literally they can't do this, but if you are unaware of how the mind works, you're unaware of how your emotions work, it will feel that way.

I think the best way for me to talk about this is to give you some really specific examples. I have had in my own life people who have attempted to emotionally manipulate me. I think that it's very, very important to acknowledge that a lot of times when people do this, they don't even realize that this is what they're doing.

For example, my mom and my dad too would try to emotionally manipulate me but they would have never called it that and they wouldn't have acknowledged that they were doing anything negatively but this is what it looked like, just so you understand. One of the main emotions that people use for emotional manipulation is guilt. They try and create a scenario where you feel guilty. In my example, it would be, "It makes me sad when you don't come visit. It makes me sad when you don't call." Notice how in that situation, my mom and dad are putting responsibility for their emotions onto me. They want me to accept the thought that I am responsible for how they're feeling. Now, I know that I'm not responsible for how they're feeling. I'm aware that that's just a thought. Many people won't be aware of that. For most of my life, I wasn't aware of it.

Another thought for guilt could be, "You owe me. I've done so much for you. After all I've done for you, can't you do this for me? Can't you come on this trip with me? Can't you come to my house? Can't you call me more? Can't you do something that I want you to do? If you don't, it means that you don't really care, that you're very selfish, that you only think about yourself, that you're not considering me and everything that I've done for you."

As my mom would say this, and this has happened with many other people too, is saying these things in the hope that somehow it would change the way I was thinking and then therefore I would feel guilty and then come home and call more and then do more of what she wanted me to do. Same with my dad. Of course my dad didn't even realize he was doing this. "I just haven't seen you in such a long time. It makes me really sad when you're so busy that you can't find time for us." It's kind of putting responsibility for how he's feeling on me and what I'm doing, which of course is impossible.

The other thing I used to have someone else in my life that would say things like, "Well, you just don't love me if you don't do that. You just don't care about me if you don't do that. I don't matter to you if you don't do that." That's all that guilt trying to create a sense of guilt within me with that thinking.

They say, "It hurts my feelings when you don't do this." If I agree with that, if I go, "Oh my gosh. I'm hurting their feelings," then I'll feel guilty and then I will probably change my behavior based on that emotion. That is emotional manipulation in its finest.

Another example of emotional manipulation would be with fear. The first one was guilt, this one was with fear. That is when somebody tries to emotionally manipulate someone else by creating fear within them. They can do that by threatening them, by giving them thoughts like, "I will kill you. I will hurt you. I won't be your friend. I won't ever talk to you again. You better do this or else." Those kind of thoughts are intended to be taken on by the person and therefore believed by the person that they're attempting to emotionally manipulate and then that person would feel fear and then act out of that place of fear in the way that the other person wanted them to. Notice how they're

manipulating their thoughts and their feelings in order to get the action.

Another possibility for emotional manipulation is someone trying to make someone else feel unworthy. Notice that these are all negative emotions. The person is trying to create a sense of unworthiness within them, which is kind of like, "Nobody cares about you. You don't matter. You're not important. What you want is not important." That person gets the feeling of unworthiness and therefore is going to take action from a place where they're not advocating for themselves. If they believe that they are unworthy, if they feel unworthy, they won't stand up and advocate for themselves. In fact, they'll come from a place of unworthiness. If the person that's trying to emotionally manipulate them wants them to do something against their best interest, creating thoughts and feelings that would generate unworthiness would be the way to do it.

Again, I want to point out that the person doing the emotional manipulation may not be as clever as I'm making them sound. They may not be doing this as calculating as I'm describing it. It may just be something that they're doing kind of out of their own consciousness as well in a way where they're trying to control the other person by emotionally manipulating them but not even understanding the sophisticated process that goes into it.

Another one is disempowered. A lot of times people who are emotionally manipulating other people are trying to disempower them so they don't have their own opinions, they don't disagree or argue with whatever the person's asking them to do. A lot of times the person who's doing the emotional manipulation will tell the person like, "You're not capable. You can't do that," and they'll bring up lots of evidence as to why that is true.

If you remember from some previous podcasts, we prove our own minds true by our brain's filtering mechanism. If I believe that I'm worthy, I will look for evidence that that's true and I will find it. If I think that I'm unworthy, I will look for evidence that that's true and I will find that. Just like we can look at someone and see all the ways in which they're very kind, we can also look at someone and see all of the ways that they're unkind. We can bring up examples of that.

Someone who's really adept at emotional manipulation will bring up something like, "You can't do that. You're not capable," and then will have lots of examples to provide evidence to, in their mind, hopefully convince the person to believe what it is they're telling them. The more evidence they have, the more convincing they will be. They may create a situation where the person is willing to believe that they can't do something and that they're incapable and that they're disempowered and then from that place take action against their own interests.

Now, this can be very subtle and this can happen in families all of the time in very subtle manipulative ways. This can be very overt to very aggressive and create a ton of anger and resentment in relationships.

The best secret and the best prevention when it comes to people in your lives who are trying to emotionally manipulate you, whether they realize it or not, whether they're well-intended or not, a lot of people try to emotionally manipulate because they are coming from a place of fear and they are coming from a place of their own emotional emptiness and they're trying to fill it up with your actions, which of course wouldn't work anyway.

It's important that you recognize that your thoughts are your responsibility and that other people can think what they would like to think but you are never responsible for them or how they feel. Somebody recently said to me, "I'm afraid you'll abandon me." I said to them, "I learned a long time ago that adults can't be abandoned emotionally." I didn't know that before and so that's so great to know. As children, we can be abandoned, of course. As adults, we can't be abandoned. We're capable in and of ourselves.

One of the other things that is really important to remember is you have the ability to create boundaries. Boundaries mean that other people can behave the way that they want to but you will have your own rules for how you will behave to take care of yourself. If someone is constantly trying to emotionally manipulate you and they're constantly trying to brainwash you with negativity and evidence and trying to create feelings of disempowerment, you have the ability to set up a boundary and say no and not listen to that and not be in the

presence of that energy if you don't want to.

The way that you'll know that you're "allowing yourself" to be emotionally manipulated is you will probably feel a lot of resentment and blame and anger. It's important when you start feeling those emotions in your relationships that you look at your role in allowing other people to tell you things that are untrue, saying negative things to you, try to emotionally manipulate you. You know, when you really acknowledge that, that's when you can really start to set some boundaries and start really taking care of yourself in a way that doesn't try and change the other person.

Whenever we're trying to change the other person, which is another word for manipulate, we're trying to control them, trying to control the other person. Now, most of the time the reason why we're doing this is because we want to feel better than we do. It's our responsibility and it's much easier to control how we feel and what we do than it is to control how someone else behaves. Whenever you find yourself believing that someone else needs to behave differently in order for you to feel differently, you are missing those two main points, the one that is you are responsible for how you think, feel, and act always, and that boundaries are a way that you can guide yourself away from situations and people who are constantly trying to manipulate the way you're thinking and you're feeling and you're acting.

You'll notice as you get more adept and aware at this that when you don't respond to someone who is trying to control you, that they simply stop trying to control you because it's a fruitless act on their end. When you set proper boundaries and you honor those boundaries with yourself, you may eliminate some people from your life that are unwilling to stop doing that. You may also just be more amused by it because you'll be aware that it doesn't have any power over you.

I think a lot of times when people are coming at us and trying to emotionally manipulate us by trying to instill feelings of guilt or fear or unworthiness or being disempowered, we can get angry about that. One of the things that I think can set you free is just allowing other people to be who they are and where they are and knowing that when they're trying to control you, they are very confused because they

think that somehow controlling you will make them feel better. Emotional manipulation sounds like a very negative term and I think it's important to remember that the opposite side of that coin is positive influence. I think it's really important that we remember that we do have the ability to help people change their minds and help them change how they're feeling and change how they're acting in a very positive way that serves them that isn't a manipulation.

A manipulation is usually for the person who's manipulating for their benefit. The way that you know that you're being emotionally manipulated is by how you feel. If you feel angry or upset or resentful or unworthy or sad or guilty, it's probably from that place where you've taken on someone else's thoughts and you feel that way because of that.

Positive influence is kind of the same mechanism where somebody calls you and they're feeling badly and you cheer them up by offering them new thoughts to think. It's kind of the opposite of the manipulation where you're offering them ... Someone calls and says they feel really fat and ugly today and you're like, "Oh my gosh. What are you talking about? You're beautiful. You're gorgeous. You're one of the most beautiful people I've ever seen. You're not fat." Helping your friends and family members think different thoughts, which offers them different feelings. That's that positive influence.

Now, it's the same mechanism. You're offering new thoughts to think, but in this situation is for the sake of the person that you're talking to. It's a positive influence for them and it's not something you're doing so you can necessarily get them to do something that you want them to do. You may benefit from them feeling better but that positive influence will help create that positive emotion. From positive emotion, we normally advocate for ourselves and take care of ourselves from that place.

If you want to know whether you are positively influencing someone or emotionally manipulating them, check in with how you're feeling. If you're feeling tense and controlling, you know that you're trying to emotionally manipulate someone and you're probably coming from a place of fear, feeling like you need to control them. If you're coming from a place of really wonderful positivity and excitement and genuine

altruism for the other person, you will feel positive. The same on the reverse end of it. If you feel like someone's trying to control you, you're probably going to feel a pretty intense negative, resistant emotion. If someone's offering you thoughts to think that would help you feel better, then you know that you're probably coming from a place of positive influence and you're feeling that from the people that are speaking to you.

The two things you want to remember is that you are responsible for how you think and feel. No one can emotionally manipulate you without your permission and that a lot of times when people are being emotionally manipulative, they don't even realize it. That could even be you at some point. Just check in with yourself and notice are you trying to control another person. You will know if you feel tense and controlling. You'll know that you might be in that space. Your awareness and paying attention to how you feel and how you think and what you're doing and why you're doing it will really help set you free from any emotional manipulation on either side of that coin.

I hope that was helpful today. I know that some people had some pretty specific questions about it so I hope that they were all answered. I hope that you are free next time somebody tries to emotionally manipulate you. You can look at them and realize how much power you have over your own life and how little power anybody else has.

All right, you guys. Have an amazing week. I'll talk to you next week. Bye bye.

Thank you for listening to The Life Coach School Podcast. It is my honor to show up here every week and connect with people that are like-minded, wanting to take their life to a deeper level with more awareness and more consciousness. If you are interested in taking this work to the next level, I highly encourage you to go to TheLifeCoachSchool.com/howtofeelbetteronline. It is there that I have a class that will take all of this to a deeper application, where you'll be able to really feel and experience how all of these concepts can start showing up in your life. It's one thing to learn it intellectually. It's another thing to truly apply it to your life. I will see you there. Thanks again for listening.

