

Ep #127: Appropriate Discomfort



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.

Hello, hello, my friends. The sound might be a little bit different on this specific podcast, because I am actually sitting in my backyard at home at about 7:45 in the evening. I am actually re-recording a podcast that I had already recorded. I decided to get it recorded this evening because it needs to be published, and Pavel, who does all of my editing, will be working on this tomorrow. The reason why I'm re-recording it is because I had done a recording and he had sent me an email and said, "You know what? I don't think this is your best work," in not so many words. It just wasn't a great podcast. His perception of it was that it wasn't up to par with all of my other ones.

I immediately, his opinion really matters to me, and I immediately said, "Well, let's redo it." I completely changed the topic to something that I'm really passionate about right now, and we are re-recording. That's the quality control around here, folks. What we produce for you matters. We've got people double-checking. I'm using my Logitech headset, so I'm hoping that that will suffice for that recording, and that you guys will still get the full benefit of hearing my teaching, and what I have to offer today.

Today I'm going to talk about a concept that I recently screamed when I learned about. I'm right in the middle of reading Marianne Williamson's book *Tears to Triumph*. As you guys know if you're long-time listeners of my podcast, I'm absolutely in love with Marianne Williamson. She's one of my teachers that I've had since the '80s. I have studied her work and listened to her recordings, and followed her work pretty religiously throughout her entire career and throughout my entire growth process. So when I got a hold of this book I was thrilled to-- You know when you get, like a new author writes a book and you love the way they write. You love everything they teach. You don't want the book to end. I don't read fiction, but I know some of you feel that same way about trilogies, like you can't wait for the next one and you don't want it to end. Well, that's how I feel whenever Marianne Williamson writes something, or whenever Janine Roth writes something. I am obsessed with everything they write. So I was thrilled to get this book and couldn't wait to start

reading it.

What I love about this book is, first of all, the topic is heavy. She's talking a lot about what is wrong with the world and what's wrong with us. Sometimes I find that challenging to read and challenging to get motivated to read that. But because Marianne Williamson's writing it, I'm for sure reading it. But some of the concepts that she wrote about in this book are exactly the work that I'm doing right now with clients.

I was reading, and she talks about the concept of us being inappropriately comfortable in our society right now. I squealed with delight at this terminology, because I think this is exactly what I'm teaching, and stop overdrinking, and stop overeating, is this idea that we feel entitled to inappropriate pleasure. We feel entitled to inappropriate comfort. Her quote is, "Our contemporary popular culture itself is a numbing agent, making us inappropriately comfortable." The concept that I took from her quote there is the idea of appropriate discomfort.

I was telling one of my clients recently that she has to be willing to suffer her negative emotions. She has to be willing to feel them, and not numb them out. I think that's exactly what appropriate discomfort is. It's this idea that it is normal and it is important to allow ourselves to be uncomfortable. In our society, there is huge money made on finding ways to sell us opportunities to be inappropriately comfortable. If we can understand this concept, like it kind of makes my mind explode. If we can understand this concept, truly and deeply, and not just understand it intellectually, but apply it to our lives, and be willing, as Pema talks about, to walk in to the discomfort and be present with it, it will change everything about our lives.

What is so ironic about all of it to me, and what I've experienced in my own life, is the more willing I am to be uncomfortable, the more genuine pleasure I have in my life. That is not to say that I'm not uncomfortable a lot. In fact, these past couple days I've just been walking around with that heavy pure that I describe. It's kind of that "Uh!" feeling. I've had a lot of appropriate discomfort, I think, in the sense that I'm just willing to be with it, and I'm willing to understand what it's here to tell me and to teach me, and to listen to it.

I think one of the main issues that we have with appropriate discomfort is our eagerness and our rush to solve it. Even when I talk to other people in my life, when I talk to my friends, or I talk to my husband about any kind of discomfort I'm having, or any kind of negative emotion like overwhelm or frustration, the immediate reaction from most everybody is to try and solve it by making an external change. So if I'm feeling overwhelmed, let's knock some things off my to-do list. Or if I'm feeling frustrated, let's see if we can solve the problem by having a conversation with somebody else about it. That is the exact time not to take action. When we're in that negative emotional state, that's when we need to be in that allowing, where we're not taking action. We're just allowing ourselves to feel the emotion.

Now, I wish I could say that I was 100% solid in just allowing emotions and never resisting them, or never reacting to them, or never avoiding them. I will say I'm much better at not avoiding them by buffering. I haven't been doing any buffering, like with overeating or overdrinking or any of those things. I haven't been spending a lot of time resisting. But there still are times in my life, and in my relationships, where I react in ways that didn't allow the emotion to process first. I know that you guys know what I'm talking about, like when you're angry and you snap at someone, or you're frustrated and you write that strongly worded email, or react on the phone or in the text or whatever it is, in a way that you later wish you hadn't. You wish you'd been able to process the emotion thoroughly. For me, it shows up in all of my relationships when I can't show up as my best self because of that reaction.

I have gotten so much better. Here's what's amazing about it. When you are able to allow the emotion before you react, you prevent compounding that emotion. So for example, I had an example this week where some of the people, the contractors that work for me, I had asked them to do something 2 weeks ago, and they had forgotten to do it. It was something that I needed updated on my website. This isn't the first time this has happened. This has happened several times, actually.

So I saw that that hadn't been done, and I did an all caps email to the person and basically said, "Why isn't this done? You guys need to get

on the ball. I'm tired of this stuff slipping through the cracks." I was in a hurry to write it, and as I was writing it I was frustrated. Later I was able to come back and tell them, "Hey, I appreciate all the work that you do. I was frustrated." They were very apologetic. But where I came from was, it wasn't necessary for me to do the all caps. If I'd waited to process the emotion first I could have been just as effective in a much kinder way.

Those are the things that I promised myself that I won't beat myself up for, and I do try and improve, and I do try and address and apologize when I need to apologize, and show up in a more professional way in the future. But that comes from not allowing an emotion to be fully processed before we react to it. It's important when we are appropriately uncomfortable, when we're having appropriate discomfort, that we allow ourselves to be present with the emotion and not be in such a hurry to react to it so we can respond to it in the way that is most wise for our lives, and is in line with who we want to be in the world.

Marianne talks about, she says, "Nothing could be more functional than an internal warning system among people, and nothing could be more dysfunctional than to ignore the warning or take the edge off." I have been talking about this with all of my stop overdrinking clients for the past several weeks. I think this is a point that is so important to remember, is that when we take the edge off our emotions, we are dulling our internal warning system. We are ignoring ourselves.

So for example, when we are at a party and we're super bored, and we drink so we don't feel bored, we are ignoring ourselves. When we go to a party and we are insecure and socially awkward, and we drink so we don't feel that way, we are ignoring ourselves. We're not evolving past that emotional work. In fact, we're devolving. We are locking ourselves into emotional immaturity by not doing the work of first processing our emotions and then really listening to what are those emotions telling us? Where do we need to develop?

In some instances, we really need to develop our social skills. We really need to develop our self-confidence in those areas. In other situations where we're completely bored, we either need to work on being less bored on purpose, and being more entertaining to

ourselves, or we need to stop hanging out in situations where we're consistently bored, where we're consistently showing up and having to drink to make our lives seem better than they really are. If you think about this, if drinking helps you deal with a life you don't like, then you are going to get really good at dealing with a life you don't like, instead of changing that life into something that you do like.

I was working with a client the other day, and she was talking about how she really needs to come home from work and unwind because her day is so stressful that she needs a way to compensate for that. What I told her is I said, "Well, as long as you come home and drink, then you never learn how to manage your stress better, and in fact you never learn how to change your level of stress by becoming that emotional adult, becoming emotionally responsible for all of your feelings, and then guiding yourself to be more productive and less stressed, to having thoughts that serve you in a deeper way than thoughts that cause worry and anxiety and frustration and stress."

What we do is we just repeat that same life because we're compensating for it with alcohol. What I've seen with most clients is that when they stop buffering with alcohol, and they stop buffering with overeating, is that they feel very raw and exposed, and many start feeling a lot of very negative emotion. I think that some of them think that something's gone terribly wrong. They think, "Oh my gosh, this is not what I signed up for." What I offer to them is that is exactly what they signed up for, and this is not a horrible bad thing. This is the truth.

Marianne has this amazing quote where she says, "When we refuse to take responsibility for our experience, we pay the high price of not being able to change it." Oh my gosh, you guys, that is so good. "When we refuse to take responsibility for our experience, we pay the high price of not being able to change it." When my client goes to work and is blaming her work on her stress and compensating for her stress by drinking, she is giving up her power to change her experience at work. She's giving up her power to have a more productive, relaxing, connected evening, because she's escaping from her own self-created stress, which is perpetual emotional childhood. Now why is emotional childhood a bummer? Because it is so disempowering. It robs us of everything that we have in terms of

power to be able to manage ourselves and our emotions.

I'm going to go through some of the other quotes that she has here, because they're so delicious and so in line with what I'm currently teaching right now. Actually, this is something that I wrote. I said, "If we're feeling anxious, depressed, or sad, we need to know that so we can adjust our thoughts and therefore our feelings, our actions, and results, to create a different experience of the world." When we numb out we tolerate so much more than we should.

Oh, here's her quote that's so good. She says, "Numbing ourselves diminishes our humanity." Come on. That's so brilliant, right? Numbing ourselves diminishes our humanity, because our humanity is inclusive of suffering. I don't know any human that doesn't suffer on the planet. It is by design.

I was writing a post to one of my students today, and I said-- she was like, "Why does this have to be so hard? Why does losing weight have to be so hard?" One of the things I said was, I said, "I think when we die we're all really thin and really beautiful and really rich and really bored. So I think we come to the planet to play, to have some friction, and to see what we're made of and see what we can accomplish when we're really put to it."

I think suffering is the only way that we can evolve beyond everybody loves each other all the time and there is nothing negative, which is my idea of the part of us that isn't human. The part of us that goes on beyond our humanness, the part of us that is Christ-like, that is like Jesus. So if we were all Jesus-loving each other all the time, I don't think it would be as interesting. We would just already all be enlightened. We would just all be walking around as enlightened beings, but none of us would know we were enlightened, because there'd be no distinction.

When we can embrace that suffering's part of the deal, it makes it kind of pointless to diminish that. If one of the reasons why we need suffering is so we can evolve ourselves, so we can become the best version of ourselves, then to numb out the suffering kind of defeats the point.

It's kind of like the podcast I did a little while ago where I talked about quitting versus accepting. What is the point of being appropriately uncomfortable? Why would anyone do that? I think it's easy to answer that question. Why not just live a really comfortable life? Why not just live in a place of constant ecstasy? Why not just take heroin all the time? A steady supply of heroin, it makes your brain explode with pleasure. Why not just be in a constant state of pleasure all the time? I think for some of us, we'd look at that and we think, "Well, that's not what life is."

Life isn't just constant artificial pleasure. Yet when it comes to lower levels of comfort, I think we miss the point. When we're going for ecstasy, and we're going for drugs that create that high level of ecstasy that disconnect us from the world, it's obvious that that's not any way to live our lives. But what about the lower-grade comforts? What about the lower-grade inappropriately comforts that extinguish our emotions and numb our emotions so we don't have to process and think about them, or take responsibility for them? What about just leading a life of mediocrity, where we don't have to push ourselves, we don't set goals, we don't ever put ourselves in any kind of discomfort? How is that not serving us? How is that low-grade numbness not serving us?

My students would come to me a lot and say, "It's hard to build a business. I'm having a difficult time. I set up this sales funnel and it's not working." I always say to them, "You're right on track. This is all part of it. There's the beginning part where you're all inspired and exciting, and then there's the river of misery, and then there's the other side." But the river of misery is the process. It is part of it.

She says, "The world will offer you many ways to numb your pain, and thus deepen your despair." Ooooh! If only numbing our pain didn't have that consequence. If only doing heroin was all good all the time, and didn't have that equal and opposite despair on the other side of it.

She says, "We're becoming psychologically numbed, when we should be becoming psychologically awakened." Have you guys ever worked through something tremendously difficult that required a tremendous amount of psychological awakening and healing and forgiveness and

paradigm change, and on the other side of that how awakened and alive and proud you feel, and how evolved. Like you know that you'll never be the same again. Like what if our life was a constant state of that where we evolved through our pain, where it was part of the deal. We slow down our progression of evolving by numbing ourselves out. We stall our emotional maturity by numbing ourselves out.

I'm not going to say that it's not tempting. I've done it so much. I've done it with food. I've done it with drugs. I've done it with sex. I've done it with work. I've done it with everything, in my attempt to not have to deal with my emotional life. But I will tell you that when I allow my emotions to be what they are, that is when my life really takes off in terms of my own personal relationship with myself, and my connection to myself.

She says, "In having the courage to face our suffering, to endure it, to learn from it, to process it, to transcend it, we often find keys to living our life in the most powerful way." She says, "Knee jerk pathologizing of emotional pain is a dysfunctional reaction to the experience of being human."

What she means by that is when we go to a therapist, or when we go to the doctor, and we tell them that we're in emotional pain, and they immediately give us a pill, or they immediately tell us, "Oh my gosh, you shouldn't be in emotional pain. Something's terribly wrong with you," which is what she's saying is an epidemic right now, instead of saying, "Oh, yes, you're a human being. Emotional pain is part of the deal, and you're strong enough to handle it. Here are some tools on how to process that pain, and allow that pain, and be present with that pain. Here's some things that you can do when you're feeling frustrated that doesn't cause you to resist it, that doesn't cause you to react to it, but just allows you to be with it." This is why so many people recommend meditation, because it's the process of being with yourself, no matter what you're experiencing. It's that appropriate discomfort.

When you think about meditating, most of the time I'm meditating, I am appropriately uncomfortable the entire time. When you can hold the space for yourself to be appropriately uncomfortable, you have mastered the art of meditation, and you will be able to use that skill

when you are tempted to resist, react, or avoid, or buffer any kind of emotion that presents with. Because the reason why not overeating is so hard, is because feeling emotions is difficult, and we're not good at it, and we're not practiced enough at it. Being heartbroken is part of our deep humanity, not a weakness in our character.

You guys, really think about that for a minute. The fact that we can be heartbroken is part of our deep humanity, not a weakness in our character. So, would you want to be a person who couldn't have their heart broken? Would you want to go through life never having experienced heartbreak? I want you guys to really think about that, because when you don't understand your own emotional pain, you are not as available to other people in the world. If you've never been heartbroken, it's very difficult to understand someone else's heartbreak. If you don't know how to manage your own frustration, and you don't really learn how difficult it is, you'll have a hard time understanding when someone else is having a hard time with their own frustration. The more in tune we are with our own pain, the more compassion and understanding and more connected we'll be to other people.

She says, "A period of emotional suffering is not simply a symptom of our depression as much as a necessary factor in healing it." "A period of emotional suffering is not simply a symptom of our depression as much as a necessary factor in healing it." In order to not be depressed, we need to be willing to suffer emotionally. Suffering emotionally is the healing process. What? We do everything we can to avoid any little bit of anxiety, any little bit of frustration. We do everything we can.

Can you guys hear my neighbor's puppy?

A quote in the very beginning of her book says this. "How we squander our hours of pain." I circled that quote. It was part of a poem she has in the beginning, and I thought about that, like how we squander our hours of pain and avoid them and numb them and hide from them, and do everything we can not to experience them, and how everything in my life has now become about, am I willing and able to move towards emotional pain and through emotional pain, so I can live at the highest version of myself, where I really understand

that when I process pain I develop more confidence, and when I numb my pain I undermine my confidence. Confidence is what gives me the power to create the life I want.

I think that one of the things that I can leave you with is that there is inappropriately comfort, and so much of our culture is selling it to us, and we are buying inappropriately comfort at every turn, and we are utilizing it, and we are numbing ourselves out instead of living the full version of our lives. I want to invite you to allow yourself to experience appropriate discomfort. I want you to know that when you don't drink alcohol, when you don't overeat, when you are willing to be present with an urge, when you are willing to be present with a negative emotion like restlessness or anxiety without taking any action to avoid it or resist it or react to it, you are developing the emotional musculature that you need to become the adult that you're capable of becoming.

She talks about how we need to develop our emotional musculature, just like we need to develop ourselves physically. We need to develop ourselves emotionally. It comes from repetition and practice. It's what all of my work is about. I hope that you guys will apply this, and I'm really thrilled that I was able to share this material with you, and that everything worked out the way that it did, and that my other podcast didn't work out, because I think this is some of the most important work. I highly recommend you pick up a copy of Marianne Williamson's book *Tears to Triumph*. It is an amazing, amazing read. I have it underlined and noted and wowed all throughout it. It's been my pleasure to share some of her work and my work here with you. I'll talk to you guys next week. Take care. 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 the LifeCoachSchool.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.