

Ep #143: Anger



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With Your Host

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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, my friends? I am amazing, I am well, I am excited, I am thrilled. So many great things going on. I couldn't be more excited about Self Coaching Scholars. Really excited about this program you guys. The intention that I have for it is as it grows, I'm going to keep adding stuff to it. If we get more people in there, I'm going to add more classes. I'm going to add more coaching days. I'm going to add some in-person coaching opportunities. I'm going to add some more bonuses. I'm going to just keep adding. For the same price, you're just going to keep getting more. I feel like, it's crazy. I was driving home today and I feel like "oh my gosh, I'm so excited about this program because it truly is such a win for everyone, for me and for my students. For the way I get to show up, and the way that I love to teach, and for my students in the way that they want to show up and get access to me, and also at a pretty affordable price." All is good in my world.

That being said, let's talk about anger. I'm on the other side of a situation that caused me a lot of anger and it's so funny. When you're on the other side of it, it's always humorous to see how things make us angry. I'm going to talk about anger today, and I'm going to reference what I went through, and what I learned, and now in retrospect, what I've learned. I want to talk about anger because I have a lot of questions for you to think about in terms of your life, and your own anger, and outrage, and vague outrage, and rage, and anger. I want you to think about those things and if they serve you.

One of the things that I've told my students lately is that it takes a lot to make me mad. It takes a lot to offend me, to be hurt. I'm pretty unflappable when it comes to people making fun of me, sarcasm, I think everything's funny. I love making fun of myself. I don't mind it when people make fun of me at all. I don't use other people's behavior as a reason to get angry, most of the time. Now, I can relate to a lot of what people experience when it comes to anger over injustice. I think that a lot of us feel as if we are justified in our anger when there is an injustice. I've been thinking a lot about this lately. I should be angry about this, this is anger worthy, and how silly that

sounds when I'm no longer angry. When we're angry and upset, we want to justify that anger, we want to argue for it.

I'm always telling my clients, "You're arguing for your misery, because you have so much evidence for it." I have this situation where someone was literally trying to steal money from me. That was my thought about it, right? They had purchased one of my products and participated in my product, and then knowing that I don't offer refunds, and knowing that they had taken the spot from someone else, they had tried to basically take their money back unjustly. I was furious about this and the way that it was handled and everything about it.

Now, I see in retrospect what was going on in my brain. At the time, I was pissed. I was like, "Hell no, this is not okay." I was trying to coach myself, and I was so attached to my own thinking and justifying my own anger, that I couldn't see past it. I was in this space of wanting to want to be the person that would be more understanding. To want, to want to be the person that would be unphased by this. I was unable to get myself out of my own anger. Even though I understood that it was my thinking, and I understood that it was causing me pain, and causing me to obsess about it, I could not get out of it.

When you guys are in these thought loops, when you're in these spins, I want you to recognize that obsessive feeling is your brain pretending, like a certain line of thinking and a certain way of feeling is necessary and is useful. For me, that was anger. That was this feeling of anger. I've actually coached a lot of my students on this over the past few weeks in terms of their anger about the election, or their anger about someone unfriending them because of who they voted for, those sorts of things. I mean, there's been a lot of anger going around. I feel very well equipped to be coaching people on it because of my own personal experience with anger.

Now, here's the thing. When it comes to anger, there always seems to be someone or something that we are angry at, okay? There's something, and sometimes it's ourselves, but usually it's something out there that we are blaming for our anger. Some of the questions that I like to ask myself when I'm in a state of mind to be analyzing and evaluating the human condition is this. I ask myself, "Is anger

useful? Is anger destructive always? Is anger a dissertation of self respect? Is anger a good protest against injustice?" Now, when we are angry it feels useful. It feels important. I mean, I'm viscerally experiencing it again, just imagining how I was feeling. A lot of times I recognize, because I don't get angry very often, I recognize often when I do, that the anger, and the amount of anger doesn't match the situation.

I was talking to my bookkeeper about this, right? My bookkeeper was looking at financials, and was basically saying, "You know, so this person steals this money from you. It's not a big deal. It's not going to affect your bottom line. It's not an issue financially. It's not a reason to be mad." I remember my coach telling me that when this has happened to him before, like he just never even looks back. He's just like, "Whatever, some people are crazy. Just let it go and move right on." I kept thinking, "Okay, that's where I want to be." That is not where I am at all.

Here's where I went. I went to the place where revenge made sense. Have you guys been here? I hope that you're completely disillusioned by me, but at least you can relate to what I'm saying. I remember when my kids were little, and my son Christian got his school pictures. He got the little cut out ones. He cut them up, and he took some to school. He gave one to a girl that sat next to him at class. The girl looked at him and went, "Ew, I don't want that." He was like in second grade. He came home and told me that she had said that, and I, you guys, I cannot even tell you how angry I was about this. It made absolute sense that I should go to the school and speak with this little girl in a very scary voice and to threaten her.

This is what my brain did. I laugh at it now, but I was like genuine. Of course I should go speak to this young child and explain to her that she should not be rude. That it hurts people's feelings. When this recent situation happened to me, I felt the same way. I started thinking about ways, literally, that I could get revenge. That I could stick it to this person. How dare they do this to me? All this time I'm recognizing what's happening, but it was like a train. I could not stop.

Now, I'm at the point, thank God, in my self coaching where I can stop myself before I take action, right? The thoughts kept coming, the

ideas kept coming on how I could enact, and act out my, "Hell no, you are not F-ing going to do this to me," and, up, up, up, up up," kind of thing. Genuinely thinking about how I could even that playing field. You're going to give me an injustice, I'm going to give you an injustice, as if somehow that was useful. Now, can you guys relate to this? Doesn't it feel useful?

I watched this happen with the election. I watched people calling people names, for calling people names. We feel so justified in it, right? We're like, "How dare this person call, how dare this jerk call this person a jerk," is basically what we were doing, right? How dare this jerk call this person a jerk. That's what I was doing too. I was saying, "Well they did it first. They caused this injustice, they called someone a name first, so now I can call them a name. They made fun of somebody, so now I can make fun of them. It's okay for me to make fun of them because they made fun of someone else."

Isn't that crazy? It's totally what we do. It feels like justice, it feels right. It feels good. I was reading about anger, I was researching about anger, and I was reading a little bit of what Aristotle talks about. One of the things that he says that I think is so fascinating is that anger has both pain and pleasure in it. I was like, "What? How does anger have pleasure in it?" I started thinking about this. I started thinking about how when someone does something, and we make it mean something that hurts us, it feels better to be angry than sad. It feels more powerful to be angry than hurt.

Let's say someone makes a sexist comment, and you're offended by it. That could be hurtful, right? You're offended because of how you're thinking about it. You feel hurt, that feels weaker and less good than anger. The thing about anger is that it feels useful. It feels powerful. It feels like we can even out that playing field, and that, that will make things right in the world. A lot of what I read about was peaceful anger, this idea that anger can be the igniter, but then we need to transition into something more useful. I talked about this in the last podcast.

I was reading about Martin Luther King, and I was reading about how he used anger and his anger in a way that was useful because he used that spark of anger to create a dream. His focus was not on

pushing against. His focus was on creating and moving towards and focusing on what he wanted to move towards. He described that so vividly and how to vision of the future instead of the constant violence against violence. I think that is the most challenging thing, because I think it's instinctual for us. I think it's not something, like I don't beat myself up about it. I think that desire for retaliation is a human instinct. I feel it come up viscerally, and I know that it doesn't make any sense.

It doesn't make any sense to go and yell at a little girl, right? At the time it feels purposeful, it feels useful, it feels like I'll go in and be mean to her because she was mean to my son. That will make things right. Now, how do we know that we are in that place? How do we know? It doesn't feel wrong. It feels good, right? That retaliation, that power that we feel in that anger, it feels good. When I just recently went through a situation with one of my girlfriends where her husband cheated on her. It felt good to hear her yell at him and to call him horrible names and blame him. That felt justified and it felt useful. I kept trying to tell her and show her how not useful that was, how it was deteriorating her relationship with herself, and with her husband, and with her children. It wasn't useful but it felt right and it felt justified in the moment.

How do we catch ourselves? How do we stop ourselves before we take that anger out on the world and use it against ourselves and use it in a way that isn't useful for us? How do we do that? I think one of the first indications for me is always, "Am I in emotional childhood? Am I giving my power away?" A lot of times we feel like anger is powerful, but I want you to imagine a toddler having a fit of anger, right? They feel like they're doing something important. I like watching people have fits, like adult people having fits over stupid stuff. Losing their mind in the car because someone cut them off and they're like turning purple, and flipping everybody off because they're so upset about it.

How do we know when we're in emotional childhood? What emotional childhood means, remember, is that we are not taking responsibility for how we feel. We are blaming it on someone else. In my specific situation, I was blaming my anger on this client that was trying to steal money from me. Now, here's the thing you guys, this is

crazy. I wasn't angry because they tried to steal money from me. I was angry because of what I was making it mean. I was angry because I was using the word, "Stealing," right? I wasn't making it a neutral situation. I was making it an offense. The minute, you know, Byron Katie says, "The first act of war is defense." That's right where I was. I was in it, and I was justified and I wasn't going to let anyone change my mind.

Now, what's interesting about this whole situation that happened in my business with this client was my husband agreed that the person was trying to steal from us, but didn't get angry about it. I was fascinated, like how is that possible? Someone is trying to steal from us. How can you not be angry about it? In his mind he was like, "No, this isn't right, this won't happen. This isn't going to work for them because it's not right." He didn't know that at the time, but he saved himself a lot of drama by feeling that way, by thinking that way. I was not such an emotional adult.

It's funny because when I talk to my friends, when I actually have my good friend who lives here locally, and I go hiking, go to coffee with her sometimes and she coaches me. When I present ideas to her that I think are outrageous, and she doesn't think they're outrageous, she's like, "Oh, this is no big deal. Why are you upset about this? This is no big deal." I talked to my bookkeeper and he's like, "This is no big deal." I know it's my brain retaliating against me. I know that, and yet I still couldn't find my way, right? I couldn't find my way out of my own anger.

Let's go back to thinking about it from kind of a conceptual idea. When we're in it, we can't think about it conceptually because all we are is mad. I don't know if you guys can hear that, but my puppies are on my hardwood floor, and they're fighting over a toy. It's very, very cute. Okay, so I want us to think about this conceptually. I want us to backup. This is something that I try to do with my clients when they're in the middle of anger because I can hold the space for them because I'm not angry, right? They're angry about something, I can see very clearly that it's not useful to be angry about something. I try and help them back up about it. This is one of the things I do in my coaching a lot that I think is important, is once we're beyond the emotion. Once we're, I'm not angry about this client anymore, really

analyzing what went on for me there so I can be preventative next time.

I feel like there was a lot of energy that I spent spinning in a thought loop and I wish I could have gotten out of it sooner. Especially now when I can think about the exact same situation and feel no anger, I want to be able to start there. Here's the question that I asked myself that I thought was really kind of fascinating. First of all, you have to ask yourself, "What is anger? How do you recognize it in yourself? How do you know you're experiencing it?" I think there's two main questions. First of all, "What are the thoughts you have that cause anger?" Now, for some of you you're angry a lot of the time, so you're going to have a lot of thoughts that create it. Those of you who are very easily offended by things are going to be angry a lot more than those of us who aren't. Those thoughts will be something like, "This shouldn't happen this way. People shouldn't behave this way. This situation shouldn't have happened." We have expectations of things happening a certain way.

That's the first question, "What are the thoughts that cause anger?" Then the second question is, "What does anger feel like in your body? What is that vibration and that experience like?" I was reading about how there have been a significant number of deaths caused by vending machines. This is not funny, but it kind of is funny, right? People put money in a vending machine, and they expect that it will work. They expect that their food will come out of the vending machine. When it doesn't, they get angry. They blame the vending machine for what they're experiencing. Often people take their anger out on the vending machine by shaking it, punching it, moving it, whatever. In a significant number of cases, those vending machines have fallen on those people, and those people have died.

I think that is the most beautiful example of how we cause our own suffering, and sometimes our own death, with blaming an inanimate object. Whenever you're angry, I want you to ask yourself, "What's the vending machine?" Is it your husband? Is it your kid? Is it the person in front of you that cut in front of you in line? What is the vending machine in this situation? Then imagine somebody losing their mind on a vending machine, punching it and kicking it. Have you guys ever done this? You shake it, you're like, "I was really looking

forward to that soda. I was really looking forward to that big of chips, and now it's stuck." Sometimes you put the money in and it doesn't do anything, it just eats your money. It just steals your money. That was my situation, right? My money got stolen from me.

There's an injustice that's not the way it's supposed to work, or someone makes a rude comment, or somebody does something that's completely inappropriate. Whatever it is, that then becomes your vending machine. Now, you're going to think thoughts like, "It shouldn't have done that. It should give me my food. It should do what it's supposed to do. It should do what I expect it to do. It should do what I planned on it doing." When it doesn't, we get angry. What are the thoughts and what are the feelings? That's really, really important.

Now, think about that person getting really angry at the vending machine. What do they do? That's like the third piece of it. For me, it was fantasizing about retribution. It wasn't actually doing it. I think, in many ways for me, it was just as detrimental because those thoughts were just spinning in my brain and preventing me from being able to focus. When you get to that place in your mind where you're feeling angry, what are the actions that you either do or you think about doing, right? Do you yell? Do you scream? Do you act out? Do you shake something? Do you seek revenge? What is it that you do?

Now, I think that question provides us with the most useful answer to the question, "Is anger useful?" Now, here's what I want to remind you, and this is a great transition for me into the difference between the spark of anger being useful and perpetual anger being useful. If you are angry about something, a lot of times you will feel like that is useful, and it will create good change in the world. For example, if we're angry about racism, then we use that anger to create change. People believe that. What you miss out on, and Martin Luther King is such a great example of this, is the change that Martin Luther King created in the world was not fueled by anger. It was fueled by hope, desire, and determination.

He had the spark of anger, the spark of that injustice, and then he focused on it's opposite and created that, and went about creating that with lots of great energy. That's where anger can be useful. It lets

us know it's a signal that something has gone wrong. One of the things that I like about anger is it can be a warning against complacency. If you think of it as just a tap on the shoulder, like this is not right. Something has gone wrong. Let's go back to our vending machine. We put our money in, and our chips don't come out of the vending machine, and we feel a little bit of anger. Something has gone wrong here. We're not like, "Oh well, sometimes you don't get your chips," right? That's not what I'm suggesting at all. You get that little spark of anger.

Now, you may want to punch that vending machine, you may want to shake it, you may want to break it, you may want to pull it over, right? You may want to do something insane with that vending machine. Is that action fueled by anger useful? Do you have a switch that takes that signal of anger and turns it into something useful...where you call the vending machine, or you go and let the people know that own it that it's not working, or you make sure that people at the front desk or whatever know that it's not working. You try and get a refund, that sort of thing. That doesn't have to be fueled by anger.

In fact, that can be fueled by something much more sustaining than anger. You don't have to yell at anybody. In fact, if you really want your money back for your chips, or you really want your chips, there's a much higher chance in my opinion that you will get them if you're able to switch from anger to something more useful. I think that's true for social injustice. I think that's true for personal injustice and I think that's true for all other forms of anger that may or may not be an injustice. The question is, "How do you know if something's an injustice?" Only if you believe that it is. There are things you want to believe are unjust and you're willing to be angry about them temporarily so you can shift into some useful action.

There are other things that you may want to stop being even a little bit angry about, and seeing that is not useful for you to shift into action towards. I think that if you are someone that is angry a lot, you have to question the beliefs that are constantly perpetuating that anger. Ask yourself, "Are those the beliefs that are most useful to you in your life?" Is that anger really serving you if it's constantly there? I think the answer is no. If you're always angry about everything in the world, you won't have enough energy to make your life better. You

won't be taking responsibility for your life, and changing it, and making a contribution.

The other thing that I think is interesting to think about is that usually anger is always preceded by pain. There's always a little bit of pain in that spark of anger. I think being able to understand that you are in pain as well will really help with your ability to be compassionate. Think about this for yourself do you want to be someone who's quick to anger or slow to anger? Here's the craziest thing, is you get to decide that for yourself. That isn't something that's innate, that's something that you get to decide and work on.

I will tell you, this last round of anger that I had was exhausting for me. I'm not used to being angry and it wore me out in a lot of ways. I went into a thought loop that was constantly producing anger. I'm used to producing anxiety for myself on a loop, but I am not used to producing anger on a loop. What I discovered about myself was that anger did not produce anything useful. Only when I shifted into truly understanding where this client must have been coming from, truly understanding where I was coming from, was I able to make any peace about it for myself. That was when I was really able to come to the place of enacting change and making a change that actually served me and my business, and the other people in my life.

I think that is such a lesson for me, because I was so committed to it. I see now it was all for nothing. Yes there was an injustice, yes I feel like I was treated poorly, but being angry about it didn't make it better for one minute. In fact, it made it much, much worse. I want to encourage you all to consider this for yourself. I want you to ask yourself, "Do you want to be quick to anger? Do you want to be slow to anger? What is anger in your life and does it serve you? Can you look at anger as a signal that something has gone wrong and then focus on making it right instead of focusing on what's wrong? If you keep focusing on what's wrong you're going to perpetuate anger. If you use anger as a signal to focus on what's right, you can use that injustice, you can use that anger in the world to create something amazing and beautiful. I want to encourage you to do that.

If you need help with this, because this is a tough one, make sure you join my Self Coaching Scholars. I will help you every step of the way

and I'll share my own experience with you and I'll give you some exercises on how to work through it. You can check that out over at TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. I'll talk to you guys next week, bye, bye.

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