

Ep #144: Forgiveness



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.

Well, hello, my friends. How are you guys? Oh my God! We've had the most exciting day. Self Coaching Scholars is on fire. We've added so many amazing things to the membership. If you haven't checked it out, make sure you go to LifeCoachSchool.com/join right now and see what you're missing out on. Come on now. Got to check it out. Got to join me. You got to change your life. 2017's going to be the one. It's the year. I can't wait. Got to be getting better.

Today we're going to talk about forgiveness. Such an amazing topic. I do a lot of coaching around this. Over the past ten years, I have really genuinely helped people change not just their lives, but the lives of their families and their legacies. The lack of forgiveness and the need for forgiveness is one of the biggest challenges I think many of us face. There is a huge misunderstanding when it comes to forgiveness and so I really hope that you will take the time to listen and re-listen to this episode because the concepts in here will be hard for a lot of your brains to accept and wrap your mind around and that's why it's important. I really can't emphasize this enough.

I looked up what the definition of forgiveness is. Now, if you're brand new to my podcast and you don't know what the self coaching model is, this will be too advanced, this podcast will be too advanced for you because you have to understand the basic tenants of the model. I'll review them quickly here but I really want to suggest if you are in a lot of pain over not forgiving someone, I want you to make sure you go back to the beginning, understand the model, how it works, and then come back to this session so you can really start integrating and applying what I'm teaching. This is a really crazy advanced concept. Even though it's simple to understand, it's difficult to apply if you don't understand all the background causes.

Here's the question: What is forgiveness? Think about it for a minute. I think a lot of people have a mis-definition of this. I think when most of us think about forgiveness, we think what it means is telling someone else something or accepting someone's apology or having a conversation with someone that tells them that what they did or

didn't do was okay. That is not what forgiveness is. That has never been what forgiveness is.

If you look up the definition of forgiveness on the Googles, you will see that it says ... I looked it up on Wikipedia and I also just typed it into Google. Forgive, it's a verb. Here's the definition. Stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for an offense, flaw, or a mistake. The second bullet is cancel a debt. What that second one is if someone owes you something, you cancel it. I think it's very interesting that those two definitions are so similar. I think when a lot of people think about forgiveness, they think about somebody having done them wrong and to forgive it means that now we're on equal playing field again, just like forgiving a debt.

Here's one of the interesting things for me. Stay with me here. Come on, people. I'm going to go. I'm going to go off a little tangent. It's going to be okay. We're all going to come back to the main theme but I want to share something with you. Side note. A long time ago, my husband and I both decided that we would not loan money to anyone. We had people in our lives and people in our family that were asking to borrow money. We decided that we would never borrow money from people because we never wanted anyone to be indebted to us because of that feeling. When someone owes you, that feeling... that's really relevant to what I'm talking about.

If you think about the person you love the most in the world and you think about them owing you something, it doesn't feel good. It's crazy. At least it doesn't to me. If someone owes me money, I don't feel good about that. Our rule has always been, "we just give you the money." If we want to, we just give it to you and you never have to pay us back. We have to decide "can we afford it? Do we think it's a decision we want to make together as a couple of giving this money to this person for their highest good?"

What is really interesting, actually, you guys, is that most of the time giving someone money is not for their highest good, even if they desperately need it, which I think is totally fascinating. There have been so many times where we've really thought about something and really thought whether we should give someone money and they've really desperately needed it and we haven't given it to them, not

because we didn't want to help them, but because we thought money would do the opposite of helping them. That's kind of an interesting side note.

I'm coming back. I'm landing that little side plane.

When you look at the definition, it is to stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone. It's not telling the person anything. It's not sitting down with the other person. It's not talking to the other person. It has nothing to do with that. The only thing forgiveness requires is that you stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone. Question number one: When do you need to forgive someone? People ask me all the time, "Should I forgive this person? Do I need to forgive this person?" My answer to that question is "you only need to forgive someone when you need to stop feeling angry or resentful. You only want to forgive someone when you want to stop feeling angry or resentful."

Most people do not forgive other people because they want to feel angry and resentful. Are you guys with me so far? I want you to think about what anger and resentment feels like. When you don't forgive someone, that's what you get to feel. Here's where the confusion comes in. A lot of people think that when they feel angry or resentful toward someone that that other person somehow experiences it. It's not true. That other person does not experience your emotion. That other person only experiences their interpretation of your behavior. This is like one of those moments, you guys. If you can wrap your mind around this, you will blow your own mind.

Another person cannot experience your emotion. They do not experience your anger or your resentment. They only experience their interpretation of your behavior. I'm going to back this up. The only thing required of you to forgive someone is to change how you feel, to stop feeling angry and resentful. That's all that's required for forgiveness. Most of us don't forgive other people because we think that somehow our emotion, being angry and resentful is somehow punishing them. That is never the case. The only thing anger and resentment does is punish ourselves. We are the only ones that feel it. The other person does not experience our emotion. They only experience their interpretation of our action.

Maybe we're not talking to them. Maybe we're yelling at them. Maybe we're being rude to them. Maybe we are giving them the silent treatment. Whatever it is, they're not even experiencing that action that we're doing. They're only experiencing their interpretation of our action. That's how little control you have over someone else's emotion. If you feel like somehow you not forgiving someone is somehow serving you and hurting them, you have it absolutely backwards. You are not serving yourself and you most certainly are hurting yourself because the emotions of anger and resentment are painful. There are better emotions to be feeling.

But if you're going to ask me the question, "Should I or do I want to forgive someone?" the answer is "only if you want to change the way you feel" because the definition of forgiveness is changing the way you feel. What's the definition of forgiveness? Changing the way you feel. That's it.

Let's say you say, "Yes, I would like to change the way I feel. I don't want to feel anger and resentment." My next question to you as your coach would be: Why do you feel anger? Why do you feel resentment? Now, there is only one answer to this question and it is not the one you're thinking. You're going to want to tell me what that person did to you. You're going to want to tell me what happened. You're going to want to tell me why they did it. You're going to want to tell me that whole story. I'm not going to let you and you're going to get mad. See, we're having this coaching relationship together.

Why do you feel anger? Why do you feel resentment? It is not because of what they did. The reason you feel anything is because of how you think. Your thoughts create your feelings. In the case of the model, self coaching model, we have our circumstance, which is whatever that person did and that can't touch our emotional life without us having a thought about it. Notice that in between that C line and that F line is that T line. You know what's great about the T line? It just occurred to me, guys. What's the best thing about the T line? It protects your F's from your C's. I've never said it that way before. That just made my brain get excited for a minute. My C's, the circumstances of my life cannot touch my feelings because they're protected by my T's, my thoughts. My thoughts determine how I feel.

The biggest protection between me and what other people do are my thoughts.

Think about what that person did to you and I want to promise you that that doesn't make you feel anything. That person has no power over you. That person has no control over you. Now, if they hurt you when you were a child, maybe they did then but I promise you they don't now. You, sitting in this moment, that thing that they did to you in the past has no power over you now. That thing that they did yesterday has no power over you now. That thing that they did to you five minutes ago has no power over you now. Your feelings are protected by your thoughts.

Here's what most of us do. Most of us don't protect ourselves. Most of us make it worse. Most of us take our circumstances and think horrible thoughts that create horrible feelings instead of taking circumstances and thinking thoughts that are protective. Why do you feel mad? Why do you feel resentment? Why do you feel hurt? Because of your thoughts about what they did. That is the only reason.

Question one was: When do you want or need to forgive someone? The answer was whenever you want to change how you feel, when you want to stop feeling anger and resentment. The next question is: Why do you feel anger and resentment? The answer is because of the way you think. How do you forgive? You forgive, which is defined by, I could ask the same question by: How do you stop feeling resentful and anger? You change your thoughts because your thoughts are the cause of it. You do not have to have a conversation with that person. That person does not need to apologize to you. That person doesn't have to change. That person doesn't have to explain themselves. That person doesn't have to do anything for you to feel better, for you to forgive.

Now, for those of you who listened to Unconditional Love, this is the same concept. When you love someone, you don't inject love into their emotional life. You just feel love. When you forgive someone, you don't make them feel good, you make you feel good. When you don't forgive someone, you're not making them feel bad, you're making you feel bad. Are you guys with me on this? How do you

forgive? You change the way you're thinking and therefore change the way you're feeling.

Here's how we do it. First thing is you have to figure out why you feel angry and resentful. The answer is because of the way you're thinking. What is the thought you're having that is causing you to feel angry and resentful? Then you change that thought so you feel something different. That is forgiveness, my friends.

I'm going to give you an example to help demonstrate this, but first I want to be very clear about something. Forgiveness is about how you feel, not about how you behave. There is a huge difference. There are a lot of people who say they forgive other people but they still feel angry and resentful but they act and pretend to be kind. That is not forgiveness, my friends. If you haven't changed the way you're feeling, it doesn't matter how you act towards that other person. It doesn't matter how kind you are. It doesn't matter what you've said to them. It doesn't matter if you've told them that you forgive them. That is not forgiveness. Telling someone you forgive them is not the same as forgiveness. Forgiveness is defined by changing the way you feel. You know you've forgiven someone based on the way you feel.

There's also a lot of people that have forgiven other people and aren't speaking to them and never will speak to them again and will never talk to them again but they have forgiven them. They haven't told that person they've forgiven them. They haven't had a conversation with them, but they have forgiven them. How do we know they've forgiven them? By the way they feel.

Here's what I want you to know. You can forgive someone and never talk to them again but don't lie to yourself and say, "I've forgiven them and I'm never going to talk to them again," and then seethe with resentment and anger. You can only define your forgiveness by how you feel.

The next question you'll have for me is, "Well, if I forgive them and I don't feel angry towards them and I don't feel resentful towards them, why wouldn't I talk to them?" You are the only one that can answer that question. I want to offer to you that the answer can be "because I don't want to" and that's good enough. Don't kid yourself and say,

"Oh, yeah. I've forgiven them, but I can't stand the sight of them." That's very different because you're still giving them too much power. If the reason they're not in your life is because of the way you think they can make you feel, you have missed the point. You're in charge of how you feel. You're the one. You cannot forgive someone and be very kind to them. You can be very resentful and still be very kind to someone. That's a very different thing than forgiveness.

A lot of you pretend to forgive people that you don't and that's why you're in so much misery. A lot of you feel like you don't want to forgive someone, you don't want to stop feeling angry, you don't want to stop feeling resentful because if you feel if you do, then you will have to see them all the time and that's not true either. You get to decide. It's your life, my friends. You get to decide how you want to think and how you want to feel and how you want to show up and how you want to behave to other people. You can drop the anger and resentment and never see them again.

The third option ... You can pretend you've forgiven someone and you really haven't or you can forgive someone and never talk to them again. The third option is you can forgive someone and then you can keep forgiving them every time you see them. What that means is you work on your emotions every time you see them. You work on your own thinking every time you see them. That's how you get really good at it. That's how you own your own power. There are some people that you will have to keep forgiving because of how you keep thinking, not because of them.

A lot of us think that when we forgive someone, we condone their behavior. I think this is a very interesting concept. Those of you who have been with me a while know that people get to behave however they want. I think in a lot of ways, condoning their behavior means that you accept that other people behave the way that they want to behave and we have no control over them. Sometimes they do things that we interpret as hurtful, that we interpret as painful, and we want to interpret those things that way. That's okay. I'm not saying that we shouldn't, but to recognize that nobody has the power to hurt us and that we are the ones interpreting that way and causing ourselves our own pain is the most powerful stance we have. It's the hardest, hardest, hardest thing for people to understand.

I have a client right now who's telling me how mean this person is in her life. Mean. She wants to give me lots of examples and she wants me to agree but I never will because I see that her thought that this person is mean is causing her so much pain. If she could think about this person differently, she would feel differently. Right now, the way that she's thinking about this person gives this person so much power in her life. It's such a trip, you guys. It's so hard to wrap your mind around but as soon as you do, it's magic.

I remember the first time I heard Byron Katie say, "There's never anything to forgive because nobody ever does anything wrong." I was like, "Listen, lady. I don't know where you went to school, but that's some cray." Then I watched her and I watched the way she lives in the world and I watched the way she stays in non-judgment. She doesn't make things good or bad or right or wrong. She's truly enlightened. She doesn't judge anything in a way that would make her feel bad. I remember saying out loud, "I don't know if I want to be that way. I don't know if that's the kind of human I want to be, who doesn't judge anything."

What I've noticed is in the past ten years, the more I'm like her, the happier I am. The less I judge, the better I feel. The less I qualify things as right or wrong, the more magic I have. The more I make other people wrong, the more anger and resentment I feel. I'm like, "Dang, she was right." That's who I want to be. I want to be in a state of mind where I never have to forgive anybody. Wouldn't that just be cool? Like nobody ever does anything to me that needs my forgiveness. Nobody is powerful enough in my life to anger me or cause me to feel resentment, especially forever.

I remember when I decided to forgive my dad. My dad was an alcoholic when I was a young kid and he cheated on my mom multiple times and he would always set appointments with me and never show up. I was definitely like the after school special. I'd sit on the porch and just wait and he would never come. He'd say, "I'm going to take you to Disneyland," and then he would never come. "I'm going to go do this with you," and he'd never come. I thought he was the cause of all of my problems.

I read a book. I think it was called Healing the Shame that Binds You. I read about forgiveness and I read about the idea of forgiving for my own sake. I decided to forgive him for everything that he had done wrong in my life. I told myself, "I'm going to forgive him because when he dies, I don't want to be mad at him still." Isn't that crazy? He ended up dying ten years later, not that long after, I should say. I'm really like appreciative that I at least had that knowledge. I always kind of felt like, "Hey, buddy. You did a lot of wrong stuff and I forgave you." I felt kind of this sense of superiority, this sense of, "You did me wrong, buddy, but I'm a good person and I forgave you." I felt this sense of one up.

If you're in that place with someone, the very next time they do something that isn't great, you're even more pissed. You're even more resentful because you're like, "Listen, I forgave you for all your transgressions. I forgave you for not being a good dad, for not being there, for being an alcoholic, for cheating on my mom, for all of that. Look how great I am. I forgave you and you're going to do that?" Then I had all that other stuff behind it to be mad at him about.

Then after he had passed, I was introduced to Byron Katie and her work that there was never anything to forgive ever. All of those things he said, all of the things he did, like none of it was wrong and none of it requires forgiveness. What that means is there was never a reason ... If forgiveness is letting go of anger and resentment, what Byron Katie's saying there's a never a reason to be angry or resentful toward other people. If you could have a life where you were never angry or resentful, it'd be a pretty peaceful life.

For some of you, you're like, "You lost me about five minutes ago." I totally get it because I remember when Byron Katie taught this to me. I was like, "You got to be kidding me." I'll tell you what, ever since I've adopted this idea that my dad never did anything that I need to forgive him for, everything happened exactly the way it was supposed to happen for me on purpose. I've had a level of freedom from negative emotion that I had never experienced prior. I'll tell you what that led to. That led to me begin able to forgive myself for everything that I was loathing myself for. That, my friends, is the ticket to the universe. When you can forgive yourself for being yourself, then you've dialed it. When you can forgive yourself for all the things

you've done "wrong", then you're dialed. You can stop feeling guilty. You can stop feeling anger towards yourself. You can stop feeling resentment toward yourself.

Now, people are like, "Oh, you shouldn't forgive yourself because what about all those other people?" It works the other way too, right? You forgive yourself for yourself, not for those other people. The people that think that you've done them wrong, you do what you can do for them, you say what you can say to them, but their interpretation of your actions is what's causing them pain. It doesn't mean you don't apologize and it doesn't mean you don't keep apologizing. It doesn't mean you don't tell them that you'll never do it again. You just drop the resentment. You drop the regret. You drop the guilt because it does not serve any purpose.

Let's say someone cheats on you. One of my very best friends is going through this right now. Her husband cheated on her and she forgave him. What that means is she stopped being angry and she stopped being resentful and she really did genuinely stop. She replaced her thoughts with, "He never should have done this to me. What a horrible thing to do," she replaced those thoughts with, "Maybe some of this was my fault and I'm going to work on it and make our relationship better." They did. They worked on it for three years and she didn't feel angry and she didn't feel resentful and she was really able to let it go. Then he did it again.

Here we are. He cheats on her again and the question that we go back to is: Does she want to forgive him? Let me ask it a different way. Does she want to stop feeling anger and resentment? I think she would say yes. I would say to her the way to do that is to change how you're thinking about this. Her thought would be, "He ruined my life. He ruined my children's life." When she thinks that way, she feels angry, she feels resentful, she acts angry, she acts resentful. She hates herself for marrying him. She's very grumpy and short-tempered and lethargic. She changes her thoughts to stop feeling angry and resentful to, "This has nothing to do with me. I did everything I needed to do. This relationship is meant to happen exactly the way it did and now I'm going to open up a new chapter in my life."

I'm not saying that's easy to go from one to the other, but I'll tell you it's worth it because then she gets to feel free. She doesn't have to feel angry. She doesn't have to feel resentful. She doesn't have to feel upset. She doesn't have to feel scorned. She doesn't have to feel any of those things. She doesn't give any more of her emotional life to him. She moves on from it and decides what she's going to make it mean. You've seen people that are still angry and resentful about things that have happened many, many years ago and you see people that are able to drop that anger and resentment so quickly that they don't let it hurt them for any longer than it needs to and it never needs to.

It's almost like, "Oh, so this is what happens now." What? Just think if you could think about your life that way. This applies to forgiving the worst possible thing you can imagine.

I look at people that forgive people that kill their children. I think there must be no other choice because if you don't forgive, you will eat yourself up with anger and resentment and horror. The alternative is completely unacceptable, right?

Can you forgive yourself? Practice with other people. They're easier, I promise. Can you stop feeling angry and resentful towards yourself? Are you willing to consider living a life where there's never a need to forgive? Remember all it means is you're not willing to feel angry or resentful. It doesn't mean you don't say to someone, "That's not okay. Don't do that." It doesn't mean that you don't put up boundaries. It doesn't mean that you don't ask someone not to be in your life. All it means is you give up being angry and resentful. That's the gift you give yourself. It is not your job to punish people.

Here's the thing, if I could tell you anything, remember this: You cannot punish someone who has done you wrong by your own feelings of anger and resentment. It does not work. Do not try and punish someone by hating them. The only person you are punishing when you hate someone is you. Do not try and punish someone by being angry at them or resenting them. You are the one that feel the effect of that punishment and you are the one that can change it by changing what you think.

I hope for those of you who are stuck in this victim mode of feeling like you've had something done wrong to you will study this podcast because it can change everything. It can change the trajectory of your life. Two major defining moments for me was when I forgave my dad and the second one was when I decided there was nothing to forgive. If you want to do this work with me, if you want to dive into this work with me, join me in Self Coaching Scholars. Go to TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. I'll see you then. Bye bye.

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