

Ep #189: The Balance of FEELINGS



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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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.

Well hello, my friends. Today we're going to talk about the balance of feelings, and I am so excited because everyone I've been talking to about these concepts is just like, blowing their own mind, which of course is what I was hoping, and super excited that you are all having the same experience that I had when I started living my life in this emotionally balanced way.

And I think the main thing to remember is that when we stop feeling bad about feeling bad, we feel better. And really, most of us want to feel better, and one of the best ways to feel better is to understand that we're not supposed to feel great all of the time.

I think a lot of my anxiety and depression throughout my entire life was because I felt like I should feel better more of the time. It was so unnecessary for me to feel bad about feeling bad because I just doubled down on feeling bad when I could just accept that part of the human experience is a contrast in thinking, which means a contrast in emotion, then I could be at peace with my experience as a human.

So in this podcast, we're going to review the feelings list and talk about the idea of the silver platter of feelings being optional. And here is where I get a lot of questions from my students, when I teach them the idea that our thoughts create our feelings, the first argument that I get is, "Okay, so if our thoughts create our feelings, why don't we feel great all of the time, and why don't we try and feel great all of the time?"

And in fact, I have a lot of new students who will try and do this. They will try and take all of their current negative thinking when they do a thought download, and they'll try to make it all positive all of the time. And they'll actually feel guilty and beat themselves up for any negative thoughts and

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any negative emotion. And when I explain to them, no, that's not the deal, the deal is that we will have that balance, we just want to do it more deliberately, then there's some clarity around it.

And I want to make sure that you all understand this as well. It's a pretty advanced concept, we talk about it kind of further into our training, but you guys have been with me a while, let's see if we can wrap our heads around this. This idea that as we become aware of our feelings, as we become aware of our thoughts and start paying more close attention to those, there will be a tendency to beat ourselves up because we'll understand that our negative emotion and negative thinking is all self-created.

And so we start to blame ourselves or other people for how we're feeling and how we're thinking. And when we can't blame the other people then we really blame ourselves because we understand, "Oh wait, it's all my thinking, so all of this is my fault", which some people think is very bad news, because then they use it as an excuse to beat themselves up instead of a reason to feel super empowered.

So here's the deal. If I give you a platter of emotions, the imagery that I like to use with my students is that I am walking around at a dinner party and I have this beautiful platter, and instead of saying "Hors d'oeuvre", I'm saying, "Feeling? Which would you like to choose? Which feeling would you like to choose today?"

And it's a really important imagery for you to get, visualization for you to see, because that is basically the power that you have in your life. You get to choose how to feel all of the time by what you think. This does not mean that you should choose to feel great all of the time. As I've talked about on the previous two podcasts, a lot of the time we don't want to feel great about what's going on in the world, and here's the difference.

There is a huge difference when you decide that feeling sad is what you want to feel, versus feeling like an emotion is not within your control. Let me tell you why this matters so much. If you feel like your anxiety, your frustration, your sadness, your grief, your pain is caused by the external

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world and you're unable to control the external world, you will be tempted to buffer, which means you'll be tempted to escape how you are feeling. You will be tempted to avoid your emotion because you will feel as if your emotion is being caused by the world outside of you and there's nothing you can do about it. And the only way to feel better is to escape into a false pleasure, and most of my students come to me with this belief system and they don't even realize it. They don't know why they're buffering, they don't understand the reason why they're buffering is because they want to feel better and they don't know how because they think that their emotions are caused by the world and they can't change the world.

What I've been teaching you over the past years in this podcast is that the world doesn't cause you to feel anything. Your thoughts cause you to feel everything and you are in control of your thinking. And so when you feel negatively, if you want to feel better, you can change the way that you're thinking. And - and this is a very important and - and, if the reason you want to feel better is because you can't manage your emotions, you need to learn how to feel a feeling all the way through before you start trying to change it, because you can manage your emotions, but step one is awareness, step two is being willing to feel any emotion for as long as it takes, and step three - and only then, step three is to change your thinking.

So there are three ways of feeling, right? The first is your wanted feelings to have a balance. What are the feelings that you want to experience in the world? If you were entering the atmosphere and you were just becoming human and you got to be born as an adult, and you had to pick from the platters of emotion, which ones would you pick?

Now, most of us think, "I'd only pick all the good and juicy ones" but then you'd be totally weird because you'd be happy during sad moments. You'd be excited during painful experiences, right? So I want you to really think about this consciously. You're coming in as a human, what emotions do you want to have in your repertoire to be able to feel to have the full human experience? So that's number one, wanted feelings in order to have balance.

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Number two, unwanted feelings we need to allow in order to release resistance, and number three, indulgent feelings we need to eliminate. Okay, let me go over that again because this is really important. One is wanted feelings that we choose because we want to have balance as humans. Number two is unwanted feelings that we wouldn't pick off that platter but we need to allow in order to resist resisting them. And number three is indulgent feelings that we need to completely eliminate. We don't want to resist them but we want to stop indulging in them.

So let's go through the list of feelings, and I want to have a little bit of a discussion about them, and I want you to think about - and I've listed a bunch - if you're in Scholars, on page 19 there's a long list of emotions that you can go through and read, but I'm actually going to - for those of you who aren't Scholars, I'm going to just go through the feelings verbally with you.

So the first one is happy. I think most of us would pick this one up. Most of us want to feel happy, it's a good feeling. I want you to think about the thoughts that cause you to feel happy. It's very tempting to think about situations that we think make us feel happy. It's easy for us to say, "When my boyfriend comes over I feel happy", "When my puppy's in the room I feel happy", "When I make a lot of money", or "When I get a new client", or "When my boss doesn't come to work I feel happy", right?

So it's easy for us to attribute our feelings to external circumstances, but what I want you to do is attribute your feelings to your thoughts. So if you think, "I'm so happy when my puppies come in the room", what is the thought you have that causes the feeling of happiness, because it's not the puppies causing that feeling.

The second emotion that is on my list here is sad. So I want you to think about if that's one of the emotions you would pick up and why. I think the feeling of sadness is really important to distinguish from self-pity or pity. And the reason why I say that is because self-pity is sadness towards yourself, feeling sorry for yourself. That's very different than the emotion of sadness when it's appropriate and usable.

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So I think most of us would pick up sad as an emotion that we would want to experience as humans because I think most of us want to feel sad when "sad" things happen, things we think are sad happen. It's part of being human.

The next one is angry, that's one of those emotions that feels useful that usually isn't. But I think most of us would want to make sure that we had that as an emotion to feel so we could process that emotion in a usable, servable way, not in a reactive kind of way.

Confused is one of those indulgent emotions. It's an emotion that's not useful. Now, people will say, "But what if you just are confused?" as if confusion is something that happens to you. And I want to remind you, confusion is not something that happens to you. Confusion is something you decide to experience by saying, "I don't understand this. I don't know what to do. I don't know what the next step is to take." And a lot of us indulge in this emotion and believe that it is useful. And I want to offer that it's not useful, it's not one that you need and in fact, you can always be thinking a thought, "I'm going to figure this out. I am figuring this out, I am understanding this, I am learning this" as an alternative to feeling confused, which is really important to understand that doesn't lead to clarity. Confusion doesn't lead to clarity. That's a different model. Confusion keeps us stuck and unmoving. It's not an emotion that we need to be indulging in.

Elated, I would totally grab that one off the tray. I think that's a super fun one. Depressed. Depressed is one that you really want to think about. Do you think that that's a usable, purposeful human emotion? Now, I would put that under number two. A lot of times we resist emotion; and that causes us a level of emotional exhaustion that leads to depression. So I think if we are depressed, denying it or avoiding it is not useful. It's one that we need to allow, but it's not one that serves a really useful purpose in our lives, as far as I can tell, based on my own life. So it most likely wouldn't be one that I would pick up.

Okay, so those are kind of - that's kind of the first row on page 19 that was happy, sad, angry, confused, elated, depressed. Now, I'm going to go

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through and list the other ones, and I want you to think about whether you would pick this up off the tray to include in your human experience, and then consider why or why not.

Furious, bewildered, excited. I'm going to go with yes on excited. Disappointed, enraged, trapped, overjoyed, alone, outraged, troubled, thrilled. The way these are listed here, they're like alternating, so it's like, this really positive one, and then a really negative one, which I love, love, love, because it really helps us show the contrast.

Hurt. Isn't hurt a good one? We need to have that as an emotion, right? And make sure that it's useful. How would you use it? Would you use it in a way to try and control the world and to blame other people and to say, "You hurt my feelings"? Or do you use it in a way to really manage your mind?

Aggravated, desperate, yes or no? Exuberant, yes or no? Would you include it? Left out, irate. Left out is a good one. I think that's kind of an indulgent one, not really useful, something we create in our minds. People will argue with me on that, but you can't feel left out. I always laugh, my girlfriend from high school, I'm still really good friends with her, and she always says, "You're the only person I know who feels amazing when they aren't invited to a party." She's like, "Everyone else feels left out" and for me, because I'm an introvert because I don't really enjoy parties - I know, that sounds so crazy. It's just not - like big parties, lots of people, just not my favorite thing. I get my energy from being alone so being with a whole bunch of people all the time isn't like the most exciting thing. I like parties because Chris likes parties, so I like them for him, but very rarely do I feel left out because of the way I think.

Irate, yes or no? Lost, ecstatic, dejected, seething, fired up, hopeless. Hopeless I think is much more of an indulgent emotion, yes? Delighted, sorrowful, crushed, cheerful, yes or no? Heartbroken, yes or no? Heartbroken I would take. Sometimes you just need a really good heartbreak. You know, I want to feel heartbroken when something happens that my kid wished wouldn't happen when things go in a way that I would rather they didn't, I'm willing to be heartbroken about it. I'm willing to set

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huge dreams and not achieve them and being willing to be heartbroken I don't think is a detrimental emotion to me. But you have to decide for you.

Upset, disorganized, up, down, mad, foggy. Would any of us pick up foggy? I hope I feel foggy today. Good, annoyed, misplaced, that's interesting, right? Do you ever feel misplaced? Relieved, distressed, frustrated, disoriented, satisfied, regretful, agitated, mixed up, contented, hot. I like that one, hot. Disgusted. Like, disgusted is an interesting one, right? Because don't you want to feel disgusted at things that you think are disgusting? Do you want to have the ability to think things are disgusting and feel disgusted? I do too.

So I think this is a really powerful exercise to go through and really decide on purpose, like which emotions are you going to feel on purpose and how are you going to balance them out? One of the recommendations that I gave to my students was to create a - get a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. And on one side put positive, on the other side put negative, and balance out those emotions, right? So on one side you might put happy, and on the other side you'd put sad. Those are two emotions you want to experience in contrast.

One might be delighted, the other one might be disgusted, and they don't have to be the opposite of each other, but what I'd like you to do is write down - like, if you were to decide on purpose what the emotions are, what would be the positive ones, what would be the negative ones, and then kind of compare and contrast that to emotions that you have on a daily basis. So if you could choose versus the ones that are actually happening to you "because you're not paying attention to your thinking".

Really important for you to decide what you're going to feel on purpose and be more deliberate with it. So some of you may ask me, "Okay, so I noticed that I'm willing to feel a balance of positive and negative emotions, I do understand what you're saying about that being our human experience, I do agree that we could do it 50/50 and have a good balance, but I feel like I'm anxious all of the time, and I don't see that I want to feel anxious all of the time." And what I want to offer you is that when you have anxiety about

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your own anxiety, or you have worry about your own worry, you're just compounding the situation.

So if you're willing to allow the experience of anxiety to be one of the emotions that you have on that negative side, which means you're actually choosing it on purpose, that is when you can get some authority over it, because rejected it and pushing it away is not working.

Now, this is different to an indulgent emotion that many of us feel on purpose as a way to protect ourselves from taking action. And we've talked about indulgent emotions before, right? So indulging in worry, indulging in doubt, indulging in anger. And I'm not talking about anger in a way that's useful, I'm talking about really just like, stomping your feet, indulging in self-pity, those kinds of emotions that we use as a way to "protect ourselves" and not really show up in our lives.

So those are the three things that I want you to imagine, and of course, I listed a bunch of emotions there, but there are so many more that you can find, even if you just Google a list of emotions and go through. Is this an emotion that I want to include in my life?

Now, here's the other thing I want you to do. I want you to be willing to add new emotions, practice new emotions, include new emotions in your life, and maybe add some to that negative side that you wouldn't have chosen but that are part of your current experience in order to establish some authority over it, some willingness to understand, to see what you're feeling, to find the thoughts causing it, and then and only then make a decision to maybe change that thought in order to change that feeling.

Too often we try and get rid of our feelings by thinking really positively, and it's not sustainable, it doesn't work. When we really understand why we're feeling the way we do and what we're thinking and what's causing it, then we can start to understand that these habits we have include feeling. We get to memorizing and patterning certain feelings, and we think that they are part of us, part of our personality, useful and necessary. And many

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times we can eliminate all of those buffering type emotions, all of those indulgent type emotions that prevent us from being who we are.

We also need to open up and embrace and be willing to feel all of the negative emotions that we've been trying to shut out for so long because we're terrified of feeling them. And finally, we want to create and practice and rehearse the positive emotions, the emotions that we will have that will help us create our dreams. Remember, our feelings are what create our actions and results. So we need to be able to create a balance of feelings that produce the life that we want to produce.

So I know that the past three podcasts I've kind of taken you guys to a really advanced place in terms of how to think about circumstances and thoughts and feelings, it's kind of model 2.0 work. It's definitely not self-coaching 101, it's like self-coaching 205. But I hope that for some of you it resonates, it makes sense, and that you're able to apply it, and that you can really start thinking about the feelings that you want to experience as a human on purpose, instead of by default.

I hope you have a gorgeous week, I'm looking forward to talking to you all next week. Talk to you then. Bye.

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