

Ep #25: Emotional Adulthood



Full Episode Transcript

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, and now, your host, master coach instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Hey, everybody. Welcome to episode 25. Yeah, I'm so proud. I'm so proud that I have this idea for a podcast and I wanted to create it and I want to be consistent with it and I've done it and so many of you have benefited from it and sent me emails of gratitude and questions and emails in a distant scope. I know I say that every time and it's just really genuinely true. I appreciate all your reviews, all the subscriptions, all the downloads, everything you guys have done. It's no joke. I really do appreciate it.

In this podcast, I'm going to talk to you about a concept called emotional childhood, emotional adulthood, and this is a concept that has developed over time for me in my coaching practice, and also in my school as a concept that we teach, and the way that I've been able to summarize it down is emotional childhood is when we do not take responsibility for how we feel.

We are responsible for how we feel in every moment. We are in charge of how we think and we are in charge of how we feel. When we are functioning as emotional children, we are blaming other people for how we feel, for how we act and for the results we get in our life.

It is rampant. Nobody takes us to emotional adulthood college. There is no class offered in college or in high school that says, "Hey, you're 18, it's time for you to become an emotional adult. Here's what that means. Now that you're an adult, you have the brain processes to be able to understand what you're thinking. You can start thinking about your thinking, and therefore, you can decide what to think and what to feel in any given moment, no matter what anyone else does in your life.

As children, we don't have this capacity. In fact, we think that everything that's going on in our life is what is causing our feelings, and it is perpetuated by how we are raised. How many times have you heard from a teacher or from a parent, "Now Sally, you really hurt little girls' feelings. You need to say you're sorry for hurting her

feelings." and, "Oh, when she did that, did that hurt your feelings?" or, "You know, when you do that, that's really mean and makes him feel this way."

It's so ingrained, we don't even realize that we teach each other that other people are responsible for how we feel, and it's the most disempowering thing that we can do, not only to our children, but especially to ourselves as adults. Children don't have this capacity to make that distinction, and there really are so many emotional children functioning as adults that it's perpetuated all the way into adulthood, and the problem with it is that it is the most disempowering thing that we can do, to keep ourselves in a space of emotional childhood and blame.

We blame the government. We blame the economy. We blame our bosses. We blame other people. We blame our ex-husbands. We blame our mothers. We blame our fathers. We blame our childhood. We blame the person that embezzled money from us. We blame everyone for how we feel the way we feel and why we're doing what we're doing and the results we're getting.

Emotional adulthood is when we decide to take full responsibility for every single thing we feel, no matter what someone else does or doesn't do. Now this is no small feat. This is a huge challenge for most of us. We go to the place of really expecting that we will take control of our minds, that we will take control of our feelings and when we feel a certain way we say that we don't want to be feeling, we do not blame someone else.

Now let me explain to you why being an emotional adult is amazing. Most of my clients come to me feeling like victims, feeling at the mercy of someone else in their life. For example, they will come to me and they will be trying to raise a child with their ex-husband or their ex-wife, and they will go on and on and on about how their ex-husband is making them feel frustrated, their ex-husband is making them feel disappointed, their ex-husband is making them feel sad and frustrated and all these different emotions.

What I will say to them is look at how much power you're giving this person over your emotional life, and of all the people in the world you

want to give your power to, do you really want to give it to your ex-husband? The truth of the matter is that you are an adult and you are responsible for everything you feel. Your ex-husband's actions do not determine how you feel, you do, and in fact, notice, when you blame your ex-husband for how you're feeling, notice that it's usually a feeling that fuels an action that you don't even want to be taking.

Emotional childhood does look like us having temper tantrums and rage fits and yelling and screaming at each other. It puts us in a place where we don't feel like we have control over ourselves as adults and we therefore start acting like serious toddlers. I've done this so many times in my own life. I catch myself acting like a whining, screaming little girl because I'm not taking responsibility, and I'm yelling at someone, blaming them for how I feel instead of truly taking responsibility for every emotion that I have.

When I am in emotional adulthood and I take responsibility for how I feel and I make choices for how I want to feel, I end up so much more empowered and I get to be more of the person I want to be instead of being in this default emotional childhood space. For me, a lot of my emotional overeating came from a place of blame, blaming my mom for the body that I had, blaming people for having the food all around and blaming myself for not having more control.

Really, what's happening is I wasn't taking responsibility for my feelings. I wasn't feeling my feelings. I was eating them instead. I was eating like emotional childhood food, too. I was eating macaroni and cheese and drive thru, kid hamburgers, and it was fascinating to see how much I was really taking this emotional childhood to the ultimate level, and wanting other people to parent us and take responsibility for us and take care of us financially.

I see that a lot with many of my clients in how they just completely abdicate responsibility, not just for their feelings but for their results, for their life and they let someone else take care of those things in a way that doesn't feel good to them. Now, there are many ways to be an emotional adult and share financial responsibilities and to eat fun chicken nugget foods, and that's not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about when you're in a place of disempowerment, you're in a place where you feel like you don't have control over your emotional life and you give that responsibility to someone else. Notice, let's say I give my emotional life over to my husband and I tell him, "You are responsible for making me happy." or, "You're responsible for when I'm frustrated and you're responsible for when I'm sad and you're responsible, everything you do causes an emotion in me." You can see how, when I'm in that space, I'm going to be constantly trying to control him.

I'm going to be constantly trying to tell him what to do and how to do it and I'm going to be mad when he doesn't do it and my emotions are going to be all over the place because I'm trying to control his actions because he is the pawn in my emotional chess board. Whatever he does is going to determine how I feel.

That is a very disempowered place to be and it's maddening because you can't control other people all of the time. I've noticed that they don't really like it when you try. I mean that's the truth, so when I really learned this concept, I noticed that there was a lot of psychology talk in relationships about meeting each other's needs, and I really think that is the ultimate in emotional childhood.

If I go to my husband and I say, "Here are my needs and you need to meet them.", it's almost as if I'm a dependent child, right? My needs are that you do this, this, this and this in order for me to be happy. If he in turn tells me what his needs are for me to make him happiness - - me to make him happy, then we have put each other's happiness in each other's hands. That's not a good place for it to be because most people can't even make themselves happy, let alone try to make someone else happy.

Most people don't want to spend all of their time and energy trying to make you happy because they're trying to manage their own emotional life, so delegating that responsibility to even someone that you love can affect that relationship in a really deep painful way.

I like to say the best relationships are when two people come together and say, "I'm going to meet my needs. You meet your needs, and then we can just come together and have a really good

time. My expectations of you are not to manage my emotional life, because I'm having a hard time doing that myself. I don't know how I could expect you to do it."

Emotional adulthood is I am responsible for my happiness and I'm also responsible for my unhappiness, and I'm responsible when my feelings get hurt and I'm responsible for my thoughts, my feelings and my actions. Now, people say to me all the time, "Well, if you're only responsible for how you feel, then won't you abdicate responsibility for how you treat other people?"

I say the opposite is true. When you are acting from a place of emotional adulthood, you don't act in a way that's mean to other people. You don't act in a way that's cruel because you are reacting from a place of trying to get them to behave in a way so you can feel better. Usually, when we throw temper tantrums, usually when we yell at people, usually when we're mean, it's because we're trying to control them. We're trying to get them to behave in a way so we will feel better, and that's never going to work and it's only going to cause tension and pain in the relationship.

Emotional adulthood is, "Listen, you get to behave however you want and I get to behave however I want, and I am responsible for all of my actions and I am responsible for all of my feelings."

Now, this does not mean that you're not going to take action that is sometimes going to be something you regret, and it doesn't mean you don't apologize and it doesn't mean you don't take responsibility for how you treat another person. Just because you know you're not responsible for how they feel, you are responsible for how you behave. That is really important because you need to decide who you want to be in the world and how you want to act in the world.

People who are functioning from emotional adulthood and taking responsibility for their feelings tend to apologize a lot more because they own up to how they are acting and they own it. They don't say, "Oh the reason I acted that way is because you were like this." That's the opposite of taking responsibility for how you think, feel and behave.

Now, the other thing that is really important when you are learning this process of becoming an emotional adult is the point of it is not to then start blaming yourself for any thoughts or feelings or actions that you're not liking. If I'm constantly blaming someone else for how I feel and abdicating responsibility for that when I blame someone else, my tendency maybe to then turn that blame on myself and go, "Uh, my God, so this whole time, I've been the one. I'm such a horrible person."

That's not the intention of this process. The intention of the process is to say, "Oh, so if I feel this way, it's because of the way I'm thinking. If I'm acting this way, it's because of the way I'm thinking.", and I can be curious and fascinated about that and I can treat myself with kindness and compassion instead of beating myself up for it, because now I know that I can change.

When we are functioning from emotional childhood, we usually take action that we end up regretting, and then we feel so badly about that that we abdicate responsibility for it. Emotional adulthood is we take responsibility for how we feel so our incidences of showing up in a way we don't want to show up are greatly reduced, but when they are, we own them completely and we say, "Hey, I just want to let you know that's on me. I did that. That fit I had was totally because I was lost in my own brain. The reason I lied to you about that or fed to you about that is because I wasn't taking responsibility and I was trying to hide. The reason I took that stuff from you and didn't tell you about it is because I was full on in not taking responsibility for myself, but I am taking responsibility now."

That's a really powerful, wonderful place to reside, in a place where you have complete power over your life. I think emotional adulthood sounds like it's something that won't be fun and exciting, like being a child is so much better, but it really isn't true. Being dependent on anyone else, when you don't need to be, as an adult, is actually the most disempowering thing you can do.

Let me give you an example of this in my own life. When I was first trying to lose weight and I was very angry that I couldn't lose weight and I was an emotional eater, I used to sign up for a diet plan, I signed up for all of them so just imagine any of them. Then I would

become a complete emotional child. I would make the diet like my parent. I would be the child and I would get frustrated and rebel against the diet like I was a child, like you can't tell me what to do. I'm not going to eat that, and oh I did everything you said and I still gained weight. That's your fault.

I would go into this place where I was the child and they were the adult and I was like banging my head against the wall, trying to rebel against the very thing I wanted, which was losing weight, which was following him. Then I would go into this place where I want this and I want it, I want it, I want it. It's like a little toddler in the grocery store tugging on their mom's dress, "I want it, I want it, I want it, I want it."

That's what I would do with food, is I would go into this place where it's not fair and I want to eat that too and I'm going to eat it, really in that place of blame and not taking responsibility and feeling sorry for myself and I really wanted the diet to take care of me and make me happy and be responsible for what I ate, and then when it did, when I would sign up and they'd be like, "Okay eat this and take responsibility for it.", then I would completely rebel against it like a teenage and throw screaming fits.

Then when I was done, I would blame the diet for my lack of success. That is an ultimate example of emotional childhood, not taking full responsibility for the fact that I wasn't following the diet, then I wasn't paying attention to my own body and what it needed. I wasn't exercising. I was just feeling sorry for myself and acting like an emotional child.

What I want to encourage you to do is to explore this in your own life. Give some examples, write down some examples of where you are acting like an emotional child. Where are you blaming in your life? Where are you not taking responsibility? Where do you feel entitled to something you haven't earned?

That's a really powerful one for me like that, that sense of I deserve this even though I haven't done anything to deserve it. That sense of entitlement, that is in that place of not taking responsibility for the actions that I'm taking in the world. Knowing that we have a choice in how we respond to everything, we have a choice in how we feel

about everything and we have a choice on how to think about every single thing that happens to us.

Yes, being an adult does require more effort. It does require a lot more responsibility, but any of us who are adults know that it's worth it. It's worth it to take that step into managing ourselves and our minds, so we aren't dependent on other people for how we think, feel, act or ultimately the results we get in our lives. Try it out. Look in your life where you are being an emotional child, how can you take more responsibility there, how can you stop blaming there and if you did, ultimately how would that change the results that you are getting in your life.

I would love to hear from you in the comments. Go ahead and go to the thelifecoachschool.com/25. Let me know how you're being an emotional child and how stepping into emotional adulthood will ultimately serve you in your life. I look forward to seeing you over there. Until next week. Bye, everybody.

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