

Ep #48: Morning Thoughts



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.

Hey, everyone. How are you guys? We just got back from Las Vegas with my beautiful husband that just turned 50 years old, and he wanted to go to Vegas because we love it there. We just went, the two of us, and stayed at the most beautiful hotel, The Encore, and we went out to lovely dinners and went to the spa and sat by the pool and slept in and just enjoyed each other and had an amazing time. I am refreshed and ready to go.

Happy birthday to my sweet husband, who does not look 50 at all and acts like a teenager, and that's so funny, except he does have the grey hair, which we can't get away from, but I think of course it makes him look good. What is it about men that they just keep getting better looking as they get older? I'm just saying.

Let's talk today about morning thoughts. I came up with this idea for a podcast because I've been talking a lot to people about their thinking in the morning. Now, many of my clients and friends wake up in the middle of the night with thoughts, which that's a whole different topic, I think, but I think it's similar because it's waking up and having thoughts just going on in your head immediately.

I have been thinking also a lot lately about the level of anxiety that I have in my life today, and it just feels like it's so much more than I ever had to deal with before, and I deal with it really well. I'm not walking around with a lot of anxiety, but I do have to work on it a lot.

I was talking to my girlfriend about this. What we were saying was, it's not that there's any more anxiety than there was before, but I think what the deal is is that I just never dealt with it before; right? I was over-eating or drinking or doing something, busying myself in the world, and now I've come to this place in my life where I'm not as impulsive. I don't do as many crazy things that distract me from myself, and so I'm left with me, this person who has all these emotions, and I'm not avoiding them as much.

I really see it clearly in my morning thinking. I actually experienced this when I was younger, but I hadn't remembered it, and I remember I used to wake up in the morning when I was younger and immediately I would think about which boyfriend I had, and that would determine what kind of day I was going to have. As I got a little bit older, in between boyfriends, it was always waking up and remembering how much I weighed; right?

What I've realized is that this obsessive thinking about how much we weigh, the obsessive thinking about how much money we have, the obsessive thinking about our boyfriend or our husband or if we're going to stay married or get married or have an affair, whatever it is that goes on in our minds, is a way of distracting ourselves from what is really going on in our mind. It's almost like we're creating drama for ourselves.

I know I did that really with the weight, always creating drama, thinking about the weight, thinking about what I ate the day before, thinking about what I was going to eat the next day, using so much of my brainpower to stay focused on things other than what was going on for me.

Now that I don't do that as much anymore, I notice that I wake up and I have a lot of anxiety-producing thoughts that automatically jump in, and I think it's because I'm not directing my mind to think towards how much money I have or how much I weigh or anything. I don't have a purpose to direct my mind.

I started thinking about, maybe instead of using my own technique to avoid my feelings, I could use my own technique to direct my thoughts and direct my feelings towards the way that I want to go, so I'm not going to wake up and obsess about what I weigh, but maybe I'll wake up and direct my mind to think in a way that I want it to think.

I wanted to share my thoughts and process as I move forward with doing this, because I know a lot of you have the same experience. You wake up, and I want you guys to think about this ... When you wake up, and maybe you won't be able to remember, but do it tomorrow morning. When you wake up, what is the first thing that

comes to your mind? What is your first morning thought, your first thought of the day? What happens? What's going on?

Now, I want to tell you that just the process of paying attention to what you are thinking will bring you into a moment of presence, because you'll be present watching your current mind. That in and of itself is, you get meditation points for that. That's what I'm saying.

Here's what I want you to notice. Do you immediately have a thought about the past, or do you immediately have a thought about the future? Now, for me, oftentimes I will wake up and I'll have an immediate thought about something that happened the night before.

At first I thought maybe I had acted in a way that was inappropriate or something the night before, because I'd wake up and be like, "Oh, my God, I can't believe I said that," but then every morning when I woke up and had the same thought, I got onto myself. I'm like, "Okay, this is a pattern of thought that can't be happening every single morning that I'm waking up, because it's not possible that I'm doing something regrettable every night." Especially the stuff that I was obsessing about or worrying about saying or whatever. It didn't align with who I am.

I was noticing this pattern in myself to wake up and be like, "Oh, I shouldn't have said that," or, "Oh, I shouldn't have done that," or, "Oh, I shouldn't have stayed out with those people," or, "I shouldn't have ..." whatever it was. It didn't matter. I would find something to fixate on, and I know that some of you guys do this too; right? You start fixating on something in your past or something that happened the night before or the day before or the week before, whatever.

Just notice that pattern. Now, here's what I'm saying. Please don't tune out when I say, "Notice that pattern." I really mean, notice that your brain is doing that, because as soon as you notice that it's a pattern, you're not going to take it personally. You're not going to use it against yourself.

Now when I wake up, "Oh, my God ... Ha, I see what you're doing there, brain. I got you. You're searching for something to mess with yourself with," right? It's almost like I find, "Oh, I shouldn't have sat

down next to her at dinner. I should have sat down next to Chris," or silly little things. Then I would start spinning on, and so I've noticed that pattern in my brain.

Now, for some of you, you will notice that when you wake up, you start worrying about something in the future. For some of you, it's the day ahead. You start thinking about what you have to get done that day. For some of you it's the longer future. You worry immediately about money and thinking about how much money you're going to have or not have, or you start thinking about the money that you do have in your bank account now and how that will affect your future.

Notice this. Is that a real genuine concern? Does it change depending on how much money you have? If it doesn't, then you know it's your brain. Isn't that crazy?

This is how I figured this out with a client. If you're constantly waking up and you're worried about how much you have to do in the day, and your level of anxiety about what you have to do in the day is the same regardless of how many things you have to do, then you know it has nothing to do with your day, right? It has to do with your brain. That's its go-to morning routine. What is your brain's go-to morning routine?

We talked about this before in the episode where I talked about questions. I talked about how everyone has a primary question. You wake up in the morning and you ask yourself this primary question, or it will happen early in the morning. For many people that's what their first thought of the day is, is a question; how much do I have to do today, or, what do I have to do today. Then they start listing those things.

The first step is to really figure out, what are your morning thoughts, and are they consistent ... What I had found is that they regularly are. If you wake up in the morning and you feel great and positive and wonderful and you greet the day and you always are having positive thoughts in the morning, that's usually routine.

I have found, and this is fascinating, and you guys should ask around, because I need to know. How many people say they wake up and

immediately have positive thoughts? Some people may transition their mind to positive thoughts, but automatically, "It's a great day. I can't wait to get up. It's beautiful," or do they have to work to get to that place of happiness? Is there a moment where you have to direct your brain, or does it automatically go there?

For me, my brain doesn't automatically go to a happy land. It goes usually to an anxiety-producing thought. Recently it's been trying to find in the most recent past something to obsess over. When I do this, when I wake up and I notice what my brain is doing, I've already pulled myself out of my brain and am into the present moment, because I'm watching my brain. Don't underestimate the power of just doing that.

As I watch my brain, what works for me is to be humorous with it; right? Be like, "Aha, I see where you're going. I see what you're trying to do there. I'm onto you." I have a little banter with my own brain, because that's how I roll.

What is it that you want to do with your brain when you notice that it's doing something like that? What's your personality? What do you want to do? Do you want to be kind to yourself about it? Do you want to say, "I understand?" Do you want to get mad at yourself? What is your natural inclination?

I pay attention to the thoughts, but I don't give them much merit, because they're so predictably illogical. Then I allow myself, I allow the anxiety to come, but it doesn't have much juice to it at that point because I'm already really understanding that the cause of the anxiety is illogical thinking that's starting for me in the morning.

One of the things that's important about this paying attention is, many people, what happens is they wake up and they have anxiety-producing thoughts and they immediately go into avoidance. They immediately disconnect. They get up and they just get busy. They just start pursuing their day, or they distract themselves.

They immediately get up and get on social media. They immediately get up and start directing their brain to email, or, like I said earlier, they direct their brain to, "How much do I weigh?" "What am I going

to eat today?" "Do I feel bloated?" They look in the mirror, whatever, look at their bank accounts. They look at their investments. Whatever it is that people do to avoid what's going on in their brain. Just notice what do you normally do. Do you avoid it? Are you curious about it?

What I like to think about with my brain in the morning is that there's no right or wrong. It's like when you open your computer, what windows were left open? It's not like, "Oh, that's horrible." It's just like, "These are the windows that open automatically in my brain." If I want to, I can train my brain to do something different.

Now, I talked about this in the last podcast, in Episode Number 47. I talked about that morning time, that earlier in the day is when your brain has the most energy; right? Makes the most sense, that you would have the most energy in the morning. That is when you can use your brainpower to reprogram itself.

What I mentioned in the previous podcast was that you can make decisions ahead of time in the morning and make commitments and plans ahead of time in the morning, and that will really help with when you run out of brain energy to work against its own resistance later in the day. You've already made the commitment there's no decision to be made.

First you notice what's going on in that brain and you notice for most of us that it's negative, that the thoughts that are going there are negative, and then you can decide what you want your brain to think in the morning.

This is what I've been thinking about. I have the most brainpower in the morning. When I wake up, my first thoughts have been negative, so I'm using all that brain energy to think negative thoughts. It's also the best time for me to reprogram my brain, and I have an opportunity here. What do I want to direct my brain to do in the morning? What do I want my morning thoughts to be?

When I was researching for this topic and thinking about this topic, one of the things that kept coming up on my Google search was morning affirmations; right? A lot of people wake up and they have a script that they immediately say to themselves in the morning. I think

this is a fantastic idea. I think programming your brain to think certain thoughts in the morning by practicing them is a great idea.

A lot of people wake up and say a prayer. They say something to themselves that puts them in a good space mentally and emotionally. My only criteria for this is that whatever it is that you're practicing thinking in the morning, it needs to be something that you believe, and it needs to be something that literally creates the feeling that you want.

Here's what I mean by that. If you say, I'm going to wake up in the morning and say, "I'm the most beautiful person in the whole world," and you wake up in the morning and you say, "I'm the most beautiful person in the whole world," and you don't believe that thought, it will have no emotional impact on you. In fact, it will probably be negative emotional impact. If you wake up in the morning and you say something that you don't believe to yourself and you create a negative emotion, you're doing the opposite of what you want to do.

The other thing is there are often thoughts that you believe should feel good, "I love you," "You're wonderful," "You have a great life," "You're so lucky to have everything you have in your life." Now, those thoughts may sound pretty, but you have to test them. You have to make sure that they literally feel good when you think them. They can't just sound pretty. They can't just say, oh, that should make me feel good. It has to literally make you feel good or it's not going to give you the result that you're looking for in your life.

Some of you may say to me, "I want to believe that my body is acceptable the way it is. I want to love my body the way it is." You may say, "That's what I want to say to myself in the morning." Well, if you say that to yourself in the morning and you don't believe it, it will have no effect on you in a positive way. It won't get you the result that you want.

We do that kind of laddering where we move up from one thought to the next in a way that we can believe. Instead of going from, "I hate my ugly fat body," we go to, "I have a body," and then eventually, "I have a healthy body." Maybe, "I have a body that is strong and can move." Then we can go to, "There are some attractive things about

my body. I can think of 20 attractive things about my body," and then to, "My body is attractive."

You see how we have to move up that scale from negative thoughts to more believable, positive thoughts. The way that you will know that is do you believe the thought when you think it, and does it feel good? Those are the important things you need when you're trying to practice new thoughts and think new things.

When you look at some affirmations that you may want to adopt for your morning routine, those are the criteria. You might want to come up with some of your own. The first thing you're doing is supervising your mind, which is already putting you in that present moment, and then you're going to direct your mind and putting it into a planned thought pattern.

Instead of waking up and just having a knee-jerk anxiety thought pattern, which is what my brain tends to do, I'm going to have a planned thought pattern that serves me. One of the things that I do if I wake up in the middle of the night and I find myself spinning on anxiety, I repeat the mantra, "I love you. I love you," over and over; "I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you." That's what I do in my brain, and it works like magic for me in the middle of the night.

The other night I woke up and I was thinking about someone that I was having a conflict with in my own brain, and all I did was say, "I love ... 'their name.'" I would say their name, "I love them. I love them. I love them. I love them. I love them," and it really helped. That may be something that you want to try to direct your mind to.

Think about how do you want to feel when you wake up in the morning and how would you need to think in order to feel that way, and then what would you end up doing if you did feel that way? Right?

Creating that deliberate thought pattern. "Today is going to be an amazing day. I'm going to feel great today. I'm going to create my day. I get to decide what to do today. There's nothing I have to do ever. I get to choose what I want to do today."

Those, for me, are really powerful things to be saying. "The past is over. I can let it go. Whatever happened in the past was meant to happen, and I can move on with my future. Everything is perfect. Everything happens for me." Those are thoughts that I believe enough and feel good enough to me that I can deliberately think.

One of the things ... You guys have to check this out. I'll put it in the show notes. It's called Jessica's Daily Affirmations, which are so fantastic. You guys have to watch this little girl rock out her affirmations. One of the things that helped me about seeing that was what she says is what she likes, and I think for some of us maybe moving to what we love might be too big of a step that early in the morning, but you would talk about things that you like in your mind, and you could just lay there and think about things that you like.

She says things like, "I like my house. I like my mom. I like my kid." She didn't say, "I like my kids," but I would say, "I like my kids. I like Christian. I like Connor. I like warm coffee. I like cars that drive fast. I like a good haircut. I like beautiful furniture. I like wainscoting. I like crown molding. I like Apple computer." Just focus on things that you like and notice how you feel. That's one idea that you can have, especially if your brain is trained to think of anxiety-producing things, to have it think about things that it likes.

You can also think about things that you're grateful for. There's tons of research that shows that it's very hard to be in a state of gratefulness and scarcity, gratefulness and anxiety, at the same time, and so if you start thinking about what you are grateful for in your life, it can put you into a state of gratitude, which will allow you to open your day with that feeling.

Now, for me, and this is not the same for everyone, but for me, it's really important for me to allow myself to think what I'm thinking and feel what I'm feeling before I try to change it, because I don't want to teach myself that I can't feel anxiety, and I don't want to teach myself that I can't deal with negative thoughts or with anxiety-producing thoughts.

For me, I like to note, "Hey, it's anxiety. It's not a big deal here. It's not the end of the world. I don't have to go and eat half the house because I'm feeling anxious," but I do know that it's a choice, and I can see, "Oh, look at me. I'm thinking thoughts that are causing anxiety. I see where you're going with this," is what I say to my brain. "I see where you're heading." But I don't freak out about it. I'm just like, yeah, that's where we're at. That's when I then shift to what I want my brain to be thinking about.

It's a really interesting question to ask yourself, "What do you want your brain to be thinking about?" If you have limited brain energy throughout the day and your brain literally goes into fatigue when it has to make too many decisions, then what do you want it to spend its energy thinking about?

I think about how many hours my brain spent calculating the calories in food. I think about how much brain energy I spent wondering what my boyfriend was doing when he wasn't with me. I put in some serious brain power into thinking about those things. I trained my brain to think that way. It just kills me, because I just didn't know any better.

Now I have, okay, let's say 12 hours I'm going to be awake. I have the most powerful tool on the planet right here. What do I want it to spend its time doing? Do I want it to spend its ... and its most precious time, its most powerful time, which is in the morning, what do I want it to be thinking about, what do I want it to be practicing, what do I want it to be doing?

As I was doing these Google searches on morning routines and morning thoughts and getting an idea what people do, the consistent message that I got over and over and over again in terms of business advice was, don't do social media and don't do email in the morning. It's a low-brain activity and it burns up energy, morning energy, on tasks that can be done much more easily than other tasks that we have to do in the afternoon.

There's a whole book called, Don't Open Your Email in the Morning, because you're wasting your brain energy, your most precious brain energy, your most creative time. Okay? When you wake up, what do

you want your brain to be thinking about? You have to tell it what to think about. This is what I want you to focus on.

For so many of us, waking up and reading our goals is a practice; right? That's usually after I've had all my anxious thoughts. Read your goals. What are your goals? Tell your brain to focus on your goals, what you want, what you dream about, what you want to create.

I like to think about my clients in the morning. I like to go on a walk and think about my students and think about my clients and think about tools and think about my own self and my own work. That's when I really want to be focused on how can I help myself the most, because I know if I figure that out, then I'm going to be able to help you all the most.

In the morning, what do I want my first thought of the day to be? "I will create this day." Don't wake up and say, "This is going to be a good day." You're going to create a good day. "I'm going to create this day. I will direct my mind. I am in charge of what happens in my brain. I can control it the best in the morning, and that's when I will."

When I wake up and I'm having negative thoughts and I'm having negative feelings, it's just my brain on autopilot. It's just my brain doing what my brain does. It just fires thoughts. They don't have to mean anything negative, and I don't have to tap into those thoughts and think them. I can allow them to be there and then I can change them.

What I'd love to hear from you all in the comments is, first of all, what do you think about when you wake up in the morning. What is your first morning thought? Then, what do you want your morning thought to be? What do you want your brain to use its precious power to do? Do you want it to just go on autopilot throughout the day? Or do you want to use some of its energy to change the way you think in the morning, to change the way you end up thinking all day long. You get to decide.

Find yourself an amazing question to ask yourself to get yourself thinking positive thoughts, or practice affirmations. Practice getting up in the morning and thinking seven new thoughts, or get up in the

morning and focus on your goals, or get up in the morning and just be aware of what's going on in your brain, and look at it for what it is, because that will put you in that present moment.

There is so much power to happen in the morning. Don't be at the effect of your brain. Don't get up and go, "Ugh," and imagine that that's what you're stuck with. Get up in the morning and go, "Ugh. Ah, that's my brain doing that. That's my brain going on auto-pilot and thinking thoughts that are causing me to feel that way. I'm going to change deliberately what I think in the morning."

Share your morning thoughts with me. I'd love to take the conversation over there. You need to go to TheLifeCoachSchool.com/48, and I will see you there. Talk to you guys next week. Bye-bye.

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