

Ep #50: Lessons Learned from Eckhart Tolle



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. Now, your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Hey there, 50 episodes. It's crazy town. I have sat here at my table with this microphone and talked to you all 50 times. Super awesomeness. Two more and it will have been a complete year of podcasts. I cannot believe how fast it has gone by, and how much I've loved doing it and really enjoyed doing it.

As you know, every 10 episodes we talk about one of my teachers, one of my masters, and today I'm going to talk to you about Eckhart Tolle. He is the man. He's amazing, and I've learned a lot from him, but especially from his Book, A New Earth. That is the book that I really did study and take a lot of courses on and really dive into.

One of the things that I love about Eckhart is that he's just so humble and he makes being in the present moment look so easy. I love the way he talks, it's so funny. You should YouTube him and have a listen to his voice, because it is truly stillness.

What he says about a teacher is, "A true spiritual teacher does not have anything to teach you in the conventional sense of the word. They don't have anything to give or add to you such as new information, beliefs, or rules of conduct. The only function of such a teacher is to help you remove that which separates you from the truth. The words are no more than signposts." I love that concept.

He says, "Stillness is the only thing in this world that has no form but then it's not really a thing and it's not really of this world." I do love that he talks so much about being in the present moment and being still. He says, "The most significant thing that can happen to a human being is the separation process of thinking and awareness. That awareness is the space in which thoughts exist." He says, "The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about it."

This is one of my main teachings, my main learnings about awareness. I'm always hammering you guys on this and I wanted to re-read this line so you can really hear how beautifully he says this. "This most significant thing that can happen to a human being is the separation

process of thinking and awareness." What he means by that is to know that as human beings we can be aware of what we're thinking, and when we are aligned with our awareness we are in that present moment. That awareness is everything.

He talks a lot, especially in *The New Earth*, of the major aspect of human dysfunction is what he refers to as the ego or an illusory sense of self. It's based on the unconscious identification with one's memories and thoughts and the other major aspect he calls the pain body, or an accumulation of old emotional pain.

The part that I like to focus on and the part that really resonates the most with me is that sense of self believing that, and the way he says it is an unconscious identification with one's memories and thoughts, thinking that you are your memories and you are your thoughts. That's the major aspect of human dysfunction. Ego, identifying yourself as your thoughts.

Those are the basic concepts and his solution really is a lot of present moment awareness, releasing of resistance, and identifying yourself as separate from your thinking. I'm going to share some of the quotes from his books and from some of his teachings and then I'm going to add some of my commentary and how it's influenced me to that.

I would love to also hear from you guys, if you are a student of Eckhart Tolle what you have learned and how he's had an influence on you, as well.

He says, "The past has no power over the present moment." That is such a hard one to remember, but the past is over. It doesn't have any power over the present moment. The only power is the power we give it by having a thought about it and creating meaning from it, okay. Remember, his quote is, "The past has no power over the present moment."

What I'm saying there is, your thinking has power over the present moment. Your thinking about the past has power over the present moment, but the past has no power over the present moment.

He says, "Some changes look negative on the surface, but you will soon realize that space is being created in your life for something new to emerge." It's a beautiful idea, right? Anytime something feels negative, any change feels negative, to think about it as space being created for something new to emerge.

He says, "The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about it." You know that that is true. Like, like, like, like. Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance. It's kind of my concept of wanting what you already have, right. Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness.

How do you know this is experience you need? Because this is the experience you are having at the moment. Now this teaching is really aligned with Pema Chödrön, who I've already introduced you to, and also Byron Katie. How do you know that this is the experience your supposed to be having in this moment? How do you know it's the most helpful experience for you to be having? Because you are having it.

Give up defining yourself to yourself or to others. You won't die. You will come to life. Don't be concerned with how others define you. When they define you, they are limiting themselves, so it's their problem. When you interact with people don't be there primarily as a function or a role but as the field of conscious presence. You can only lose something that you have, but you can't lose something that you are. Ooh, that's good, folks. Right?

You can't lose something that you are. What you are is the field of conscious presence. Sometimes letting things go is an act of far greater power than defending or hanging on. To love is to recognize yourself in another. Ooh, that's so good. Right? When you see something in someone else, you recognize yourself in them. You love them. That is love. It's a beautiful way of thinking about it.

Realize deeply that the present moment is all you have. Make it the Now, the primary focus of all of your life. Now, I've always found this very challenging, this concept of being present and that Now is all you have, because I think I'm such a future-focused person and I like to create my life.

I have heard Eckhart talk about that. It doesn't mean that you don't plan, that you just know that the only thing you have is this moment and you really have this moment. You really have it.

I love this one, "Life isn't as serious as the mind makes it out to be." That's a great reminder, right. The mind makes everything so serious and so dramatic. Life really isn't that serious.

Whatever the present moment contains accept it as if you had chosen it. This is kind of like the Dalai Lama's idea of saying "yes" to everything. Can you imagine accepting everything in this present moment as if you had chosen it. That is the full releasing of all resistance. Anything that you resent and strongly react to in another is also in you. It's kind of interesting. Byron Katie would believe that, too, right. Anything you see in someone else and have a negative reaction to, it's probably because you have that in yourself. It's kind of any interesting thing to consider, yeah?

Time isn't precious at all, because it's an illusion. What you perceive as precious is not time but the one point that is out of time, the Now. That is precious, indeed. The more you are focused on time, past and future, the more you miss the Now, the most precious thing there is.

A genuine relationship is one that is not dominated by the ego with its image-making and self-seeking. In a genuine relationship there's an outward flow of open, alert attention toward the other person in which there is no wanting whatsoever. Okay. I want you guys to imagine a world in which this could be true for all of us. A genuine relationship is one that is not dominated by the ego with its image-making and self-seeking. In a genuine relationship there's an outward flow of open, alert attention toward the other person in which there is no wanting whatsoever.

He really plays into the concept of unconditional love. Can you be in a relationship where there's just an outward flowing and no wanting? Now, for some of you that may sound horrible, but think about it. If you wanted nothing from the person you were with, you just loved on them, and everybody was the same way, what would our relationships be like? Just think about it.

You find peace not by rearranging the circumstances of your life but by realizing who you are at the deepest level. Love is not selective, just as the light of the sun is not selective. It does not make one person special. It's not exclusive. Exclusivity is not the love of God but the love of ego. However, the intensity with which love is felt can vary. There may be one person who reflects your love back to you more clearly and more intensely than others. If that person feels the same towards you it can be said that you are in a love relationship with him or her.

The bond that connects you with that person is the same bond that connects you with the person sitting next to you on a bus or with a bird or a tree or a flower. Only the degree of intensity with which it is felt differs. That's an amazing thing to think about, right? The bond that connects you with your husband or with your child is the same bond that connects you with the person sitting next to you on the bus but it is only felt differently.

That's a trip. That card, I'm tripping on that. That's a real trip to think about. I'm going to be thinking about that for a while. He says, "Whatever you fight you strengthen and what you resist persists." My favorite quote of all time from Eckhart Tolle is, "Worry pretends to be necessary but serves no useful purpose." I can't tell you how many times I've said that to a client, said it to myself, thought it. Worry pretends to be necessary. Think about that. What does worry ever really do for us, but cause us to feel worry?

Being spiritual has nothing to do with what you believe and everything to do with your state of consciousness. Is there a difference between happiness and inner peace? Yes. Happiness depends on conditions being perceived as positive. Inner peace does not. Oh my God, that's so trippy. Happiness depends on conditions being perceived as positive and inner peace does not. Hmm mm. What that means to me is that inner peace, what he believes and what he's teaching, is that inner peace comes from the awareness that thoughts are not who we are. Happiness comes from happy thoughts.

Always say, "yes" to the present moment. What could be more futile, more insane that to create inner resistance to what already is? What could be more insane than to oppose life itself, which is Now and

always Now. Surrender to what is. Say "yes" to life and see how life suddenly starts working for you rather than against you. Accept it and then act. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it and not against it. Whoooo.

Any action is often better than no action, especially if you have been stuck in an unhappy situation for a long time. If it's a mistake at least you learned something and in which case it's no longer a mistake. If you remain stuck you learn nothing. That's kind of a trippy one. It's a trippy one to hear Eckhart say, just because he's so about stillness and being in the moment, that for him to say, Take action and you will learn from making that decision and taking that action is kind of a trip.

I love it. If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place. Primary reality is within, secondary reality without. It's not uncommon for people to spend their whole life waiting to start living. Can you guys relate to this one? I can. I think it's amazing to think about. It's not uncommon for some many people to be waiting for the circumstance to be right, for the time to be right, for something to change in order to start really showing up in their life. Okay.

To offer no resistance to life is to be in a state of grace, ease, and lightness. This state is then no longer dependent upon things being in a certain way, good or bad. It seems almost paradoxical, yet, that when your inner dependency on form is gone the general condition of your life, the outer forms, tend to improve greatly. Things, people, or conditions that you thought you needed for your happiness now come to you with no struggle or effort on your part. You are free to enjoy and appreciate them while they last. All those things, of course, will still pass away. Cycles will come and go. With dependency gone, there's no fear of loss anymore. Life flows with ease.

What a liberation to realize that the voice in my head is not who I am. Who am I then? The one who sees that. Don't seek happiness. If you seek it you won't find it because seeking is the antithesis of happiness. Oh, he's preaching now. Seeking it means you don't already have it and his belief is that we all are at peace. We all are genuine happiness.

Awareness is the greatest agent for change. You know, I want to high-five him right now. You know I believe that on the deepest level of who I

am. Awareness, that has to start with awareness. As soon as you honor the present moment all unhappiness and struggle dissolve and life begins to flow with joy and ease. When you act out the present moment awareness, whatever you do becomes imbued with a sense of quality, care, and love, even the most simple action.

Humanity is now faced with a stark choice, evolve or die. If the structures of the human mind remain unchanged we will always end up recreating the same world, the same evils, the same dysfunction. I have to read that again, you guys. Like really take this in. Humanity is now faced with a stark choice, evolve or die. Think about this in terms of everything I've been teaching you. Evolving takes energy. Evolving is uncomfortable. It takes us out of the familiar, right. Are we willing to evolve? Because, if the structures of the human mind remain unchanged, we will always end up recreating the same world.

The moment you become aware of the ego in you it is strictly speaking no longer the ego but just an old conditioned mind pattern. Ego implies unawareness. Awareness and ego cannot coexist. The moment that judgment stops through acceptance of what is, you are free of the mind. You have made room for love, for joy, for peace. Whenever you become anxious or stressed outer purpose has taken over and you've lost sight of your inner purpose. You have forgotten that your state of consciousness is primary and all else is secondary.

The most common ego identifications have to do with possessions, the work you do, social status, recognition, knowledge, and education, physical appearance, special abilities, relationships, person and family history, belief systems, and often nationalistic racial, religious, and other collective identifications. None of these is you.

The significance is hiding in the insignificant. Appreciate everything. Love is a state of being. Your love is not outside, it's deep within you. You can never lose it and it cannot leave you. The greater part of human pain is unnecessary. It is self-created as long as the unobserved mind runs your life. Do you believe that? I believe it in the deepest part of myself. The greater part of human pain is unnecessary. He's not saying all pain is unnecessary. He's not saying that at all but what he's saying is the greater part of it. It's self-created as long as the unobserved mind runs your life.

Become conscious of being conscious. The beginning of freedom is the realization that you are not the thinker. The moment you start watching the thinker a higher level of consciousness becomes activated. You then begin to realize that there is a vast realm of intelligence beyond thought, that thought is only a tiny aspect of that intelligence. You also realize that all the things that truly matter, beauty, love, creativity, joy, inner peace arise from beyond the mind. You begin to awaken.

It is when we are trapped in incessant streams of compulsive thinking that the universe really disintegrates for us and we lose the ability to sense the interconnectedness of all that exists. Defining yourself through thought is limiting yourself. The ego wants to want more than it wants to have. Ooh, that's good folks. That's really back to that concept of wanting what you already have. The ego wants to want more than it already has.

Nothing has ever happened in the past that can prevent you from being present now, and if the past can't prevent you from being present now, what power does it have? See if you can catch yourself complaining in either speech or thought about a situation you find yourself in, what other people do or say, your surroundings, your life situation, even the weather.

To complain is always non-acceptance of what is. It invariably creates an unconscious negative charge. When you complain you make yourself into a victim. When you speak out you are in your power to change the situation by taking action or speaking out if necessary or possible. Leave the situation or accept it. All else is madness.

Awareness is the power that is concealed within the present moment. The ultimate purpose of human existence, which is to say your purpose, is to bring that power into this world. What will be left of all the fearing and wanting associated with your problematic life situation that everyday takes up most of your attention, a dash, one or two inches long, between the date of birth and the date of death on your gravestone. Holy cow, Eckhart.

What will be left of all the fearing and wanting associated with your problematic life situation that everyday takes up most of your attention,

a dash. One thing we do know, life will give you whatever experiences most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness.

I'm going to finish by reading this story that he tells.

A woman in her 30s came to see me. As she greeted me I could sense the pain behind her polite and superficial smile. She started telling me her story and within one second her smile changed into a grimace of pain, and then she began to sob uncontrollably. She said she felt lonely and unfulfilled. There was so much anger and sadness.

As a child she had been abused by a physically violent father. I saw quickly that her pain was not caused by her present life circumstances but an extraordinarily heavy pain body. Her pain body had been the filter through which she viewed her life situation. She was not yet able to see the link between the emotional pain and her thoughts being completely identified with both. She could not yet see that she was feeding the pain body with her thoughts.

In other words, she lived with a burden of a deeply unhappy self. At some level, however, she must have realized that her pain originated within herself, that she was a burden to herself. She was ready to awaken and this is why she had come.

I directed the forces of her attention to what she was feeling inside of her body and asked her to sense the emotion directly instead of the filter through her unhappy thoughts, her unhappy story. She said she had come expecting me to show her the way out of her unhappiness, not into it.

Reluctantly, however, she did what I asked her to do. Tears were rolling down her face. Her whole body was shaking. "At this moment this is what you feel," I said. "There is nothing you can do about the fact that at this moment this is what you feel. Now instead of wanting this moment to be different from the way it is, which adds more pain to the pain that is already there, is it possible for you to completely accept that this is what you feel now?"

She was quiet for a moment. Suddenly she looked impatient, as if she was about to say angrily, "No, I don't want to accept this." "Who is

speaking?" I asked her. "You or the unhappiness in you? Can you see that the unhappiness about being unhappy is just another layer of unhappiness?"

She became quiet again. "I'm not asking you to do anything. All I'm asking is that you find out whether it's possible for you to allow those feelings to be there. In other words, and this may sound strange, if you don't mind being unhappy, what happens to the unhappiness? Don't you want to find out?"

She looked puzzled, briefly, and after a minute or so of sitting silently, I suddenly noticed a significant shift in her energy field. She said, "This is weird. I'm so unhappy but now there's space around it. It seems to matter less." This was the first time I heard somebody put it like that. "There is space around my unhappiness." That space, of course, comes when there's an inner acceptance of whatever you're experiencing in the present moment.

I didn't say much else, allowing her to be with the experience. Later she came to understand that the moment she stopped identifying with the feeling, the old painful emotion that lived in her, the moment she put her attention on it directly without trying to resist it, it could no longer control her thinking and so become mixed up with a mentally constructed story called the unhappy me.

Another dimension had come into her life that transcended her personal past, the dimension of presence. Since you cannot be unhappy without an unhappy story, this was the end of her unhappiness. It was also the beginning of the end of her pain body. Emotion in itself is not unhappiness, only emotion plus an unhappy story is unhappiness.

When our session came to an end, it was fulfilling to know that I had just witnessed the arising of presence in another human being, The very reason for our existence in human form is to bring that dimension of consciousness into this world. I had also witnessed a diminishing of the pain body, not through fighting it but through bringing the light of consciousness to it. Amazing.

I hope you all have enjoyed Eckhart Tolle and his teachings as much as I have. Talk to you next week. Bye.

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