

## Ep #69: Interview with Karen Anderson



### **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.

Brooke: How are you guys? What's happening? I'm so, so happy to be here and recording and talking to you all. You are in for a very awesome treat in this episode I interview Karen Anderson. What I love about Karen, I love so many things about Karen. One of the things that I love about her is the work that she does with clients and their mothers because I've had so much work that I've done in my own mother that her work has been really, really helpful to me. I know you guys are going to love this. Tune in. If you want more of Karen's deliciousness you can go to [kclanderson.com](http://kclanderson.com). Check her out. Let's get started.

Hi everyone, I am here with Karen Anderson and we are going to talk today about your and our mothers. Welcome, Karen. I'm so happy to have you here. Karen is one of my master coaches and one of my very dear friends and we love talking about our mothers together. Karen, why don't you tell us just a little bit about you and the work that you do?

Karen: I came to this work about the mother thing, the mother-daughter thing. It's been a life long part of my life and I've done all kinds of work on it. It wasn't until I started really digging in with Brooke, with you Brooke that I finally really, really got it. Once I did it was like, "Oh my God. I cannot not do this work." That's why I do it because I guess it's like the freedom that has come from doing the work on my mother issues impresses me. Impresses me beyond anything I've ever done before. The freedom, the creativity, all the things that have come as a result of having done that work it sounds cliché but it's been life-changing, seriously life-changing.

I cannot not as I said not do it for others, not do it with others. What has been the most spectacular aspect of it is that all this other stuff in my life got cleaned up at the

same time. I mean, it wasn't like flipping a switch or anything but you know what I mean? It was like all these other stuff just fell into place.

Brooke: Okay. Let's start off, I have 700 questions. Let's start off with tell us a little bit about your mother and your relationship with your mother and briefly tell us when you refer to doing the work on it what do you mean the self-coaching work, the coaching work. What does that look like? What have been the benefits really specifically of doing that?

Karen: I've spent a lot of my adult life feeling very anxious, feeling afraid, feeling that I can't take care of myself, feeling angry, feeling pathetic. Things like that. My relationship with my mom up until a certain point was very, very close and what I realized when I broke away from her and I did that rather late in life. I started not spending as much time with her and not talking to her very often. I started to realize that we actually weren't close. We were enmeshed. There was a lot of codependency there.

The more I remove myself from her and her life the more I started to want to know who I am separate from her because I had never really given myself that opportunity. As a result of doing that and this was before I got into coaching. As a result of doing that it put a real strain on our relationship and she didn't like it at all. There's been a lot of upset. A lot of discord, a lot of not very nice things that happened as a result of that. I found myself spending a lot of time either feeling righteously indignant and angry or feeling just incredibly guilty and ashamed of myself.

Brooke: God, I can relate to this.

Karen: Neither of those things felt good.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: I didn't know, I didn't know what else to do. Those were the only two choices I thought I had was to be angry and get out of my life or this guilty pathetic little girl who does whatever her mom wants. Neither of these were acceptable at a certain point.

Brooke: Yeah, you know I think so many of the people listening, so many of my clients that come to me I've talked to so many people that have such similar experiences with their mother. There's this enmeshment that can happen when you're a child when your mother really hasn't developed herself I think is a lot of the situations and then that enmeshment happens at a really young age. It's hard for some people to like what you said break away from their mothers and still maintain a healthy relationship. When you did and we're going to talk more about boundaries for sure because that's such a huge one and I've talked a lot about my own boundaries on this podcast.

When I did that with my mother it was a very similar experience. Right? I set boundaries with her in a very loving way and she was not amused at all and very upset, very, very angry. It was that all or nothing, right? It's either we're totally enmeshed or I have absolutely no contact with you at all. Okay, you found yourself in the position that I was in where you're like either totally angry and indignant or you're feeling guilty and horrible and like you're a bad daughter. Where did you go from there?

Karen: As I said, there's been therapy and there's been all the books that I've read and all of that was very helpful because it helped me feel like I'm not alone. It also started to give me some language for what actually was maybe the case, maybe happening.

Brooke: Okay, wait, let's talk about that. We actually talked a little bit before we started the recording and I said, "No, no, no. Shut up. Don't say anything. We record all of this." We had talked about this idea that a lot of Karen's clients come to her and say that their mother is a narcissist. We

were talking about is that a useful label or not. Let's talk a little bit about that. What are your thoughts on that?

Karen: As I said, I think if a woman feels that her mother is a narcissist or thinks her mother is a narcissist that's all that really matters. What's really fascinating is that my mother believes that her mother is a narcissist and is always constantly talking about that. It doesn't really matter whether she is or she isn't. What matters is that you believe that. In some cases it can be very helpful to understand what narcissism is and how it manifest and what it looks like between mothers and daughters and that kind of thing. Then, it can also be at least it was in my case it eventually became unhelpful because I started to say, "My mom is narcissist. That's the way I am so I'm stuck."

Brooke: Would you know how to define that? If I put you on the spot and say how would you define narcissist or narcissistic personality disorder?

Karen: I'm not a psychologist.

Brooke: Okay. Wait, I'm going to look it up and read it. I'm going to read it because I do think that it's helpful for some people to have that label especially in the beginning. If they are really struggling in their relationship. Let me just read what it is so people know what we are speaking of. Okay, it says, "Narcissistic personality disorder is a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for admiration and a lack of empathy for others. But behind this mask of ultraconfidence lies a fragile self-esteem that's vulnerable to the slightest criticism. A narcissistic personality disorder causes problems in many areas of life, such as relationships, work, school or financial affairs." I think that and the other thing that I had looked up that I thought was interesting is specifically narcissist, my gosh it's so hard to spell. Narcissistic mothers.

Karen: There's a lot out there.

Brooke: Yeah. There's a lot being said and I think there's a lot that can be useful.

Karen: Actually a couple actually I'm just looking at it now it was in 2011 I wrote a blog post and it was basically just a series of questions.

Brooke: Okay.

Karen: It was, "Do you have the urge to self-punish or self-sabotage? Do you hope that your mother will change? Do you feel guilty when you established a healthy boundary? Do you feel like you don't belong or fit in? Do you fear her? Do you feel unworthy? Do you feel inherently flawed? Do you have low self-esteem? Are you afraid of getting into trouble? Do you still feel like a little girl? Do you have no inner authority? Do you feel like she never really loved you or that conditions were attached to her love? Do you feel like you can't love yourself or be yourself? Are you unable to accept praise?"

Brooke: Okay. Interesting.

Karen: Those are questions that if you answer yes your mother might be a narcissist.

Brooke: Yeah, basically what it says is that a mother who is a narcissist will see that their child is an extension of themselves basically and they don't let go. That's where that enmeshment comes in.

Karen: Right.

Brooke: What's so fascinating about that enmeshment that happens in so many mother-daughter relationships is that even though the mother appears to be being very kind and the mother appears to be very loving and very connected. If you really analyze what's going on in that

relationship it's always about the mother and it's not about the child. Right?

Karen: Yeah, I have a really great example of that.

Brooke: Okay.

Karen: With my mom is that whenever I've been around her and her friends she is extremely, she praises me and talks about how wonderful I am and all these stuff but behind when it's just her and me ... I mean, here's a really good example. I've been blogging since 2009 and she knows about it. She's looked at my blog here and there several years ago she was telling ... I was with her and she was telling some people, "Karen is a great blogger. She loves to blog and you should read her blog. It's so wonderful." Then, later she sent me an email and told me that I should be ashamed of myself for blogging.

Brooke: Interesting.

Karen: There you go. It was like, "What?"

Brooke: It's the idea and when you're talking about a narcissist personality disorder it's, "I will praise you and acknowledge you when it reflects well on me."

Karen: Exactly.

Brooke: Which is very interesting. Anyway, back to this definition I think for a lot of clients it's helpful to recognize and to say, "Oh my gosh, some of the reasons why I feel this way when it comes to myself and the way I was raised and my mother is because my mother is narcissist." I think that it's overly labeled. I think everybody can be a narcissist, right? I think you have to be really, really careful.

Karen: Everybody is.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: Everybody has some of that, yeah.

Brooke: Yeah, I think that when you look at your relationship with your mother and you see ... This is true for everyone whether you think you had an enmeshed relationship or not I think if it's that all or nothing relationship with your mother that for sure will affect you as an adult. That is true whether your mother is still living or has passed.

Karen: Exactly.

Brooke: I think that's what's so fascinating is the work that I've done with so many women whose mothers have passed. Let's talk a little bit about once you got to this place where you were, "Okay, I've read all these books. My mother might be a narcissist." Then, you were feeling either your two options were completely guilty or indignant then how did you process from there?

Karen: With your help.

Brooke: Okay. Talk about the process that you went through and what you do with your clients.

Karen: It's funny because when I think about how I came to come to the Life Coach School I mean yes I knew people who had done it but it's funny because I sometimes think that ... Maybe if the only reason, if the only thing that comes of it is that I heal this, I'm good.

Brooke: Right, totally.

Karen: It's funny because I think the same with master coach training because in master coach training I went even deeper on it. It was like I was bound and determined to get to the bottom of it and clean up my head on that because it was that important to me. The process that I take my clients through it's not set in stone but it goes like this. I know that it's really important for women to have the opportunity to let it all out and to say all the things and be witnessed and acknowledged.

Brooke: Agreed, yes.

Karen: Because it's so important. I think most of the women who come to me understand based on how I write because I send out a newsletter every week to them and they know that I'm not going to let them hang on forever to that story but I know how important it is to be heard on that. The first thing I like to do with women is to take them through a process where they tell the story as long as it takes. However many pages it takes to write it down or spill it all out and then we work on pairing it down to the facts so that they can start to separate out the facts from the fuzz and the feelings that they are having about the story and what they've made it mean about them and so on and so forth. That's the first, the very first part is to have that acknowledgement and to say, "Yup, I know how it feel, sister."

Brooke: Yes.

Karen: Then, it's all about the emotions because the emotions are so complex and they are so in some cases or most cases they are conflicting.

Brooke: Yes.

Karen: Because you want to love your mother.

Brooke: Of course.

Karen: Then, but you find yourself like, "I hate her."

Brooke: Right.

Karen: I mean, there have been times I'm like, "I just wish you were dead."

Brooke: I think what's so hard about it is that you think that your relationship with your mother should be a certain way. You think you should be a certain daughter and you shouldn't feel any anger or hate towards mother.

Karen: It's so taboo too. I mean, come mother's day it's like, "Oh my God."

Brooke: Yes. You're so ungrateful if you don't.

Karen: Right. It's funny I just finished writing a newsletter post for this week and it's entitled, "It's not on you." It's not on you to fix it.

Brooke: Right. Right.

Karen: It's not your responsibility to fix this and you're not a bad person if you don't.

Brooke: You know, one of the things when you're talking about emotions when you're working with your clients, one of the things in my own personal work that I had to really deal with is when I was a child my mother was very depressed. I think the nature of depression is to be self-absorbed because you literally cannot function right when you're depressed at the level that my mother was. It was always about her emotion because her emotion was always leading the day and one of the things that I really had to unlearn and it's a fascinating thing for someone that hasn't had this experience but if you've had this experience you're nodding your head right now as you're listening is realizing that I'm not responsible for anyone else's feelings but my own.

Karen: Right.

Brooke: It seems like common sense but it truly isn't. I literally had to learn I am responsible for how I feel and how I feel really matters and I'm not responsible for how someone else feels. My behavior, this is the huge piece and I'd love to hear your thoughts on it but what I had to learn is my behavior to take care of myself is for me and not against her and how she feels about it is truly none of my business.

Karen: That my friend ...

Brooke: Was the hardest piece I would say for me.

Karen: Yeah. For me it was that because when you're a little tiny baby even and your mother is making you responsible for how she feels even though she doesn't even know that.

Brooke: Of course.

Karen: I mean it's so funny I was in the grocery store one day and I heard this woman talking to her kids and they were little like five, six years old. She was like, "Oh you make mommy so happy." I was like, "Aha."

Brooke: No. Don't say it, yeah.

Karen: Conversely was acknowledging that I was making her responsible for my feelings and owning that was hard.

Brooke: Oh my gosh. It's so hard. I'm so glad you brought that up because it's like one or the other, right? I was as growing up and even now always like I feel responsible if she's upset or I feel responsible if she's angry or whatever. Then, I started feeling resentful and angry with her and blaming her. Exactly what you just said, blaming her for my feelings towards her and what was really happening is I didn't have proper boundaries. That's why I was feeling so angry and resentful but I was blaming her. Can we talk a little bit about boundaries because I think that's ...

Karen: Boundaries is everything.

Brooke: Yeah.

Karen: I mean, that's one of the big things I teach as well is there's a whole section on boundaries.

Brooke: Yeah, okay so once you teach about emotions you let them hear their story and then you really teach about emotions because that's so important.

- Karen: Right, and teaching them how to feel them in their body and know where they are coming from and all that thing and then we get into the thoughts and just becoming the observer. What does that mean to be aware? Then I teach them the whole connection between the circumstances, your thoughts, your feelings, and how they are all connected and how to tease them apart and look at them separately. We go through that in the first few weeks.
- Brooke: That's our key because I think for me when you're in a relationship with your mother that's so powerful to be able to separate out her as a person and your thoughts about her as a person it seems almost trivial when I say it like that but it's everything. It's everything.
- Karen: As I said if it's been there like that since you were a tiny baby you don't know any different. I often wondered why like how come and this is sometimes I still beat myself up but whatever. I sometimes still beat myself up like why did it take me as long as it did and other women are like they turn into rebel when they are 13 or 15 or 18 or 25 or whatever. They don't care what mom thinks. It took me and I was well into my 40's.
- Brooke: Right.
- Karen: You know? But whatever, that's how enmeshed it can be.
- Brooke: Of course. Yeah, the reasons. This is a thing is like the reasons we behave the way we do and the reasons why is all in our mind. When we start the work that you're doing is so important because when you start really uncovering what's in your mind and what you believe that you don't even know you believe you blow your own mind I mean literally that's what ...
- Karen: I blow my mind all the time.
- Brooke: Exactly, you blow your own mind. Okay, let's talk a little bit. Once you've got your feelings understood and you

understand the model and you separated out the facts from the thinking then ...

Karen: Then it's about boundaries.

Brooke: Let's talk about boundaries and how you work with your clients on that.

Karen: I think a lot of women they believe that, "If mom just didn't do X then I wouldn't be angry." Now that women once they've worked when we have that solid understanding of this then they are ready to look at boundaries and to say, "How do I want to show up in the relationship? Who do I want to be as an autonomous woman who gets to make her own choices," right?, "No matter what mom does or says." I mean, for me I mean this was a small example and this was actually this was a boundary that I learned how to set before I knew anything about coaching.

My mom would often we would have a conversation and she would ask me about someone in the family with whom she's no longer talking. I would just go, I would tell her all the news good or bad and she would dig and dig and dig. I never felt good after these conversations. I would get angry that she was asking me these questions. I'm like, "I don't want to answer those questions." I remember saying, "I don't want to talk about that, I don't want to talk about him or her." Then she would be like, "Oh, why not?" I finally realized that the boundary that I set was when she asks I say, "Oh he's fine." Nothing, what I learned was and what I then learned after learning about coaching was what I was doing was I was controlling myself. I was changing my behavior in order to have this boundary and she got to ask the question, she got to say what she wanted to say but I didn't engage.

Brooke: Right. That's such a huge point. The difference. I've talked about this a lot on the podcast, the difference between a boundary and manipulation is a fine line, right?

Karen: Yes.

Brooke: First, we have to make sure there's a boundary violation, right? We have to make sure that there is a boundary violation and with enmeshed relationships with mothers there usually are no boundaries.

Karen: Exactly.

Brooke: There's lots of boundary violations so one of the things that was so ...

Karen: You don't even know it.

Brooke: Right. It was so challenging for me was all of a sudden you start setting boundaries in a relationship where there has been no boundaries. There's going to be some upset in that relationship. My example was in the way that I define it at the school is it's a request with a personal consequence which means you say to the person or maybe you don't. Maybe it's an unspoken request. "If you do this, then I will," it gives the person permission to do what they want to do but it also gives you a way of protecting your boundaries. General sense you could say, "If my neighbor comes into my yard without talking to me about it I'm going to call the police." Right?

Karen: Right.

Brooke: With me, it was my mother was just calling me six, seven times a day constantly calling and one of the boundaries I set with her is I just said, "Hey, I just want to let you know that when you call me that many times a day I'm not going to pick up the phone." It was just a very clear, like she can keep calling me right? I'm not going to answer so continually calling me is not going to solve the issue of me not answering. I'm just not going to answer. I don't like to talk on the phone and I will not pick up the phone.

She was very angry about that because one of the things that she had an expectation of how I would behave just like I had an expectation of how she would behave. That was a really powerful boundary for me to set but I want to

say something that's really important for anyone that's asked and thought about this is it's not easy to set boundaries to people that you really love because it's easy ...

Karen: That you're really enmeshed with.

Brooke: Exactly because you feel so afraid of the abandonment.

Karen: That's why I like to talk a lot about understanding the concept where there's a request and a consequence but understanding that for my clients especially that they don't have to necessarily make the request out loud.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: I showed them how they can change their behavior without having made the request.

Brooke: Yes. Yeah, that can be very helpful.

Karen: Because that helps with the fear. You can't force someone to be out of fear like that.

Brooke: Yeah, an example of that for my boundary would just be that I just wouldn't pick up the phone. I wouldn't actually tell her, "Hey, I'm not going to pick up the phone."

Karen: Right.

Brooke: I would just not pick it up. Now, it's still a boundary. She still may get very angry in that relationship but it's one thing that this is what it did for me and I know that you can speak to this as well because I know you've had the same experience. What it did for me setting proper boundaries with my mother what it did for me first of all was it helped me take responsibility for the relationship and my role in the relationship. It had me take responsibility for my own resentment and my own feelings of frustration. I got to own those.

The other thing it did is it created this space where I could then love her and not be in a constant state of resentment and anger. That was such a beautiful gift that I gave to myself. Ironically it made her very angry. It seemed like the more angry she got the more loving I felt but eventually it did even out. Now, it's much clearer delineated relationship that work so much better for me. Even though at the time it was challenging and I risked to losing the relationship. What it did for me is it allowed me that stay in the relationship and actually enjoy it somewhat.

Karen: I guess that aspect is there and it's very real. I'm someone who has set boundaries and I guess for lack of a better word have been rejected. I went to see her last summer for the first time in quite a while and earlier about I don't know about a month or so ago I emailed her and I said, "Hey, you want to get together again this summer?" She said, "No." She goes, "I don't see the point. I feel very uncomfortable around you." Admit that I had to take some time because a lot of stuff happened in that moment for me.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: What ended up happening was it was really cool because what I started to understand was I started to understand something more about myself in relationship to my mom and that is that what I immediately wanted to do in that moment was call everybody I know and post on Facebook and message everybody and say, "Look what she did to me now."

Brooke: Right.

Karen: I was like, isn't that interesting? Isn't that interesting? What I ended up doing because I have made it a point that I want to feel love from my mom. Sometimes it's harder than other times but when I bring myself back to

that I remember okay I just simply responded and said, "Okay, we'll let me know if you change your mind."

Brooke: Right.

Karen: It was so, just like, "Ahh," you know?

Brooke: Yeah, there are so much more freedom. Yeah, what I was going to say was I think that there are when you have this type of relationship with somebody, some people call it narcissism. Some people call it overly controlling, boundary-less relationships. I think there's a definitely a range and they are not all the same. Let's just say that you've grown up in a relationship with your mother where you're very conforming and pleasing to her. People pleasing with your mother. I see that as an option, right? You can remain in that dance where you're completely enmeshed and you're telling your mother what she wants to hear and doing what she wants you to do and playing that role. That's one option, right?

The other option is setting some boundaries and doing that hard work and trying to negotiate the relationship if it's even possible to do that within the relationship. Then, there's another option which many of my clients have chosen which is to completely delete the relationship and to not have it in their lives and they feel very good about that decision and they like that decision. Can you speak a little bit to, let's talk a little bit first about do you see any problems or any issues? Have you worked with people that stay in that enmeshed conforming relationship? What are the problems that that may cause?

Karen: Staying in it makes you feel powerless. I have a client actually a former client and what's interesting is that in this case it was with her father not her mother. It was very similar. It was that constant resentment. Wanting to cling to the story that her father did her wrong and it was scary. It's scary to step into your power when you've never felt

like you've had it. You don't know what that looks like or feels like or what's going to happen. In a way it's okay.

Brooke: It's an option for sure.

Karen: It is an option. Something that has been very powerful for me that you've taught me is I'll never forget this, when I said something like, "But I like being angry." You're like, "Awesome."

Brooke: Yeah.

Karen: Understanding that it's the choice is the part.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: You can say, "You know what? For now I'm choosing to stay here."

Brooke: Yes.

Karen: That's okay.

Brooke: Yeah. It's still a choice. You recognize that it is a choice, yes.

Karen: Exactly.

Brooke: Yeah. For me personally, what it did for me to stay in that relationship and what's so interesting about it was it felt much less dramatic to just comply and to stay conforming and to just my mother everything that she wanted.

Karen: Easy. It's easier.

Brooke: It seemed easy.

Karen: On some level, yeah.

Brooke: What it did is it kept me in this area in my life. It kept me in emotional childhood and for those of you who are listeners of the podcast, you know that emotional

childhood is when you don't take responsibility for your feelings. What I was doing was taking responsibility for my mother's feelings. Resenting her and being very angry about it and then blaming her for those. It kept me in a spiral powerlessness is what exactly what you're talking about. Okay. Let's talk about deleting the relationship and just ...

Karen: I've done that.

Brooke: Yeah, let's talk about that a little bit.

Karen: That wasn't good.

Brooke: As an option, yeah.

Karen: I thought I was deleting the relationship back at the end of 2010 and what end up happening was it basically then just I mean, no I didn't have any contact with her for a long time.

Brooke: How was that for you?

Karen: It was good. There was a lot of good to it but it also consumed my thoughts and energy. I was constantly, I felt like I constantly had to let everybody know, "See, I had to do this because she's like that." Constantly I have to prove to everybody else that I made the right decision.

Brooke: Because were you feeling guilty about it?

Karen: Yeah, of course yeah I mean and sad and angry. I mean all those feelings that they conflict. It's like on the one hand you're sad because why can't it be a good relationship. Then, you're angry because why did she have to screw it up and guilty because why didn't I do what I was supposed to do to be the good daughter.

Brooke: Okay, this is what's so interesting about what you're saying is I think that people think that if they eliminate that person from their life that somehow the pain will go away.

That somehow the relationship ... You know the reason I know that doesn't work is because people's mothers have died.

Karen: Right.

Brooke: They are still deeply entrenched and enmeshed in those relationship. I think it's important. I would never say to anyone that I could possibly know whether they should be in a relationship with their mother or not physically but I do know for sure especially based on what you just said is that deleting the relationship does not end it for sure.

Karen: Right, the term relationship is fascinating because if you are born to a mother, right? Which we all are.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: You're in a relationship with her. You're going to be in relationship with her forever.

Brooke: Yes.

Karen: It is, it's a relationship.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: It exist because the two of you exist. Whether she's dead or not. Whether you're dead or not I mean it's just it exist. It's not like you can actually really truly delete it.

Brooke: Right. I think that's so important to know because I think that we call it changing the sea. We want to just remove the problem but it's a thought problem. It's a series of thoughts. It's how we relate to other people on our lives and what we make those relationships mean that either cause us the pain or not. That's true whether your mother was very nurturing and available and had very clear boundaries or didn't. The way that I like to think about the work that I've done in my relationship with my mom is I

think it's some of the hardest work I've ever done but I also think it's the work that makes me the most proud.

Karen: Me too. Amen.

Brooke: Yeah. I feel really proud of myself for having done that work and having done it in such a loving way for myself and for her. Even though it was so challenging. I did have so much anger and resentment and really being able to work through that was so, so important to me. Let's talk a little but just before we wrap up here. Let's talk a little bit about how doing this work right on ourselves, it's not work on the mother. Please hear us say that.

Karen: Right, exactly, yeah.

Brooke: You don't go tell your mother how she should behave differently. Don't try and give your mother a manual she will not follow it ever.

Karen: Yeah. That's one of the things I cover very intensely.

Brooke: Good, good but when you do this work on yourself what are some of the other benefits you've seen in your life from doing it?

Karen: You know, it's funny because these are some of those intangible things that they are not sexy but ...

Brooke: You didn't lose 30 pounds?

Karen: No but I stopped binge eating.

Brooke: That's interesting.

Karen: I mean that's been a long time coming. I mean I binge ate like all crazy, crazy. I truly love myself and my body and I think that body image is one of those things that shows up in a lot of women who have mother issues or father issues for that matter. Just being truly content which doesn't mean like, "Oh, I'm happy. Happy, joy, joy," all the

time but it's being able to just ride the waves of life feeling like I've got myself I've got my back. I'm okay. I'm going to be okay. Yes, here's some trouble happening over here and we're sad or whatever but it's okay. I'm okay. I know how to care for myself in this moment.

Brooke: I know for me what it did which was glaringly obvious was reduce the amount of anxiety I was creating for myself. Huge. Oh my goodness. I had so much anxiety all of the time that of course I was blaming on her but really I was creating myself in the way that I thought about her. It's really interesting so I'll share this. I shared this before we started the recording but I just recently went and spend, I bought her Mother's Day present and it was at this beautiful resort and I paid for everything and we went to this beautiful resort and I decided that I was just going to make it all about her. Right?

I put these boundaries in place a couple of years ago and I've really made it carefully about me. I'm like, "Nope. This is going to be all about her and whatever she wants to do, wherever she wants to eat, whatever she wants to do it's all going to be ... " I'm just going to completely not have my own boundaries here or try and do what I want to do. I'm going to make this about her for Mother's Day. Anyway, what's so interesting for me about that was I came back from that trip so filled with anxiety. I was fascinated by how I felt that I had exactly the opposite of what you were saying there as I think it was like ... I know it was crazy to say but it was like post traumatic for me because it was that constant denial of what I want and need at that time.

Karen: I'm curious, why did you choose to do it that way and make it all about her? Do you know underneath why you were doing it?

Brooke: I don't think that at that time I consciously really knew this, right? Obviously I wouldn't have done it, had I? I think because I've been so clear with my boundaries and I say

to my mom so often. She's like, "Hey, do you want to go to this? Do you want to go do this? Do you want to go do this?" It's always no, no, no because I need to do that for my own self and so I think I felt like, "You know what? I'm just going to say yes. I'm just going to do this." I think the reason why is because I still am processing guilt about all the boundary stuff that I do do. I'll tell you what it did.

I'm really glad that I did it the way I did because it really helped me understand how important it is for me to not do that and to take care of myself and to really acknowledge and have boundaries and have small doses of work that I need to do. Because when I'm around my mom I have to do a lot of self-hating work. It's okay, I don't mind doing it but I think for extended periods of time I feel like in some ways and I know this sounds so dramatic and I need to work on it but I feel like in some ways I just threw myself to the wolves by doing that. It's like a heroine addict that decided to go on a binge.

Karen: No, I think that I can't say I've done it in exactly that way but I think it's like we have to test ourselves. That's what I did last summer when I went to see my mom it was like, "All right, is this the exact right thing to do? I don't know but let's go see. Let's see where I'm at."

Brooke: Right, yeah.

Karen: It's all good if you can do it with that understanding or awareness. Maybe if you don't quite have it but again that's what this work does for you is it allows you to make choices that no you're not quite sure how it's going to go but you know in the back of your mind that even if it sucks, even like you did ... You're like, okay I still have my own back. Next time I can do it differently or next time I'm not going to do that. Whatever.

Brooke: Here's what I learned. I learned that just going in and focusing on pleasing her because I think I thought like what's the big deal? She wants it to be all about her let's

just make it all about her. We'll just do it. I think for me I felt like what's the big deal. It's really big deal for me and it was really not okay. The other thing that I learned is that it wasn't enough. It would never have been enough. That was really I think for me really healing because I think I saw myself what I've been trying to do my whole life it's this idea will I ever be good enough. I mean, I couldn't have done this better. I don't say it's right.

I mean, the whole trip and everything I did it was so over the top and so loving and giving and in a kind of contrived way for me because it wasn't genuine and it wasn't something that I really genuinely ... I don't know if anyone who hasn't been through this can understand what I'm saying. It was like I was willing to go to the motions because I knew that's what she wanted but it wasn't coming from a ... It's like when I teach you guys about the manual and I ask you, "Do you want someone to follow your manual even if they don't want to?" Some people will say, "Yeah." That's what I felt I was doing. I'm like, "I'm going to follow the manual even though I don't really want to, for her."

What's so interesting about that for me was that I saw that it didn't actually pleased her. It didn't fully satisfy the need. The need was still there and very strong for more and more and more. It was almost as insatiable. For me, it was dishonest in a way. I think that felt, that's what created so much anxiety for me is the truth is I need boundaries, I need space. I need to be alone. I need to be able to go and get my hair done without her coming. You know what I mean? I need that space. By not allowing for my own boundaries I really, I let myself down and without even realizing it. I came away from that with such a deeper wisdom I think. I will tell you and maybe you can tell me what you think about this is the level of anxiety that I experienced was so intense afterwards that I think it reminded me that's the amount of anxiety that I used to have all of the time.

Karen: Exactly. Yes. Anxiety is fascinating to me because I've struggled with it and I think for those of us who grew up in similar situations we're constantly on the look out. We're constantly vigilant for a lot of different reasons. For whatever the reasons are we're vigilant and that we grow up to be vigilant. We're constantly scanning the environment for clues on whatever it is. Making sure is everybody happy? Is she happy? Is she getting upset right now? We're constantly disclude into that. That whole idea that we're making her responsible for the environment or I guess we're making her responsible for not being the way she is. My anxiety I didn't even think it was tied to my mom.

Brooke: I didn't either. I had no idea. I had no idea it had anything to do with that relationship. It's so fascinating.

Karen: It is because and I know you coached me way back when on what I thought was a phobia of other people throwing up. I never thought I was going to get over that. I never thought I would get over that. It just got worst and worst and worst. What I think now is that I just basically took generalized anxiety and put it on that. It's like, why some people are afraid of squirrels or some weird ... Like why are they afraid of that?

Brooke: I can totally relate to that because what happened to me and this used to happen to me in my life all the time. I've gotten much better at dealing with anxiety just because I've done so much work. We did a whole session with Kelly McCormick on anxiety.

Karen: That was awesome. I love that.

Brooke: Her work is just so brilliant but one of the things that I noticed is like okay so when I came home from this trip I happen to come home by myself which was so lovely. My kids were off with friends and my dogs were with my husband. I came home and was by myself and was whittled with anxiety. I noticed that I latched on to a

certain thing at work and made it about that. Right? I noticed myself I started obsessing about it and started thinking about it and started worrying about mistakes. This is a clue, right? Is when your reaction to something doesn't fit the situation when it's like so over the top. It's exactly what you were saying about the throwing up thing.

It's like all of a sudden you're like, "I want to make sense of this so I'm going to make it about this." What I was able to do is just be like, "You're okay, it's totally fine." Then really take responsibility for literally what I had done to myself. That is to say this is nothing against my mother at all. She had no part in this. She didn't ask for it, she didn't demand it. Nothing. It has nothing to do with her at all. I wouldn't blame her for it. It was completely on my own accord. I will tell you that owning that was what made it easier for me to process my own anxiety. Otherwise I would have been completely angry and resentful on top of the anxiety and wouldn't have been able to acknowledge it.

Karen: Yeah. As I said I never thought I would get over that and I can't say that I'm a 100% over it but it's vastly better. Vastly better. I mean it's so funny because after the ... I don't know if we're allowed to talk about this. The Mastermind, the Life Coach School mastermind in March, my husband and I drove up the coast to Washington and he actually got sick. He got a stomach bug. I know, right?

Brooke: Don't you dare throw up, buddy.

Karen: No. God bless him. He's an amazing man. He woke up in the middle of the night and he's like, "Oh, do we have any Tums?"

Brooke: Right.

Karen: I'm like, "Whatever." I could tell that he wasn't feeling well and he was trying to take care of me.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: I'm like, "Dear, if you're sick go get sick dear." Just go get sick it's okay, it's okay. I was like, "Oh my God, who am I?"

Brooke: You're like, "Listen, buddy. You better not throw up."

Karen: He did. He did. He had 24 hours of feeling like crap but it was okay. I was okay and he eventually was okay and I impressed the hell out of myself. I know it's because I have done this other work.

Brooke: For sure. I totally can relate to that and I totally agree.

Karen: Because I never thought they were two different things.

Brooke: Right.

Karen: Hello, they weren't.

Brooke: I think generalized anxiety can so easily be solved by thought work and by self coaching and I shouldn't say easily be solved. Let's be real.

Karen: No.

Brooke: Not easily but I think it can be understood in a much better way because what you can do is you can see how in many instances what we believe is causing our anxiety is so illogical that we can find the other maybe more elusive thoughts that are causing it.

Karen: It can also be and this is I think the number one thing I want to say is that it can be fun.

Brooke: Yeah, it doesn't have to be so serious and dreadful.

Karen: It does not have to be serious. A lot of my clients and it's been my experience too that therapy is looking back with dread and dreading up and the crying. I have made it a point to say, "We're going to move forward and have fun while doing it."

Brooke: Yeah, I think that's a huge, huge difference. Okay. I know that there's people that are listening to this that were like, "Oh my gosh, you're talking my language. I need your help. I want coaching on this." I gave your email at the beginning and I know that we'll have it in the show notes if people want to get in touch with you and work with you. Is there anything you want to add?

Karen: Yes. I have a book coming out on September 1st about all of this.

Brooke: Brilliant. Do we have a title yet?

Karen: I don't have a title yet. I'm working with my publisher and it's funny because I was actually talking to them couple of weeks ago I'm like, "We have to get a title. We have to get a title." They said, "Blame it on us because we don't have a title yet."

Brooke: Okay, perfect. What's great is if you go to Karen's website you guys can opt in to her list and she could send amazing, good ...

Karen: You'll get information.

Brooke: Then you'll get information. You can also work with Karen one on one and you can find out more information about that on her website. I highly recommend that if you are struggling with any of this stuff that we have shared with you that you do that. Anyway, Karen we've gone way over time but I love ... Love.

Karen: It's mother stuff, right?

Brooke: Love talking about this and I love talking to you and so I'm so glad to have shared this time with you. Thank you so much for joining me. I really appreciate it.

Karen: Thank you. It was awesome.

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