

Ep #81: When Something Bad Happens



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.

Hi. Oh my gosh, it's been one of those days you guys. I usually don't have these days. What I mean by that is my brain is full of thoughts that I keep having to download. As soon as I download them, there's a whole another array of them. I just have had a lot going on.

Here's the thing. I have a student who is upset with me and I had my financial institution think that I was a scam person so they had to turn off all access to my bank account. That was awesome. Then I had some crazy success with the launch of Stop Overeating Masterclass. I know you guys know that I was like so excited about that class. It's like one of my most favorite things that I've ever done and I can't wait to do it.

Then we had so many people interested in doing it, in signing up for it and then it got sold out and then I opened up another class and then that got sold out. Just like kind of overwhelmed with my excitement to accommodate the people that got into the class and really trying to make some options for the people who didn't. For some reason, everything going on in my brain is kind of getting the best of me today. There's days like that and I have to say I was really looking forward.

Here's the deal. I'm sitting in my office and all I see is trees. There's no one else in my office, but I was really excited to talk to you all. I know that sounds weird because I'm really just recording this, but I know you'll listen to it and I get so many amazing emails and comments on the podcast. Just really wonderful things that I hear from you guys on those comments and it just makes me feel so cared about, loved and listened to. I'm like, "I'm going to go talk to them all about this."

I laughed when I saw that my topic today is when something bad happens, because I've just had that kind of experience today. I just kind of feel like, "Okay, regroup. Get the mind straight. Get the mind straight." My example, as I guess, having one of my students upset with me because of something that I did that I feel was the right

decision and I feel ... I stand by that decision, but it didn't prevent them from being upset. I would consider that "something bad happening."

Here's what I realized is that the circumstance isn't that something bad happened. The fact of it is that she told me that she was upset about something. Now, what I make that mean and how I feel about that is going to determine everything. Really taking the time to download my thoughts and think about that in a way that I wish that I could control her feelings. I wish that she wasn't upset. I wish that I could fix it.

I feel myself kind of being pulled into that people pleasing mode, wanting to ... "What can I do to make it better?" Yet, also really feeling strongly about the decisions that I had made and bottom line is I totally love this person and find it very difficult not to take responsibility for how they feel. That's kind of been like coming in the back of my mind and I also, before that, was raging mad at somebody else and really what that means is I just had a crazy rage of thoughts going on.

It was funny. I called my coach, which is a colleague who's also a coach and called her and said, "Here I go," and just kind of spewed all of my thoughts and what was going on in my head and all of my anger. It's so fascinating how I really rarely get angry. I rarely get to the point where I need to talk to someone about being angry, but I was definitely there.

It's so funny. I went on a walk and I was walking the dogs and it's like my favorite thing to do. I love watching the puppies and I love walking and I love being outside. I'm always so excited when it's time to walk the puppies. Oftentimes, I'll have other options of things to do to work out and I'll be like, "Oh, just walk the puppies instead." I just want to be with the puppies.

Anyway, I'm walking the puppies and talking on the phone to my colleague, my coach and just going off. Just letting my thought. Just arguing and just, "Rawr-rawr-rawr-rawr-rawr." Letting all that anger come out. I got to the end of the walk and got in the car and it is the most amazing experience. I hadn't remembered any of the walk. I

had enjoyed it. Of course, I had just been on the phone kind of just ranting. My friend, colleague, had just really listened and kind of offered me some insight, but I wasn't really in a place to absorb it.

Right before we got off the phone, I just need to get some authority over this situation. I need to get some authority with this person. One of the things she said to me ... She just said, "No, authority is a myth. You don't want to have authority. The only way you ever have authority over anything is fear. Is if the person is afraid, and so you definitely don't want that." "Okay, all right. Talk to you later. Bye."

I was sitting in my car, going, "Wait. What? What do you mean?" Like, "Oh, that's so fascinating." I was done walking the dogs, but I had missed it, so I decided to go on another walk. I literally drove the dogs to a new place. A new trail and took them on another walk. It was so funny you guys, because I went around my loop that I usually do with the dogs, but I wasn't done walking. I was still having all these insights and all the self-awareness going on.

Rory, one of my dogs, was just sitting there at the trail like, "All right already. Let's start walking." I was like, "No, we got to keep going. I'm just getting to the point where I'm understanding this." What really came up for me is I was really angry and I know for me that I don't normally get angry. I started coaching myself once I was able to kind of get to the bottom of why is this making you so angry, what is going on.

Of course, for me, what was at the bottom was fear. Wanting to control this other person because I was so afraid of losing them and wanting to be able to have some authority over them, so I could control whether they left me or not. Which, of course, is so interesting, because the truth is that all I really need to do is get out of fear and anger and I can have a conversation and I can be much more effective and I can be in a space that is much more creative and able to solve problems.

One of the things I kept telling to myself is every problem has a solution. People really are doing their best. Sometimes, people's best is terrible, but here's what I know. Most people are well intended. Even when they're making mistakes, they're usually well intended.

Most people don't do a bad job on purpose. Most people don't do bad job because they're trying to upset you. Most people don't show up short of their best selves because they want to be that way. It's usually a misdirected attempt. That really helped me and the truth was is I wasn't at my best when I'm angry or afraid, especially because the thoughts that were causing that were all very illogical.

Once I was able to really be in that space of compassion for myself and understanding where I was coming from, then of course all of the answers and the direction that I needed to go and what I needed to say and what needed to happen became very clear for me. I love it when that happens. I love it when I give myself the space to figure out. I give myself the space to process my anger and I have someone that will hold the space for me to do that without judging me.

It was really kind of an amazing experience to go through that. Then I kind of landed on the other side of that and like a vulnerability place. Was feeling very vulnerable in terms of one of the things that happens when you really acknowledge that you're responsible for how you feel and that I felt exposed in terms of my fear of losing this person. When I really acknowledged that, then I really went to that vulnerable place. I was able to communicate from that place.

I felt tender when that happened. Then shortly after that, I was dealing with someone being very angry at me. I was kind of like on the opposite end of that situation and in a very vulnerable spot. One of the things that was really amazing for me to see is that I have so much more compassion when I was in that space of understanding, what I had just gone through, but that didn't mean that I was weak. I think going to that people pleasing, "Let me fix it. Let me make it all better. Let me change what is important to me so you can feel better." I didn't go to that place either.

This really reconfirms to me that the work that I'm doing in the world, the work that I'm doing on myself really matters and really is important. Sometimes it's messy and everybody doesn't always end up happy all of the time. Relationships aren't always easy and fun. I would like them to always be easy and fun, but if you stay present and you pay attention and you monitor and look at your own mind, there's always a way to find yourself back in compassion and there's

always a way to find a connection with another human being without attacking them or judging them. I'm talking about when you're speaking to them and when you're with them because it's not useful. It disconnects and creates resistance.

All in all, I'm feeling proud of the work that I've done, but I'm also feeling like I'm still kind of in the middle of it. I still have a lot of stuff going on in my brain. Holy cow, that was my intro. Thanks for hanging in there with me. I know that you guys can relate. Sometimes, I'm just driving along and like, "Wow, that's a lot of anxiety that's coursing through my veins right now." I got some work to do.

I came into the office and I'm actually going to be moving offices which is bitter sweet. I have this amazing office right now. This huge window that looks out on to the park that's beautiful, but I need a bigger office. I need one with like a little video studio I'm going to have set up in here. I'm going to have some really cool stuff tricked out in my new office, so I'm excited about that. We're over here growing, yo. We're like a little tiny business, it's getting its training wheels. It's super fun.

Today, I wanted to talk to you all about when something bad happens. Let me tell you that everything that I'm going to teach you in this podcast is what I have to remember and use in my own situations that I've been dealing with this week. The reason why I was inspired to create this topic and when I wrote my outline, what I had in my mind was one of my best girlfriends. Her son was diagnosed with Lyme disease and he was bit by a tick years ago and they didn't think anything of it and then he started having a lot of Lyme symptoms.

One of her very close friends has Lyme disease and was able to help her get son diagnosed. It's usually one of the problems that goes or issues that goes undiagnosed for years. We were spending the weekend in Tahoe together and she's just really upset about her son having Lyme disease and she wanted to talk to me about it and she wanted me to help her with it.

She's one of those friends. She's super fun. Her father was a psychologist, so she doesn't want have anything to do with psychology or coaching. At one time, she was wanting some help

losing weight and I was trying to offer her some emotional insight and she was like, "Absolutely not. Stay away from me with all of that." When she wants help, she wants it, but I have to do it in a way that she doesn't realize that I'm coaching her.

She was asking me about how she was supposed to help her son get through his Lyme disease, because he was really struggling with it and having some issues with it and some problems as you can imagine. Was just really struggling to stay mentally positive. Of course, as I would do with anyone that I was speaking with is I said, "Well, what about you? What's going on in your mind? What's going on with your attitude?" She's like, "Oh, no, no, no. That's not what I'm worried about. I'm worried about his."

I said, "Well, the way you're looking at it and thinking about it, of course, will affect the way you parent him and the way you show up for him and you can't really control the way he's thinking about it, but you can control the way you're thinking about it." This is true whether you found out that someone's lied to you or cheated on you or hasn't followed through in a way that you wanted them to.

Even if you've discovered weight gain or you've had a diagnosis of something or something unexpected happens that you would label as bad, the most important thing that you must remember is that all problems are in your mind. You have to own the problem, your mind. My husband, many times, I'll present something to him and I'll say, "Can you believe blah-blah-blah-blah?" He'll be like, "Yeah, whatever." To him, it's no big deal, it's not a problem. I'm not really upset or concerned about what you're going through." That sort of thing.

I'll be like incensed about it like, "Can't you get on board with my drama on this?" He just won't. He just won't get involved. He doesn't see the same thing as problem. If the Giants lose a game, now we've got a problem folks. 49ers miss a touch down, we've got a problem. If I have some kind of drama in my life, it's not a problem. What it helps me do though when I speak to him is it just shows me, "Wow, this isn't a problem for him. This is just a problem in my mind."

You have to understand what are you thinking about this that's making it a problem. It's only a problem when you start thinking about it. What is it you're thinking about it that's making it a problem? With my girlfriend, she needs to look at what are her thoughts about her son's Lyme disease and having him having it. What is she constantly thinking that is creating the emotion that she's feeling.

A lot of people will tell me that, "Well, I'm just thinking the truth. I'm just thinking what's real. I'm just acknowledging his diagnosis." If you're thinking in a way that's causing you pain, it doesn't matter if it's true or if it's not true. It matters what you're choosing to focus on and what you're choosing to think about true or not is the thought serving you.

Then you have to ask yourself the really hard question which, of course, I asked her is, "Okay, so your circumstance is your son has Lyme disease. How do you want to feel as you go through this with him? How do you want to feel as you deal with this? You get to decide and what feeling do you think will best serve you as you go through this process."

For example, if I'm dealing with one of my students being really upset with me, the reason that that's a problem for me is because of what I make it mean about me and what I make it mean about my relationship with her. What I make it mean about me as a person. You need to be really careful that you pay attention and make sure those thoughts are conscious. Then you need to ask yourself, "How do you want to feel?"

For me, I want to feel compassion and love and openness. I don't want to feel defensive and righteous and justified. I want to feel I'm understanding and open without trying to feel. I want to be able to feel compassion, but I don't want to feel responsible for how someone else is feeling. That's really important for me to ask that question.

Another really good question is who do you want to be as you go through this. That's what I ask my girlfriend. I said, "Who do you want to be as a mother? Who do you want to be as a woman? Who do you want to be as kind of the caretaker of your child and his diagnosis? Who do you want to be through that process? Do you want to be

upset and worried and wringing your hands and frustrated and scared feeling like a victim and really trying to hold in all the fear that you're experiencing when it comes to your child? Or do you want to be someone that acknowledges how she feels in terms of the worry and fear, but then also does the work to go to the place where you can be determined and positive and hopeful?"

It was really interesting for us to kind of have that conversation. I explained to her, I said, "You're arguing with reality." That was one of the things that I had learned from Byron Katie is that when you argue with reality, you lose but only 100% at the time. If you're arguing with the reality of a diagnosis and you think something has gone terribly wrong and they shouldn't have happened to us and they shouldn't be happening to him, there really is no upside to that. There really is no place to be in that space where you can be creative and wise, because you're trying to win a battle that's unwinnable which creates a lot of resistance.

Just notice, if you're in an argument that you can win, if you're arguing with something like, "My son shouldn't have gotten Lyme disease." Or, "This person shouldn't be upset with me." Or, "This person should change how they feel." That person feels the way they do. Your son has Lyme disease. Arguing with it is not helping anything. It's certainly creating more tension and resistance than is necessary.

Notice, if you are in a space of desperation in an attempt to fix something, this is where you get into trouble. For me, this is where I get in to people pleasing and self-sacrificing and trying to make things better at my own expense. Notice that if you're ... Like with my girlfriend, her just trying to fix it, trying to make it better in desperation coming from that place of desperation and hopelessness and stabbing in the dark trying to fix, trying to fix.

The reason we want to fix it is because we don't want to feel what we're feeling. We don't want to feel that resistant. We don't want to feel disappointed. We don't want to feel scared. We are trying to fix that external world to change how we feel. What we can do instead is just notice the thoughts we are having that are creating the emotions

that we're having. Most of the time, when we are feeling that way, it's because we're identifying ourselves as a victim.

We're saying "this happened to me, poor me" and we're usually blaming some kind of perpetrator. This big bad thing that's happening. Or this big bad person. We make them into the villain and us into the victim. We do that with circumstances and we do that with people. I think when I was feeling really angry, I think I was feeling like a victim. I was like feeling sorry for myself. Really, that's what was causing all that fear and that worry about abandonment. I could have been in that space of pure empowerment, because my thoughts had kind of gone off the rails. I needed to regroup to get back to it.

Here's the power in this you guys. When you can look at a circumstance outside of yourself and see that that circumstance is neutral, like really see it. Like your son having Lyme disease, in and of itself isn't bad, isn't good, isn't anything. It's just neutral. It's what you make it mean. It's what he makes it mean that will determine ultimately what the experience is of it.

I know for some people, they're like, "Whoa, that's not a very compassionate way of looking at it." I think the opposite is true. I think when you can feel empowered by what you do have control over, that's where you make the biggest difference in your life. I can't control that my student is upset with me, but I can control how I respond and how I feel and how I show up in that situation. That is really helpful, because I can't control this other person and I can't change that. Just like my friend can't change that her son has Lyme disease and that can leave us feeling very disempowered and out of control, but when we do focus on what we can control, that puts us back in that driver seat.

One of the thoughts that I've shared with you all before that's really powerful for me to remember is what's meant to happen does. It was always going to happen this way. I tried to share that with my girlfriend and say, "If you knew that it was always going to be this way, you think something has gone terribly wrong?" The reason why you think something has gone terribly wrong is because you had this vision of how it was supposed to be.

What if you could just go to this place, like what if it was always going to go down this way like nothing went wrong? As Byron Katie would say, this is just the way of it. How would you approach it differently? How would you show up differently? If you knew that this is how it was always going to be, it was always meant to happen that way.

One of the examples I like to use sometimes is one time I went zip lining. In fact, I took my master coaches and we all went zip lining. I was standing literally on the top of a redwood tree and it was moving and I was flipping out and feeling very anxious and very vulnerable and kind of upset. One of the other master coaches was upset too, but she was funny. She was just crying but she's like, "Oh no, I'm fine. I'm just crying. I'm just crying."

I think what was happening is the tree was moving and the zip line was moving and I kept thinking that something was going wrong and that we were all going to die. The guy that was working there was like, "No, no, no. This is how it's supposed to be. The tree does move and the zip line does shake like that. That is supposed to be happening. Nothing has gone wrong here. Everything is safe. This is how it's supposed to be. This is how it always is."

I remember like having this moment and like, "Oh, this is how it's supposed to be." This is how it always is in life. There's always that unexpected "bad thing" that happens and we always resist it, right? "Oh, I don't want anyone to be upset with me. Oh, I don't want to be mad at anybody else. Oh, I don't want any kind of diagnosis. I don't want anything to happen like this." Wait a minute, we didn't come to the planet for easy street. I know that for sure. There's a whole lot of obstacles that we're going to run into and those obstacles are part of the deal. They're supposed to happen. They're part of the process.

When I'm faced with these challenges, when I remind myself, "Oh, it was always going to be this way." Then I get right out of regret. I get right out of resentment. I get right into the present moment. This is supposed to be happening. This is this moment that I'm supposed to be experiencing. When I drop into it like that, even if it's, "a bad thing," then I can find so much more creativity, compassion, wisdom in that moment. This is normal.

Another time, I went to watch one of my girlfriend's son's play lacrosse. My sons have always played soccer. We went to this lacrosse game and they literally have weapons in their hand and they're like hitting each other with these sticks. I'm alarmed. I'm like, "What is going on? Why are they hitting each other with sticks? This doesn't seem right at all." Everybody else is like, "Oh no, this is normal. This is okay. This is no problem."

From my perspective, nobody should be hitting someone else with a stick like that. In their perspective, "Oh no, this is normal. This is happening. This is part of the deal." Yes it hurts when you get hit with a stick, but it's part of the game. It's part of the game of lacrosse. Even though I'm like, "Why would anyone want to play a game where there'd be sticks that would be in your face?" It's part of the deal. They know going in that there's a high chance that they're going to get hit with a stick.

That's kind of how our life is too. There's a high chance that you're all going to get hit with a stick in the face. It's part of the deal. If every time we get hit in the face with the stick, we think something has gone terribly wrong and we were very dramatic about it and we're very upset about it. Then we're going to end up in a different place.

Then, if we're like, "Oh, yeah, I got hit with a stick today." Even just thinking about this right now, I'm thinking about my day, kind of when I started this podcast, it was like, "Hi everybody. I need a hug." Even now as I'm talking about this and reminding myself, "Oh yeah, sometimes I don't think I should get hit in the face with a stick, but I do. It's part of the deal. It's part of the game." I want to be in the game. I don't want to be sitting on the sidelines. I want to be in the game. Sometimes, I'm the one with the stick and sometimes someone else is one with the stick, but it's okay. It's part of the deal. It's part of the game.

Here are some questions that I think are helpful. What does this situation offer me? When I think about this situation where I was really angry about something happening or I think about this situation with my student being upset about with me or if I think about this situation with my friend and her son having Lyme disease, what does this situation offer me? What is the opportunity here? What am I

being offered in terms of what can I learn, how can I use this to make me stronger? How can I use this situation?

Some of you may be like, "Oh come on already." What is the alternative to looking at it? It has nothing to offer me. There's nothing good about this. There's no opportunity here, then you're just stuck at the effect of it. I have found that that is not useful for me in my life anyway.

Another great question is how can I show up for this. How can I show up? I want to show up in my life in this situation. How can I show up when my son has a diagnosis? How can I show up when my account gets closed down and they won't let me access my bank account because they think I'm a fraud even though I've been in business with them for 10 years? Just a little side note, the way that I showed up was not useful.

Me, scolding the bank employees about how their institution's safeguards are making me feel, fell on deaf ears. It wasn't useful and my sense of self importance and everyone should be working around the clock to make sure this doesn't ever happen again to me because it's such an inconvenience. It was not useful. If I was able to approach that situation more like what does this offer me and really asked myself how do I want to show up, I would not have said, "Be sarcastic and defiant with the bank employee. That will definitely get you what you want."

I'm like slicing judgments at them and being upset with them about how they're running their bank. They're just at work trying to have a good day. They're not really concerned that I don't have access to my money. They're trying to explain their policy and why it is the way it is. It really is in place to protect me and everyone else at the bank. That's kind of their day and I'm with my self-importance just really not showing up the way that I would have liked to show up especially as I'm describing it to you now.

Another question that I love to ask is what feels most like love. What feels less like fear and more like love. Think about that if I would have asked myself that question before I called the bank. What feels most like love right now? When I ask the question, I consider it for myself

like, "Was it loving for me to get on the phone with the bank people and express my dissatisfaction and to kind of vent that out? Did I serve myself there? Was that the way to get the result I wanted? Did that solve the problem?" No. Absolutely not.

It certainly didn't feel like love. It felt most like fear and arrogance. It didn't serve any end game at all. It's so funny because the bank called me today and it's still blocked. They're still having issues with trying to figure out if we're running a drug cartel I guess. I don't know, or some scam or whatever. I don't know what they're thinking, but when they called today, I was in a totally different space. I think I was like, "Hey, we really want to get this working for you. We're really sorry this is such an inconvenience and I just want to let you know that the reason that this is in place is really because of this, this, and this." I was like, "No worries. It's all good. It's all fine." I was just in such a better space since I had time to process and what was going on in my mind.

Here's the thing that I want to share with you. You're going to get hit in the face with a stick. The zip line is going to shake. It doesn't mean something has gone wrong. It means that you're a human being on the planet and this is what happens in life. You get to decide how you want to show up for those things. You can't decide what happens to you unfortunately, but you get to decide how you will respond, what you will think, how you will show up and what you will take from that experience to use in your life to become the person that you want to be.

As I leave you all today, I just want to say that, first of all, thank you for being there and listening. I feel amazingly better after having talked to you. I feel like I've been talking with a good friend on the phone, but I just also want to share that I think everything in our life can be used for goodness. It can be used for love. My friend can show up for her son who has Lyme disease in the most deepest, profoundest loving way. Maybe more than she could, had he not had it. She can do what feels like love to her. She can fuel all of her actions with love and she can, what I call my ...

I was talking to my master coaches this weekend and I said, "You got to be really careful with that mental hygiene. You got to make sure

that brain hygiene is up and really you're having to look at those thoughts and keeping it clean and doing all that preventative medicine on your brain to make sure those thoughts are really being managed and thought on purpose." I want to recommend that to all of you no matter what's going on in your life. I know for some of you, you're getting repeatedly hit in the face with a stick. You can't maybe stop that from happening right now, but you can decide what you're going to make it mean and how you're going to react.

I want to suggest that reacting with love and compassion is available to you. It always is. You can't control what happens to you, but you can control how you respond to it and how you think about it. That's all for now you all. I look forward to talking to you all next week. Take care everyone. Bye-bye.

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