

Ep #88: So What?



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.

Holy cow, you guys. Episode 88. We are getting so close to the big 100. Hey, so, we still have a few spots left for December 5th if you want to come spend the day with me and really dive into everything I teach you on the podcast and have a chance to be coached by me, have a chance to see this all live and in person. Here's what happens when people come to my in-person training that want to become coaches and want to really dive into this work for six days, is they come and meet me in person and we do the work in person. They're like oh my God, it's so different in person than it is ... I learned so much on the podcast but it's totally different when it's in person. And you can really see me at my craft when we're in person and we're really going through the process of coaching. It's very different than something I can teach you just chatting with you on the podcast. I want to invite you to come to the beautiful hotel in Palo Alto, California. It's very reasonably priced and I would love to have you come. Go to thelifecoachschool.com/december5th and you can read more about it.

Today I'm going to talk to you about so what. One of the things that when I'm teaching new coaches to do is when a client gives them a thought, one of the things that they can say is so what, or so what are you making that mean. This is true with facts and this is true with thinking to do what we call inquiry. Now one of the things that's important for you to remember about your brain is that it's a very sophisticated device that can take a lot of input in. If you think about the amount of input that is in the world, there's no way that your brain can be constantly processing that all all of the time. What your brain does is it filters out what's important. It notices only what's important.

For example, if I look out right now, I'm talking to you guys in my office, and if I look out the window I can see a lot of cars. Now my brain isn't paying attention to what brand every car is. It's not paying attention to what color. It's not paying attention to if there's anyone in the cars. Now, if I were a car dealer and my brain was trained to look at cars in that way, I probably would notice all of the brands of cars and the colors. If I were a CIA agent and I was trained to see movement and people in cars, that's probably what I would notice. If I see a lot of people I'd probably notice the outfits that they were wearing because I've been trained to look at that, whereas my husband wouldn't notice at all.

What you tell your brain is important is what it looks for. It deletes everything else. It doesn't spend a lot of time processing it as important. Now there are lots of theories, which I find fascinating that you can remember things that you weren't even paying attention to later. They just aren't being processed through your brain, which I think is super cool, the idea that you could be hypnotized and go back and notice things that you didn't notice before because they weren't as important to you.

Why does any of this matter? I was just reading when I was preparing for this session with you guys. I was reading about a study they did which I think is so awesome where they had people in college...they had them go up to the counter and ask for something. The guy behind the counter said, "Yeah, just a minute," and bent down to get whatever it is they were asking for. I think it was a sheet of paper. They bent down to get it, and a different person stood up and gave them the paper, the form that they wanted.

Most people did not even notice that it was a different person, and the person looked completely different. They didn't even try and make them look the same. I think that's so fascinating. The brain doesn't think that it's important. Now, if they had on a really cute outfit and the outfit changed, I might notice that. If someone noticed that they looked like someone they knew, they might notice that. If the brain finds it important and significant, it's going to notice. But most of us don't make those things important and significant because our brain would just be exhausted all the time if everything were important and significant. We have to decide what's important and significant, and that's what our brain will notice.

The reason why this matters is because most of us don't take the conscious time to tell our brain what is significant and important to look for. We don't even do that consciously. Our brain really has to be told this is what matters. If it's not told, then it will just go by default. For example, if you have some intact belief systems that you haven't chosen consciously, your brain will continually look for evidence to prove those true. For example, I'm working with a lot of clients right now in my Stop Overeating Masterclass, which by the way is freaking amazing. Best course I've ever taught I think by far, and most amazing group of people going through that that are losing weight and rocking their lives. I'm so proud of this program.

Anyway, a lot of them have these belief systems that they can't lose weight so their brain is constantly looking for evidence, constantly seeking and finding evidence that they can't lose weight because that's basically a belief system that the brain wants to prove true. A lot of them believe that they're failures and that they won't be able to succeed in this area of their life, so they're constantly finding evidence for that to be true and seeking it.

Now, there's much evidence to the contrary but they don't see that evidence because their brain is being told to filter it out. Let me break this down for you. If we're about to walk into a room together and I say to you, "This is the most beautiful room. You're going to love this room. You're going to love how gorgeous it is," and I walk in there being set up that way, my brain will be looking for the beauty. It will be looking for what's beautiful. Now that's if I believe that the room is beautiful.

Now if someone says, "This is the most beautiful room," and my brain goes, "Mm-hmm (affirmative), I'll be the judge of that," then it's going to be looking for

the opposite. When I tell someone, "You can absolutely lose weight. You can absolutely weight 125 pounds," and they doubt me, they're going to be looking for evidence that that isn't true instead of looking for evidence that it is true. You have to be aware of what your brain is looking for. What it is trained to see? Have you decided that consciously and on purpose or is it on default mode from somewhere in your childhood?

Now, the reason why this matters so much is I'm going to bring you back to the main concept of this entire podcast and what I'm constantly teaching, is that our thoughts create our feelings, and our feelings are really the most important things to us that matter. Our goal in life is to feel less pain and to feel more comfort. That's how we have evolved to survive. We seek pleasure and we seek comfort. That's how we survive. That's why we reproduce, because we're looking for pleasure. That's why we eat, to take away the discomfort of hunger and to provide the pleasure and the satiation from food. We are constantly seeking towards pleasure and comfort, and that has been what has helped us evolve. It's a beautiful system.

We have to make sure that we have trained ourselves to create those feelings that we want. If our thoughts are constantly creating our feelings, we need to be aware of what we're choosing to think. Most of us have no idea what we're choosing to think. We're just feeling whatever we're feeling on default. Any circumstance that happens to you in your life, anything that you are confronted with, anything that you face in your life is going to cause you to have a thought about it. What determines what thought you have about it? The way your brain filters information. The way your brain filters information will provide you with a conclusion, an expectation and a thought, and therefore your feelings.

This is why a lot of people feel the same way a lot of the time because they're constantly looking for those thoughts and of evidence for those thoughts that make them feel the same way. The brain likes to be efficient. It likes to think the same thoughts over and over and over and be efficient. The brain doesn't care if they make you feel good or bad. The brain just wants to be good at what it does.

That's where we come in and we get to decide, okay, if my brain doesn't care what it thinks, I get to decide what it's going to think. I want to feel more pleasure than pain. I'm going to work on my brain in a way that will create more pleasure in my thinking than pain. I'm no longer in survival mode, so many of the thoughts that I choose to think can change the complete trajectory of my experience on the planet.

When you are doing any work on yourself, one of the most powerful things you can ask yourself is so what. Now when you ask yourself that, that's going to reveal your thinking. I'm going to share with you guys a story that I recently experienced personally and how I coached myself on it. I have a really good friend. Most of you guys know. I talk about her all the time. We have separate

friends from each other. She has a group of friends that are her friends that aren't really my friends and I have a group of friends that are my friends that aren't really her friends, but she and I are very good friends.

For some reason ... I shouldn't say some reason. When we are together, my friends are not crazy about her. They don't want to spend a lot of time with her, most of my friends. It's really interesting. Her friends aren't crazy about me. Recently, we spent some time with her friends. We went to three parties in a row and we all spent some time together. I got the impression that we were all getting along. I'm like oh my gosh, look, her friends like me. We can all get along. But I noticed that when I'm with them that I try to get them to like me, which of course makes me weird and creepy when I'm around them. I always don't feel quite at home and settled in because I have this preconceived notion that they're not going to like me.

I started having this thought, oh yeah, they like me now. I started seeing all this evidence for that in my brain. Well, I just went out to dinner with my girlfriend and she told me that she had gone to a party where all these friends were there and they'd kind of cornered her at the party and told her that they didn't like the way she acted when she was around me, which of course I interpreted that they don't like me and so they certainly don't like her around me.

I immediately started spinning the story in my mind. Now, if I would have stopped there and coached myself, I would have saved myself a lot of misery, but I didn't because I wasn't even aware of what I was doing. I started spinning this story about how other people don't like me and I'm weird when I try and get people to like me. I'm too much and I just need to settle down. I have too much energy and I'm too over the top. I'm too ambitious. I talk about my work and I'm too excited about it. People just want to chill. I'm so intense. When am I going to figure this out? You would think I would have figured this out by now. Why can't I just relax? On and on and on I spun myself this story.

Now, if I back it up, and when I started to feel terrible about this, and when I back it up to the original thought, it is my girlfriend's friends said they don't like her when she's around me. At that point I need to say to myself, "So what? So what am I making that mean?" Now this is why this is so important. That in and of itself may be a fact. My girlfriend's friends may not like her when she's around me. That's fact. That's in and of itself. Then I can ask myself, "So what?" Immediately just asking myself completely sets me free. Because it makes me realize that everything after that question is the story I'm spinning. It's not reality.

Here's where I go immediately. It's okay for people not to like me. It's okay for people not to like my girlfriend. It's okay for people to tell other people that they don't like them. It's fine. All of it's great. I don't need to make that mean anything about me. I certainly don't need to use that information to make myself feel badly. I can say, "So what? It's okay." I always go to that you can be the juiciest peach

on the vine and there's always going to be someone that doesn't like peaches. That's okay. Not everybody has to like peaches. Certainly not everyone likes me. I'm not your normal everyday run of the mill person. I'm a little over the top. I'm a little intense. I want to talk about things that matter in a really intense way. I want to ask you lots of questions about yourself. You're either going to love that about me and want to hang out, and we'll get together, or you're going to think I'm way over the top and too intense, and you're not going to want any part of it.

The thing that was so interesting about this story for me is that these people weren't even talking about me. They were talking about my girlfriend and how she behaved. I was feeling upset about who I am and making all this evidence that I have for these belief systems about me being too much, that I was looking for evidence and finding. That's true for all of us. When you are upset, tell yourself your story and then say to yourself, "So what?" Let yourself tell it dramatically. "There was these people and they totally don't like my friend when she hangs out with me. That's really upsetting and I totally don't like it that they said that and I wish they would just be quiet. I hate them and they're such bitches. I wish that they would just be nice. Why do they have to say stuff like that?" That's what my brain does.

Then just say, "Okay, so they don't like her when she's around you. So what? So what are you making that mean?" It immediately sets me free because then I have access to my own brain and I see that it's all optional. Now, the other things that's really important about asking this question, "So what?" is then you can start to see the themes that come up. It's amazing how you can take five very different situations and make them all mean the same thing. I have this situation with my friend who her girlfriends told her that, so I made that mean I'm too much, I'm too intense. I had somebody tell me that I talk too fast and I made that mean that I'm too intense. I have situations where I'm talking to a group of people and we're all hanging out as friends, and then they get up and go somewhere else. I make that mean that I'm too intense.

It doesn't matter like the situations are all very different, but I make them all mean that I'm too intense, which is so interesting. I have so much evidence to the contrary. I have so many people that love my work and love what I do and love hanging out with me. I have tons of friends and people who always tell me all the time, "I love how ambitious you are and intense you are, and how you love talking about this stuff and you're so passionate about it." But I'm always looking for evidence that I'm too intense and too much and I have to be really aware of that. I can use so many different things to make that theme come true.

There's so many of you guys that have those same things as well. You can make very different situations with very different people all mean the same thing. A lot of you have these ideas that you're a failure, so you look for evidence and find evidence for failure in everything that you do. Some of you believe that you're winners and you look for evidence that you're a winner in everything that you do.

Even when there's a lot of evidence to the contrary, you're able to see what you want to see.

I think that there is so much power in, first of all, becoming aware of your belief systems and noticing what you're finding evidence for. The best way that I know how to do it is any situation, any situation that seems upsetting to you, ask yourself, "So what? What are you making it mean?" You're probably making it mean some negative theme that you have had in your life. The brain wants to explain things. It wants to prove itself true. It eliminates anything that doesn't support its hypothesis, which is really fascinating, because if any of you guys did debate in high school or in college, I think this is such a fascinating process of understanding how the mind can work.

On the debate team you have to argue a case and find evidence for a case on something that you may or may not believe in, and you argue case. Then oftentimes the teacher will have you then argue the opposite of that same case. You're debating pro life and then they'll have you come in and debate pro choice. You have to have equal evidence and equal passion and equal effort to be able to argue both sides of it. Most of us never consider the other side. We never argue the other side. We only see and find evidence for what we want to prove true.

I notice this with myself even when I'm doing research for classes that I'm teaching. I have a hypothesis. I have a theory and I only really want to read the evidence that's going to support my theory and support my hypothesis. It's challenging for me to read the stuff that doesn't prove that. It seems to complicate it. I think that's a beautiful thing when we're seeking evidence for things that make us feel empowered and make us feel positive, but most of us have a lot of hypothesis in our mind that are creating evidence for something that is negative and not true in our lives, and it's bringing us a result that we don't want.

I can look at my life and tell a story about someone who's had a really tough go of it. I was born into a family with two parents who were very volatile. Neither one of them were ready for marriage. They hadn't found a real clear way to love each other. Then I was six years old. Our house burned down two days before Christmas. My dad, who was an alcoholic, had been cheating on my mom and their marriage was already in shambles. Then a log rolled out of our fire onto a Afghan rug and the whole house went up in flames, all of our presents, our big beautiful house. I was six years old. I was in kindergarten. I remember sitting in the car watching the fire trucks spray water on our house as it completely burned to the ground. Shortly after that, my parents got a divorce. It was very volatile, lots of problems with that. My mother was beyond depressed. She moved us to California away from all of my friends and away from anything that I knew, and proceeded to go into a deep dark depression for about three years.

We had a nanny that was taking care of us but she was pretty volatile herself. My brother was having a lot of emotional and learning disability issues, which I found out later because he had been dealing with sexual abuse. I was extremely lonely and my mom was extremely unavailable. I missed my dad and my dad would make appointments to see us all the time but he would say, "I'm going to come see you and then he wouldn't show up." Then sometimes he would show up and just take my brother. I really struggled. My mom was in bed most of the time. I really struggled to find any sense of myself and any sense of happiness. I had a really tumultuous childhood, lots of problems, lots and lots of loneliness. Never really had any connection with either one of my parents, and therefore went through my teenage years doing a lot of drugs and a lot of lying and having a lot of sex, and really abusing myself and struggling with my weight, and dealing with crippling anxiety and not knowing how to even begin to process any of it.

My parents were very unavailable. My mom, she started dating one of my friends' dads. They fell in love with each other and then started traveling. They would go up to Lake Tahoe and leave us alone all the time. We just got into more and more trouble. I had very little direction and just a lot of emotional pain that I didn't know how to deal with. When I asked my mom if I could go to therapy, she spent three days crying about how I needed to be the one that was together and I couldn't fall apart because my brother was such a mess. He was a drug addict. Really just asking her for therapy was a put down to her as a mother. I ended up going into therapy. I had a Freudian therapist who just really had me just sitting there talking to myself. I really didn't make any progress there at all. I was dating men that were much older than me and having sex way too soon.

Shortly after that, when it was time for me to go to college, I decided not to go to college, where I was initially going to go, which was away and go to the dorms, because my therapist told me to stay home and keep seeing her, which I did, and then eventually ended up joining a cult. That was my childhood. I could tell that story and that would be accurate to tell that story. Or I could tell the story where I grew up with two parents. My mom was beautiful and kept the most beautiful, lovely house. My dad was fun and funny and a total partier. We had such a good time together, all of the time. All I remember was my dad laughing and teasing me. We had this huge, amazing house that we lived in. Unfortunately, that house burned down but it was okay we ended up moving to sunny California, which is amazing.

My parents got divorced but my dad came and visited quite a bit. I was always so excited when I got to see him. He would come and take me, and whenever my dad came and took me somewhere it was always somewhere fun and exciting. My mom had a really hard time after the divorce, but it didn't matter because I had friends and I loved teaching. In my room I taught all my stuffed animals. I think that's what really developed my independence and my ability to manage my own emotions because I couldn't really lean on anybody at the time. That's what

made me really strong. I got myself into therapy at a really young age and learned so much about myself in therapy.

Then one of the other experiences that I had that was really powerful is that I joined a cult. Most of the people that joined this cult never got out of it but I did. I used all of what I'd learned there and all of the strength that I learned there to really catapult me into this really amazing, strong life that I have now. I wouldn't give anything for a different childhood because I think it created exactly the person I'm meant to be.

What's the difference in me telling those two stories? It's what I'm looking for. It's the evidence. The first thought is I'm a victim. I had a horrible childhood. I'm a survivor. That's the original story. Then if you look at the other way I tell the story, it's like I'm strong and empowered and my childhood served me, and it gave me everything I needed to be able to have this wonderful life I have now. The same is true, when you look at everything's happening in your childhood, ask yourself, "So what?" Look at what's happened in your marriage, in your life, with your kids, everything. So what? What are you making it mean?

You get to tell the story. That's the one gift you have as a human being. You get to make up the meaning you give to everything. You can make it mean something wonderful and amazing or you can make it mean something terrible and awful. You can make the house that you're living in now a complete castle and a cherished gift, or you can make it mean something horrible and awful and painful. The only difference is what you decide to focus on.

No matter what's going on in your life, I encourage you to ask yourself: So what? Anything that's happened to you in your life: So what? What are you making it mean and what do you want to make it mean? That's completely and totally up to you. Do it on the little things in your day. So you're late to work. So what? You got stuck in traffic. So what? You gained three pounds. So what? What are you making it mean and what do you want to make it mean? You get to tell your brain what you want it to filter out and what you want it to focus on. You want to make sure that you're doing that consciously. All right, everybody. Do this work. It's totally worth it. So what? Talk to you guys next week. Bye bye.

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