

Ep #91: Interview with Andrea Hanson



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

Welcome to The Life Coach School podcast where it's Welcome to the Life Coach School Podcast where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching and now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Brooke: Hey everyone, how are you guys doing? I'm so excited today to share one of my most amazing master coaches colleagues and friends, Andrea Hanson. She is such a pro at everything she does. When I teach master coach training, the master coaches have to turn in projects to me and hers was so unbelievably excellent and amazing. I am still thinking about it years later.

She's just written a great book called "The Inside Guide to MS." She works specifically with people who have the diagnosis of MS, but she's also fantastic with anybody who has a diagnosis that they're grappling with and having any kind of challenges with. You can find out more about her at andrea-hanson-coaching.com I'll put it in the show notes.

This interview...I'm recording this intro after I've done the interview. The interview is just fantastic. I think that you will see how incredibly smart and amazingly compassionate Andrea is in all of her work. It's really a treat to have her on the show. Please enjoy.

Hey Andrea! So happy to have you on the podcast today. We're going to start. I've given an intro already and told everyone how fabulous you are so no pressure. One of the things that I'd like to start with is just having you introduce yourself a little bit and tell us a little bit about your story and how you came to be a coach and what you're up to now.

Andrea: Alright, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when I was very young. It was in the year 2000 I was 22 years old. When I got the diagnosis, I happened to be in graduate school. I almost immediately had the, "I can't be in school when I have MS. I have to take care of myself.

I've got to go out and to earn good money and get insurance," and this type A... I've got this, took over.

I left my program and I went to go work in finance, business management. Which at the time in 2000 there was a big bubble and that was what was very, had a lot of money. I went to work and I got a really good paycheck and on paper, I looked fantastic. I had a great job, I had a great income. I was 22, I was living in uptown Dallas and hanging out with my friends and going out all the time and all this kind of stuff.

The thing is, on the inside it was a very different story, I was a little bit miserable. I actually was having a lot of relapses and I was feeling a lot of just guilt about having MS and fear about what it meant for my future 10, 15, 20 years down the road. What was my life going to look like? What my ability is going to look like?

Brooke: Let me interrupt you for just a second because I know there's probably some people that are listening that have no idea what MS even is. Maybe we could just do like a little short description of what it meant when you got that diagnosis, did you know what it was, what did you learn about it?

Andrea: Sure, when I got the diagnosis I had no idea what it was. I went in because I was losing eye sight and I had thought it was detached retina. I don't know why it's not like I really understood but that was either. I had no idea and it turns out what MS is, it's an Autoimmune immune disorder where your immune system when it gets excited, when it feels like it has to fight an infection, it goes way overboard.

When it goes way overboard, what it does is it starts to attack the body instead of attacking what other pathogens are in your body causing the illness. When it attacks your body for MS specifically, it attacks your neurons and it attacks what's called myelin on your neurons. It's that

lubricant that makes your neurons fire really quickly. It's why when you think about walking and you walk it happens immediately it's because of that myelin.

When you have multiple sclerosis, your immune system is attacking that myelin and so it slows down that process. Anything in your central nervous system is affected with multiple sclerosis.

Brooke: Why was it affecting your eyes? How did that work?

Andrea: It can affect you with your nerves and so with your eye you can get, it's very common to get something called optic neuritis. Which means that the nerve in your eye is inflamed. When the nerve in your eye is inflamed, your eyesight gets fuzzy or shuts down.

Brooke: Got it okay. When you went into the doctor how did they test for it? How did they know you had it?

Andrea: It's something that I went in because coincidentally I had poked myself in the eye, which is why I thought I had detached my retina...which by the way is not a great thing to have either it's not like a detached retina is awesome by any means. I just went into a regular doctor and she looked at my eye and my story of "I poked myself in the eye" and now I can't see to just a normal ophthalmologist wasn't adding up.

She's like, "I don't see, you certainly didn't detach your retina. I don't see anything in there." She called in a neuro-ophthalmologists and the neuro-ophthalmologists was the one who made the connection and then called in ... I went to down the line of all these specialists when I was diagnosed and ended up with my MS specialist who knew immediately what it was.

Brooke: You got this diagnosis and one of the things I want to talk about later because I think this can be relate-able to a lot of people. I'm sure we have people that have MS that are listening, people that know people that have it. Also I think

this can apply in your journey and what you teach can apply to any diagnosis, any unexpected diagnosis that comes in to your life and how you manage it. Go ahead and tell us the rest of your story, you're good on paper?

Andrea: Great on paper, I'm crappy on the inside.

Brooke: I think a lot of us can relate to that.

Andrea: Yeah absolutely and I thought as I think also people can relate to. I thought in order to feel better I had to change my circumstances. I was looking at what I was doing I certainly didn't love working in finance. It wasn't my wheelhouse. I was just doing it for the money. I was thinking, "Okay well maybe if I change my job things will get better." Maybe if I stop dating and get more of a serious relationship then things will get better.

I looked at everything that was going on and I was thinking I feel really crappy because my circumstances aren't quite right yet so let's change some of those. I got one of these books that basically is supposed to help you learn your passion. Learn what it is you're supposed to do with your life because if I had just found my passion I would be happy.

I realized it was a book by a coach and I realized that that's what I wanted to do. It just really lit something up inside of me and what it really taught me was these ideas that if you're aware of what you're thinking you can change how you're feeling, you can change the direction, you can change the results.

One of the books I went to very quickly, I had the Byron Katie and I had the Eckhart Tolle and then I found your book as well going into the self-coaching 101 model. I started to really think about it and realized "wait a second, if I change how I'm thinking about my job, if I change how I'm thinking about my dating situation, if I change what I'm thinking my disease, I feel differently."

It's not like that stuff happened overnight, but it really sparked something. Yes, I did end up going into a different field. I did end up going back and finishing my master's program which was human development, something that's very far from finance. I really started to practice that awareness of what I was thinking and how I was feeling and it just opened that door to understanding that I can change how I feel by changing what I'm thinking

Understanding that when I feel things like guilty because I have to opt out of an engagement because I was tired and I knew it was too much. That guilt wasn't caused by my MS. The feeling afraid of what my future was going to look like because a disease will progress with you that fear was not caused by my disease.

Brooke: I think this is a huge point, I think this is something that we can all conceptualize but putting into practice is a lot more challenging. Let's create the scenario where we're relating these ideas of thoughts. You get a diagnosis, for me I work with a lot of weight loss clients. A lot of what I deal with is pre-diabetic, infant resistance diabetic diagnosis.

There's that moment where what we call the circumstance, the fact is the diagnosis you have MS. Then there's this magical part where you get to decide what you're going to make that mean. You're going to decide what you think about that. You're going to decide now that you have this diagnosis, which is factual and you can't really debate it although we try sometimes.

Now what are we going to do about it and what we think about it, what we feel about it, what we do about it determines our experience with that disease. That's why there are so many people that have MS that have completely different experiences of having it. It's the same with diabetes. It's the same with obesity. It's the same with cancer.

Can you speak to that process of maybe getting the diagnosis or even having it and really thinking about how you think about it?

Andrea: I would say even we need to back it up because you get your diagnosis but the diagnosis is given to you not in the framework of, "Here's your diagnosis you can think what you want, you can feel how you want." This is not how a diagnosis is handed to you.

Brooke: Or how you think about this and what you do next really matters.

Andrea: Exactly, I'm going to have my expectations ... you don't get any of that. You get, "Here's your diagnosis. Be afraid because this is all the crap that can happen." It's almost this shock and trying to, because they want you to ... they have whatever healthcare worker you're working that handing your diagnosis... they want the best for you. They don't necessarily understand that how you think about it is going to affect your reality. They just want you to do what they know will help you and will help your diagnosis.

Sometimes it's almost like this shock and all you must be very afraid so you have to do all these things or else your MS will or your diabetes, or your cancer will take over. It's quite often from the get go discussed as something that is in control and something that can control how you're feeling and your experience in life.

Your very first step you have to really know to separate from that. That's what it took me 9 years to do to realize, "Wait a second, I don't have to take on what they think. I don't have to take on their expectations of what's going to happen to me. I can decide and I can decide what I think about this." Just because they think I will suffer from this diagnosis, it doesn't mean I will suffer from this diagnosis.

That was a huge thing to realize and it can be hard because when you're working especially with healthcare

professionals when you're getting a diagnosis they are the authority figure. A lot of times when you're in that position especially when you're just getting diagnosed and you're scared and you don't know or you feel like me you don't really know even what they're talking about.

All of a sudden you feel like this little kid, "okay just tell what this means, tell me what's going on." A lot of times what it means to them is that it's going to control how you feel emotionally. There has to be that conscious choice to understand and to practice that having a diagnosis does not mean you have to feel a certain way.

Brooke: Here's the thing that I think is interesting about a diagnosis and of course you guys if you don't have a diagnosis of anything, you can apply it to anything. Someone tells you that they don't want to be your friend anymore, you get fired from a job, any life event that you don't have control over that you're not planning on. You can ask yourself this question you could say, "Okay this is the reality of my life right now, but I get to decide what I want to think about it," and I think that, that decision in that moment changes everything.

We can't control that you have the diagnosis, but we can control whether you make it worse with your thinking or better with your thinking that's so important. Once you discovered all of these coaching material, you started learning the power of your mind. It really helped you with, it sounds like, with the MS and then what?

Andrea: Then I went back and I finished my degree and I started to transition out of that finance role because I knew even with getting very clear on the fact that it's not making me feel anything, I still realized once I had that clarity that it wasn't what I wanted. I made that choice to transition away from it and I went towards coaching. I opened my business and I went and I learned from you.

I went first to weight coaching and then into master coaching and I had the pleasure of working with the National MS Society for a little bit. They had a program where they were doing career coaching. I partnered with them and did that and I was also just getting more and more clients with multiple sclerosis and not so much with weight coaching. I watched my business transition and now I'm working a lot with people who have a diagnosis.

I am helping them to understand that thought model and understand how much control they have over their symptoms with their diagnosis and how their diagnosis progresses and how their diagnosis affects them on a daily basis. It really helps just to get them back to really just living their life instead of living their diagnosis because a lot of times we feel like if we have a big change like this any big change it has to consume us. We have to think about it and we really don't.

Brooke: Give me what are the top 3 worst symptoms you think that come along with MS?

Andrea: Gosh, so there's 3 basic ways that MS can affect you. It can affect you with your walking, with your motor ability. Some people not all, by any means, not even most but some people can lose the ability to walk. It can affect things like your, really it's any muscles like your vocal cords.

It can affect speaking, it can also affect you cognitively and that can affect anything from executive functioning, which is planning and understanding "okay I do this first and then I do something next and then I do something" and understanding the ways you go about getting something done and it could be something as simple as making dinner.

It can affect memory, certainly. It can affect being able to recall a word when you're talking. It can affect you sensory wise and so you can be in pain, you can have

stabbing pains, you can have numbness, you can have a lot of people will have a pins and needles kind of feeling.

The central nervous system affects a lot in our bodies and there's a scale of not really doing anything to really affecting to where you're not really able to speak, you're not really able to feel different parts of your body. It can get here but not in most people by any means.

Brooke: The reason I asked you that is because I want to be one of these clients and this is what I can hear people saying it's like, "Listen I have stabbing pain, I could barely walk, I'm having a hard time remembering things and you're telling me that I can just have happy thoughts about this and just think positively and it will all be fine."

How do you speak to clients that come to you that are under a tremendous amount of stress and are feeling really at the mercy of their disease and in many ways those are the circumstances of their life? How do you help someone that's in that space?

Andrea: When there's someone in that space and by the way, I think people don't have to be that severe to still have that same thought of, "How could this possibly be that I can feel this way. How can I not?" It could be that their symptoms are a lot less severe they can still have that same mindset.

What the very, very first thing that needs to happen when I'm working with these people is really getting clear on the difference between your circumstance and what you're thinking about your circumstance. Really getting clear on what the facts are and what you're thinking about those facts.

Just separating those 2 things out can have a huge effect on your stress because yes you have in the circumstances "I have pain in my leg." When you just think about that circumstance "I have pain in my leg," it's a pretty neutral thing, but when people look at their

thoughts about the pain in their leg it's, "MS is awful and it's never going to get better and I can't do anything and this makes me ... People are looking at me, people don't think I'm normal, I can't be normal."

It's all of these thoughts that are very, very painful thoughts that don't necessarily have much to do with the actual pain itself. They're making that actual pain mean all of this stuff about how they can't be a normal person anymore. They can't be accepted anymore. How they're never going to get better that's a big one, it's never going to end.

All of these things, as we know can help you feel or can make you feel helpless. We can quite often...there's this cycle of learned helplessness gets in. When you live with those thoughts you think it's the pain that's doing it, but really it's what you're thinking. Then you start to think like, "What's the use? Why even try? Why even bother to get better nothing is going to work?" You just have this nice little belief system of nothing is going to work, never going to get better and you blame it on the pain.

Once you start looking at those thoughts and working with those and really understanding those and loosening them up so to speak you realize that the pain really is just the pain. By the way there's a whole bunch of things to do to minimize your pain just using your mind and using relaxation techniques and things like that. Just separating those two things out is a massive first step that I do especially when people are really holding on to it.

Brooke: The other thing I've noticed a lot that I think is so fascinating is how much we argue with our pain and we argue with our diagnosis and we argue with the circumstance of our life because we feel they're unfair and they shouldn't be happening to us. "What did I do to have this horrible thing?" All that energy we spend arguing with it and I love what Byron Katie says, she

says, “You can argue with it, but you only lose 100% of the time when you argue with reality.”

There’s this magic that comes with making peace with what you cannot change and I think that gives you so much empowerment to think about really genuinely what you can because there’s a lot of things you can’t change with MS, you can’t change a diagnosis you have it, you can’t change it. There’s a wide range of things that you can with most diagnosis to make that huge difference.

Andrea: Absolutely.

Brooke: I think that’s so important. Tell me. You talked about stress being a huge part of this for people as I can imagine. How do you work with yourself and with your clients when it comes to having a disease and dealing with stress? People that don’t have a disease have a hard time dealing with stress. You have the disease and what are some of the things that you do with your clients?

Andrea: One of them is definitely around kindness because a lot of times I think especially when you’re working with people who like me and like a lot of my clients, they’re professionals, they’re not going to quit their job, they don’t see how they can’t change anything in their life because they’re making an income and quite often a really good income and how can they possibly?

When they’re told to slow down it’s like, “What are you even talking about?” And it gets a bad rap. One of the ways I work with people around stress is understanding how you can slow down without necessarily changing your circumstance. There’s a lot of ways that we can slow down and how we treat ourselves, how much we push ourselves to do something. A lot of times we’re very, very brutal to ourselves about what we should be doing and what it means if we don’t do it.

Just that alone can cause so much stress and all that is, is just how you’re treating yourself. It’s got nothing to do

with what you're doing. That's a big part of it, it's really looking at how you're talking to yourself, the kindness factor. Another big part of it is ...

Brooke: Wait. Before we move on from that, I can just hear people rolling their eyes like, "Listen I have MS, I have to work full-time, I have to support my family this kindness thing is kind of BS." Here's what people don't realize, some of us don't even realize in our own lives is how much when we are constantly rattling negativity in our own brain, how much stress that causes in and of itself.

We'll think "well I have to quit my job so I don't have this stress" when really the stress isn't created by the job. It's created by all of the thinking around it. I think kindness is just taking the thoughts that are so stress producing and putting them in a much more compassionate way and how much stress that can reduce.

It seems like kindness, you know what I mean. I think when people talk about kindness they think it's just like, "Oh it's just such a nice little thing to do." Instead it's no your life really does depend on it. You are how you feel, how strong you feel really does depend on you taking time to be compassionate with yourself.

I really think that's an important, people say, "Yeah, yeah okay I'll be kind. Okay I'll be nice to myself." Then they roll their eyes and they don't actually do it and I just want to make sure that we're making the point that no really, it really matters.

Andrea: You can be sitting in your chair and not doing a think and stress yourself out like crazy.

Brooke: Totally yeah.

Andrea: Just because of what you're thinking in your head and the reason why it stresses you out it's because we can be brutal. When you're so hard on yourself all the time and you're pushing yourself to keep going that is what's

creating the stress it's not what you're doing. It's not your job. You don't have to quit your job. You have to change how you're thinking about your job and thinking about what you should be doing or shouldn't be doing.

Brooke: Ultimately I think people think I think about this idea like the secret, "Oh I'll just think my way to happiness," but really when you change the way you're thinking about your job and your disease, it changes what you do and how you do it. I think people think ... for example if I have a full-time job and I'm making a lot of good money and I'm very successful at my job...what I may hear you saying when you say "be kinder to yourself", think about what you're thinking.

What I may think the effect of that will be is me working less and me being less productive and me not getting as much done. The exact opposite is what I have found to be true. When you remove all the negativity, when you remove all of the garbage that's in the brain you can be much more clear and focused and productive and get so much more done so you're actually more effective.

Andrea: Yes, stress like you said it affects everybody and really it's not anything that you're doing differently because you have MS. It's just there's more at stake because you have MS but when you're stressing out you physically are tenser. It translates to your entire body that's another thing that happens when you change your thinking and you stop and you're being so hard on yourself.

Like actually practice not being hard on yourself. You are relaxed both mentally but also physically and that allows you to do so much more and it helps you when you have some kind of a disease or a chronic illness that affects your body.

Brooke: Yes, absolutely. A good way for anyone thinking about is and he's like, "How do I apply this, how do I apply this? I have a disease I don't know how to apply this." Ask

yourself this question, “Why am I stressed?” And the answer always needs to be, “Because of the way I’m thinking.” When I ask my clients, “Why are you stressed?” The answer is typically, “Well I had a rough day, my job is tough, my disease, I have symptoms, I have things going on,” right? That’s never the correct answer.

Stress is caused and I’m talking about the emotional stress is caused by the way you’re thinking about something. Period. If you remember that then it will be much easier to really pay close attention and apply kindness. That’s such a beautiful way of thinking about it and talking about it.

One of the things that you talk about in your book, which is the “Inside Guide to MS”... is amazing. I’ll definitely link to that in the show notes for those of you who want to check it out. I loved reading it. I thought it was such a fantastic book and I thought that even though I don’t have MS, I learned so much from it. People have said that to me about my weight loss book.

“I don’t even need to lose weight and I learned so much,” and I feel the same way about your book. There’s so many gems of wisdom in there. One of the things you talk about is honesty and how important it is and the title of that chapter was The Truth About Honesty. Talk a little bit about that and why you think that that’s so important.

Andrea: Whenever you’re diagnosed especially but whenever you have that big news that’s unexpected, we can tend to go into denial. On one front, denial is actually a defense mechanism. It helps you process and it’s not a bad thing, but a lot of times what happens is denial is prolonged and it can be in stages. For me, for instance, when I had MS, I immediately went on disease modifying drugs. I immediately did things like working out and looking at my diet.

I immediately put things in place but I was still in denial about what it really meant to have MS. I was in denial about how I wanted to change my life to be healthier. I was in denial about just how afraid I was about my future with MS. I was really, really scared and I went into this mode that a lot of people do which is I just have to keep going because if I keep going, then I don't have time to sit and think about it. I don't have the time to think about how scared I am.

It moves us into this type of denial where like, yeah technically we're doing stuff so we're not completely ignoring the fact that we have MS or a disease, but we're in denial about what we're thinking, we're in denial about how afraid we are. One of the biggest things that I did with my MS is really face what I was thinking, really be honest with myself about what I was thinking about my diagnosis, what I was thinking about my future, what I was making it mean...all of those really scary things.

I was just 100% honest with myself and we feel like if we're not thinking about the fear and we're not thinking about how afraid we are of something, it helps us. It helps us to move forward, it helps us to keep going. Really even just the act of being in denial about something especially when it's 4, 5, 8 years after your diagnosis, that is very stressful and very hurtful to us because it's almost like you're trying to trick your brain.

You're trying to tell your brain that it's not happening but of course you know you have this whole big part that you don't look at but you know it's there. That part of honestly really uncovers it.

Brooke: It's such an amazing point. I hear this a lot from people where they'll say, "Can't you just use the model? Can't you just work on your thoughts to stay in denial about something?" I love what you're saying how it's so important to tell yourself the truth and understand what your truth is and understand what you're thinking. It

doesn't mean that you don't have the option of changing that truth if you want to, but what we're suggesting is covering it up and pretending that it's not there and lying to yourself about it is the opposite of what we're saying.

The example that I gave was of the woman who's like, "I'll just think positively about the pain in my leg, I love pain in my leg. Pain in my leg is wonderful," and that's the opposite of telling yourself the truth. Telling yourself the truth is, "There's pain in my leg and I'm making it mean that this is the end of the world and that my life is over," and really understanding "yes, I'm afraid" but not making fear or a negative emotion or a genuine true emotion mean something that it doesn't mean.

It just means that you're having an emotion and telling yourself the truth and not being in denial about all of it. Because I think we want to get to the point where, "Oh I'm always thinking positive about it all the time and I never have negative thoughts anymore." That's not honest and it's not useful at all. I love what you're saying about that. I think that's so key.

Andrea: It's super important because a lot of times we don't do this especially when you're looking at something that you're deeming a huge circumstance. We don't do it because we feel like we're going to be stuck there. I don't want to sit and really verbalize. I really sat and verbalized how afraid I was that I was going to lose this function or how afraid I was really when you followed it down I was going to become a bag lady because of everything.

Brooke: That's what happens to everyone it doesn't matter what the diagnosis is, you're going to end up on the side of the road in a van with a cart.

Andrea: Exactly.

Brooke: It's so true.

Andrea: Really I mean verbalizing that is so important because the first thing you realize, the first thing you realize is it's not actually happening. It's not actually happening. Whatever it is that you are so afraid of, you can't bear to look at isn't what's happening and once you do look at it it's this instant disconnection that you have because when you don't talk about it, you don't verbalize and you just let it live in your brain and you push it to the back it's very big and it's very real.

The second you verbalize it and especially if you write it down. There's so much in writing it down. You disconnect and you realize this is crazy, like this is not even something that is going to happen, this is not something that's happening right now and you start to realize this is what I'm thinking. You realize that I am not in fact going to stay here now that I'm looking at it, now that I'm being honest about it.

This fear of once I go there and really feel my fear and really feel this anxiety, this fear that you're going to just get stuck there and never leave. You realize that that's just not true because you get this instant disconnection and you don't even really feel as deeply about it as you thought you would. It's just having honestly it's just not ...

Brooke: How about your current life in your current practice and how are you managing it now and how are you feeling symptomized that sort of thing?

Andrea: I feel great, it's been ... someone was asking the other day when my last relapse was. I think it was 2010 I can't even really think about it because I honestly don't think about my MS on a daily basis. When it comes to running my business there's a lot of moving parts, there's a lot of things to do and daily I have an eye on what I'm doing, an eye on my business and then I always have one eye on me.

What I'm feeling and what I'm thinking and what's going on and I am constantly looking at my thoughts. I am constantly running models on my thoughts. I get coached all the time on what's going on. I am very quick to step away if I need to. For instance, I just had a really bad cold this last week and I completely shut everything down and it was hard because it's my business and if I'm not doing something it's not getting done, but I truly put my health first. That's not me putting my MS first. That's me putting my health first.

Brooke: That's such a good point. I love hearing that. As you're speaking, I'm thinking in some ways sometimes our diagnoses can be such blessing. That's how I feel about my weight struggle because it's made me much more vigilant with myself. It's really made my relationship with myself so much stronger because so many of us go through our lives just ignoring ourselves.

Andrea: Yeah.

Brooke: When you have a disease it's much harder especially when it goes ignored it interferes with your way of living. I think there are little blessings.

Andrea: I truly am one of those people who say that I am grateful that I've had this diagnosis and you were talking before there's going to be people who are like, "What are you talking about? Shut up." It's true, because you're right. I think about my life before I was diagnosed and there is nothing healthy going on there at all.

I certainly wasn't listening to my body I don't even think I really knew what that meant to be honest. I certainly wasn't feeling my emotions. I wasn't doing any of it. For me, MS was that catalyst actually to make me listen to myself a little bit more and really tune into again just being healthy because that's really ultimately what helps your MS. If you treat yourself as a healthy human it's going to be good for your MS.

There are plenty of people who have a diagnosis and continue to ignore themselves and continue to even when they have the diagnosis or the illness get worse and worse and worse. If they're stuck in that cycle of blaming their circumstance for what's going on and they are not feeling in control then they can go a very long time ignoring what's happening and just getting worse and worse.

Brooke: That's such a good point yeah. I was reading some statistics about 80,000 people will lose a limb due to diabetes this year ...

Andrea: Oh my gosh.

Brooke: ... and you think you know what's causing it and you know and literally it's not that you don't want to change. It's just if you don't see how much power you really do have if you keep, like you said being in that blame circumstance that can be so disempowering. It's really painful.

If somebody has a diagnosis and they wanted to work with you what's your process of working with clients?

Andrea: The first thing I do is I have a completely free discovery session where we just talk, we find out where they are, what they're thinking about their diagnosis, what they're doing to help themselves and what they want their life to look like. Like you said there's a lot of things that you want to do, but it can be hard. Some of these are really big changes. Doing something like starting an exercise program is no small thing, changing diet is no small thing.

We talk about where are you right now, what are you trying and where do you want to be, what are the things that you want help with. I help them get very clear because a lot of times you can be very confused because you get a lot of advice, you get a lot of people telling you a lot of different things and it's often very contradictory. Even when you have your doctor who you'd think would

be the main authority, it can come across as just like so many options. What do you even do?

I help them get clear on what is it that they want to do, what are the steps you can take and then I talk about how coaching can help them. It's from there that we decide if we're going to work together. The very first thing is just a free phone call where we just chat and we just talk about what's going on and what they want.

Brooke: That's awesome, okay great. Then if they decide they want to work with what does that process look like?

Andrea: I have an 8 week program and right now it's a one on one program. It's all over the phone. There's sessions where we talk to each other one on one. We'll email during the week, I have suggestions I have and I don't like calling it homework, but things to practice because this is a practice. This isn't just talking for an hour and then forgetting about it until next week.

I give them based on what it is that they want to do and what they feel like they need to do. I'll give them certain different steps and different things to practice to start to really get into that mode of being aware of what they're thinking and how they're feeling and separating themselves from that blame on their circumstance.

Brooke: If someone were to work with you for 8 weeks what could they expect to walk away with that they maybe don't have?

Andrea: The biggest thing that I've had feedback-wise from clients is knowing what to do when things like stress and fear pop-up because after they work with me they understand that difference between what they're thinking and what their circumstance is. They're walking away with that awareness of understand like okay that's the fact, this is what I'm thinking.

We always have stress that pops up. We always have circumstances that pop up in our life. When they walk away they know how to handle it. They know what to do and they don't feel so out of control anymore. They also know how to create those habits that are so big like exercise and diet and weight loss and things. They understand the keys to making it successful, making it lasting instead of just this flash in the pan thing where feel like they fall off the wagon.

They understand how to create these new habits and the biggest thing is they just feel in control again. They take that control back because I am going to say I know this sounds like a generalization, but I really think that every single person that I have worked with has come to me thinking the MS is causing this.

Brooke: I'm sure.

Andrea: Pretty much every single time.

Brooke: It totally makes sense. I would feel that way too even though I understand all the stuff intellectually when you're in something like that. I would say one of the most amazing gifts we can give ourselves is that time at least once a week where we can remove ourselves from ourselves and have a look.

I feel like when I work with a coach I get to sit with my coach and have a look at myself and see what's going on and get that perspective back. That's so powerful so I want to encourage any of you who are interested in coaching, any of you that have had any kind of diagnosis.

Andrea specializes with people with MS but she can absolutely help you if you have any diagnosis that you're trying to reconcile and make peace with and you can find her at andrea-hanson-coaching.com. I will absolutely put that in the show notes and I encourage you to go and checkout her website.

If you're at all interested, why not do the free consultation? That's such a generous offer that you do with your clients and find out more about what she does and what she can offer you. That would be incredibly powerful for any of you. I just want to thank you so much for coming on today it was so awesome.

We could keep going and going and going which we might get into trouble if we do. If you guys have any questions for Andrea go ahead and take them to on thelifecoachschool.com/91 and I will make sure that those questions get answered. Thank you so much is there anything that you want to add about your website? Did I do everything right there?

Andrea: I think it's great yeah, there's the website, there's the free session, they can go to amazon and download a kindle book for "The Inside Guide to MS" as well.

Brooke: Awesome! Alright, Andrea. Thank you so much for being with us today. Take care mama bye, bye.

Andrea: Thank you.

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