

Ep #392: Criticism



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

Ep #392: Criticism

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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.

Hello my beautiful friends, how are you today? I am in Colombia, Cartagena. And I'm in heaven. I'm having such a good time. I am on a girls' trip. I've been on a girls' trip for the past several days and we are having the best time. Girls' trips are the best.

And Columbia has been gorgeous. My team planned us the most amazing vacation time together. And we are loving life right now. So I hope you are all doing well. I know that many of you are also traveling now again and I'm so happy to see where you're all traveling and how much fun you're having and I'm just excited for the joy that I see in so many of you all. It's nice.

So today I want to talk about criticism. I coached a client the other day about being able to handle criticism based on your work, based on your livelihood, based on the work you're putting out in the world. And one of the biggest fears that I hear, especially from new people that want to become coaches is that they're afraid to put themselves "out there."

And it's a legitimate fear. I believe it's a legitimate fear because we are primal in terms of wanting approval. We're primal in terms of wanting to be included in the tribe, wanting to be part of the tribe, part of the group.

One of the reasons why we have such a huge fear with public speaking is because we are literally and physically separated from the group when we're standing up speaking in front of a big group. This whole group that we need to be a part of in a primal way, we are now standing apart from, speaking from a different angle, versus feeling like we're part of it.

And when we put ourselves out there, when we're writing blog posts or putting ourselves in podcasts or creating new tools, putting ourselves "out

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there,” kind of alone to be separate from the group with our new ideas, we open ourselves up to criticism.

And so one of my clients as I was coaching on this, she was a student, she was a life coach, she had all - and this is very common - she had all of these very positive, amazing comments, and a few not so amazing comments, a few comments that said you’re not doing a good job, this is terrible, I don’t believe in you-ish.

I’m not quoting exactly what the comments were but that was basically like, you’re like part of the tribe, you’re out there and we don’t approve of you. And I think for her, there was just such a visceral reaction, she wasn’t used to it, she hadn’t been putting herself out there, was literally fight or flight, went into fight or flight with her own nervous system.

And so I wanted to do a podcast to talk about this. I get criticized a lot. I have a lot of haters and people that say things about me that make me have thoughts that create feelings of disapproval and rejection and being ostracized and all of the emotions that go along with that.

And I think for me, it’s a lot less of an issue because I’ve been at this a lot longer. And I remember when I first published my book, *If I’m So Smart, Why Can’t I Lose Weight?* When I first published that book, there were so many great comments, so much positive feedback, and a few people had negative feedback and I just was obsessing over it. I could not stop thinking about those people.

I wanted to write them letters, I wanted to go to their homes, I wanted to explain to them why they were wrong. It really, really got to me. And now, I’ve gotten to the point where I have some strategies and some ways of dealing with it because there’s so much of it.

Obviously, I’m much bigger now, I have a lot more followers, a lot more people paying attention to what I’m doing. Therefore, a lot more criticism. And that’s what’s going to happen to my dear student who is just starting the process of putting herself out there and getting criticized and feeling like she just wants to go back into the cave.

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And so I want to encourage all of you to listen to this podcast if you're afraid of putting yourself out there, if you're afraid of being criticized. I do think for me personally, getting older has been one of the most amazing blessings as it comes to criticism. I just don't care as much anymore if people have something negative to say about me.

And I do think it's from practice, I do think it's because I know we're not going to live forever and spending a bunch of time trying to convince everyone in the world to like me is a complete waste of my time. So I do think that as we get older and as we show up in the world more, this becomes less of an issue.

So one of the first things that I said to her when she was saying I read all these positive comments, and then I read the one negative one, one of the things I said, you know the best way to avoid any criticism is to just live a life that's normal, that's in the crowd, that is mixed in with everybody else.

If you live a life that is standardized, if you live a life that doesn't take risks, if you live a life where you are kind of going along with what everyone else thinks and what everyone else believes, not contradicting anyone and not putting yourself out there, you're not going to have to deal with as much criticism.

What I've noticed though personally for myself is that when I do that, the internal criticism for not putting myself out there becomes too loud. So then I have to risk the external criticism. And for some of you, that's not an issue. For some of you, you would much rather not put yourself out there in a way that risks that because it's too frightening for you.

But for others of us, it's too frightening to listen to our own minds criticize us for not doing that. And if you are that person, you know what I mean. There's something within I think thought leaders and people who want to be in leadership positions, people who want to make an impact, people who want to contribute in a way that is contradictory to how other people are living their lives, that pull is strong.

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And I see this with many of my students - they're not students yet, but many of the people who come to me who want to become life coaches. They're terrified of the criticism that they're going to get from the people around them.

They're terrified that if they're a doctor and they want to become a life coach, or they're an attorney and they want to become a life coach, or a stay-at-home mom want to become a life coach that people around them will think, "That's ridiculous, that's not even a real profession, it's unregulated, what are you thinking? It's all just this toxic positivity."

Anyone who doesn't understand what life coaching really is, who hasn't done proper research on it will not really understand what you're doing. And so you will probably get a lot of external criticism. And when it's your actual family, when it's your actual community and group of friends that are doing that, it can be incredibly challenging.

So I do want to offer that the best way and the way many people deal with that is by not taking risk, by not putting themselves out there, by not risking that criticism. And that's obviously a valid choice and something that you can do.

But if you feel that calling within you to step out of the crowd, to do something contradictory to what maybe you've always done or people around you think you should do, you might want to follow along with some of these tips that I have for dealing with that criticism.

The first one, and I think the easiest one is just don't read it. Don't ask for it. Don't go to the comments. Don't go to social media and see what people are saying about you. Don't read the articles that are written about you. That was one thing that I learned from Oprah.

They used to write all these articles about her, like in People magazine, and all the tabloids. And so much of it was untrue, she just didn't even read it anymore. She's like, I can't because it gets under my skin, I just don't go there.

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So especially in the beginning, I just stayed away from all of it. I stopped reading - when I was on Amazon and I would post my book on there, I stopped reading the comments. I'm not on social media so I don't read the comments that are on social media. My team reads them and handles them.

And that means I don't read all the positive, wonderful things either. I don't let either one of them really sway me to have a good day or a bad day. I just put my best work into the world and I don't spend a lot of time reading the feedback.

If there's something significant that I need to read, usually my team will bring it to me. So that's really good advice I think, especially if you're starting out new and you're kind of freaked out about this. Give yourself some space not to be reading all the comments.

There will be things that people don't like that you do and you cannot make everyone happy with you if you're trying to create something different. There will probably be descent. And in the beginning that could be super challenging. So staying away from it as much as is possible.

The next thing is give air time in your brain to positivity. So if you are going to read the comments, if you are going to - many of you don't have the luxury of not responding to the comments or not going through your own emails.

And so some of you will be reading that, and it's very easy and it's really important to pay attention to this. It's really easy to gloss over the positive ones and ruminate on the negative ones. And so you want to make sure that you are giving equal air time, if not more air time to the positivity of your own thoughts, of your own positive judgments, of your own encouragement to yourself, as well as hearing the criticism and the feedback.

It's really easy for your brain to get focused on the negative because it's a survival mechanism. It thinks, oh my gosh, I need to find out where I'm not being approved of and where I'm being rejected because my life depends

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on that. And it's easy to avoid the positivity because there's no threat there. We pay much more attention to threat than we do to accolades.

And so just making a conscious choice to read the positivity, to stay focused on your own brain, to come up and create thoughts that create positivity in your own brain, as well as reading the criticism with an open mind and an accepting mind.

I'll tell you the way that I read criticism and it really helps me not be afraid anymore is I find the truth in it. If someone has written something about me on a comment, in a post, or someone has said something to someone on my team, or someone has sent us an email, whatever it is, or even if someone said it to be verbally, it doesn't even have to be through something at work.

I listen and I find the truth in it. And as soon as I'm opening myself up to the truth, the resistance goes away. The resistance and the fear goes away because I'm open to it. And it's okay.

What's beautiful about being able to listen to criticism that way is you can be open to it and you can hear anything that's valid that may be useful, that may be helpful for you moving forward in your business and your life and your next post. And you can learn from it and grow from it if you can find the truth.

And this is true even if it's written in a very derogatory way. Even if it's written in a way that you can clearly see the person has an agenda, or the person has some goal that they're working towards to either hurt you or make you look bad or whatever, if you can push that aside, and maybe even derogatory language, you can push all that aside and just say what is the truth in this? Is there any truth?

And then recognize, life is 50/50. You don't have to be perfect; you don't have to have the perfect post; you don't have to be at the highest level of your work in order to be successful. And I know that for some of you, it's like, grammar freaks you out.

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Believe me, I understand this one. There are people out there, we call them the grammar police. They always want to fix our English grammar and they point it out to us. And for some people, it's debilitating. If you're a perfectionist and someone has found a grammatical error in one of your posts, that can be really challenging for someone to hear.

And so you want to say okay, I made a grammatical error, and watch your brain want to make it you're not good enough, you shouldn't be putting yourself out there, oh my gosh, you don't know grammar, you're not educated, you have no business writing online or something like that.

Just be careful of the brain that adds on to it. But the truth is you made an error, and that's it. And you can go fix it. And maybe the truth is you were a little snarky in your post, or maybe the truth is you were a little biased in your post.

I'm just making stuff up. Maybe there was a flaw in that tool that you created that you thought was so amazing. Maybe someone pointed it out. Maybe you could use that information to make it even better.

And so hearing the truth in it and accepting it and learning from it and moving on can be a fantastic approach. The other thing is just knowing that some criticism will land and it will hurt because it is true, and because you've done something that you wish you hadn't, or you've said something in a way that was misinterpreted. A myriad of things could be happening.

And just let it be. Accept that that's true and that's part of the experience and that that's life and that sometimes we deserve to be criticized and that's okay. And we just keep stepping, we just keep moving forward.

It's when we heap on our own layer of criticism. When we take the criticism that we got from someone else and then we make it mean all of these horrible things about ourselves, and we try to beat ourselves up about it in a way that doesn't serve the world, it doesn't serve you, it doesn't keep you growing, it doesn't make any of the criticism useful at all. It just hurts us.

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Life is 50/50 my friends. We got 50% good, 50% bad in my opinion. And so criticism will be part of that 50% bad. And you can make it worse or you can make it better by utilizing it and listening to it and accepting it.

I recently had someone get super mad at me. We were on the phone and he was like, really frustrated about something and he just kind of started telling me about myself to myself. And I just stayed open. And a lot of what he said was so true and I just didn't want to hear it.

So I tried to really hear what he was saying. The way he was saying it, he was very angry and upset, but I tried to stay in my neutral space and be like, huh, that's true, what you're saying is true to me, what you're saying is actually something I can see in my own life and something that I want to work on and I hear what you're saying.

And as soon as you're in that space with someone, especially a confrontation with someone, it softens everything. Because people want to be heard and I want to hear them. And so just saying yes to it, seeing where it's true, releasing that defensiveness can be incredibly powerful. Relaxing into it.

I do want to offer that the more you grow, the bigger you get, the more you expand, the more you're going to have to deal with criticism. The more you're going to be confronted, the more you're going to be examined.

I think this is a beautiful thing. I think that it can be used to make us better, it can be used to make us stronger, it can be a sign that we're on the right track, that people actually care what we're thinking and doing. They care about our lives, they want to comment on it, they want to see our posts, they want to take the time to judge us really.

And I know that for some of you, that seems excruciating. And I hope to be an example that that doesn't have to be. It doesn't have to be excruciating, it doesn't have to even be painful. It can just be interesting, it can be fortifying actually when you're able to overcome it, it can be an interesting part of being truly someone who is standing out from the crowd with the opportunity for someone else to look at them and judge them.

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Do not let the fear of potential criticism, do not let the idea that someone might have something to say about you hold you back from saying it. Be who you really are in the world. Trust that you can stand out from that crowd and still deal with criticism in a way that makes your life better, not worse.

For the last part of this, what I want to share with you that's the most important piece and most of you already know this is that internal criticism, is that rhetoric, is that noise inside your brain that criticizes you ahead of time before you do something, that criticizes you while you're doing it, and that criticizes you after it's done.

That is the most debilitating criticism any of us will ever have. And we have to make sure that we're conscious of it, we have to make sure that we're paying attention to it, and that we're not letting it prevent us from being who we want to be in this world.

The external criticism will come. We're going to deal with it, we can't control that. But the internal criticism we can control. The internal criticism we have a process for. Those thoughts that we think, those thoughts that we believe about ourselves will determine the results in our lives.

It will determine what we end up creating, how much we end up showing up, and who we become. So pay close attention to what you're criticizing, what you're judging in yourself, and make a conscious decision to stop it, to not tolerate it, to not keep beating yourself up.

Find what's true about it, do the exact same process here. Find what's true about it, utilize it in a way that will make you better, that will make you grow, and then move on with your day and keep showing up, keep being you, don't let anyone tell you that what you're doing isn't your magnificent best, isn't what something you should be proud of.

The bigger you get, the more people who aren't doing what you're doing will sit around and criticize you. Let them. Let's go. Have a beautiful week everyone. Talk to you soon. Bye.

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