

## Ep #405: When You Just Can't



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With Your Host

**Brooke Castillo**

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You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo episode 405.

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.

Hi, my friends. I'm coming to you today from a day of, "I just can't..." And what's crazy about that is I'm actually doing what I say I can't do, but I'm telling myself that I can't do it.

Have you had these days where you wake up in the morning and you're like, "I just can't do it? Today, I just can't. I want to crawl back under the covers. I don't want to do it. I don't want to show up. I don't want to deliver. I just literally can't do it." Which is a lie because I am doing it.

And I want to give you all some tips when you're just mentally, physically at maybe a five out of 10, how do you get through your day? How do you handle that?

I know, for some of you, you err on the side of staying in bed and you cancel your day and you're very dramatic and you watch Netflix all day and you just can't function. And others of you ignore yourself completely and just beat yourselves up and grid yourself through the day.

And I think that there's a middle ground. There's a middle ground where you're just not feeling it, but you want to get your work done. You want to take care of it. You don't want to compound your next day by making that worse. You want to get through the day, even though you're just not feeling it.

I want to help you with that because I feel like I do that quite well, and I show up even when I say that I can't. But I also take care of myself as I need to take care of myself. So, I'm going to give you some tactics. I'm going to give you some actual physical things to do. But I'm also going to give you a mental way of approaching this, so you know how to take care

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of yourself and you do take care of yourself, but you also get as much work done as you possibly can while doing that at the same time.

Now, I just want to make a caveat here. If you're deathly ill and you need to be in bed, this is not the podcast for you. Those days, you know, there's no doing anything, "I literally just can't." This is for more of the, like, "Well, I could rally. I just don't feel like it." This is for you, if that's you.

And for some of you, this is a daily occurrence. I know for me, if I have like a mild cold or I'm not feeling quite right, this could go on for a week, where I have to get up and rally myself, "You got this. you can do it. you can get through the day. Let's go." And I find that to be more productive and more useful and healthier for me than lying in bed all day. And you'll know what's right for you if you tell yourself the truth.

So, here's what happens, is we wake up and we don't feel right. We don't feel like we're naturally motivated. We don't feel inspired or excited. We just kind of feel, "Yuck, blah, I want to just go to the beach. Or I just want to cancel my day. Or I just don't want to deal with any of this."

When that happens to me, the first thing I do is I get moving a little. And when I start moving, I can really tell, like, "Am I really sick? Is there something really wrong with me? Do I need to get back in bed? Or is this a mental, physical thing that I can overcome."

And so, what I do is I get up and I get moving and I start my routine. I start my day. I take a shower and I get dressed. Now, I do not want you to underestimate how important this is. If you are feeling blah, if you are feeling yuck, it is very important, if you're trying to rally, that you get up, you get in the shower, you brush your hair, and you get dressed.

This exact thing happened to me today. I put on a really cute dress, got dressed, did my makeup, did my hair, did all the things to make myself presentable to myself.

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Now, for some of you, this will be the trick. This will be all it takes for you to then go and get your day going. If you're feeling a little bit sick or a little bit run down or something's not quite right, this won't solve it for you. But you will know right away if you're going to be able to get through your day once you have a uniform on.

And the way that I like to describe it is, it's a uniform for attacking the day. Let's get going. And for me, I like to wear high heels, I like to put on something colorful, I like to curl my hair, I like to make myself look as good as I can, especially when I'm not feeling good on the inside. And so, by getting moving a little bit, by getting myself ready, I can kind of track where I'm at.

The next thing that I really recommend that you do – and this may be if you're going to go work, then you start getting a little work done. For some of you, you may not feel like working out, but going for a walk is a really good way of touching in with what's going on with your body and what's going on with your mind, literally taking yourself on a walk outside.

Now, I had a friend recently say, "I don't walk when it's cold." Okay, listen, it doesn't matter if it's cold outside. It matters if you're cold. And so, you have to just have the right materials on your body for walking.

I have friends that live in Canada. They make fun of us when we live in Texas and California because we think it's cold outside. And they explain to us that it's not cold outside when it's 50 degrees. So, go outside and get some fresh air.

Do not walk on the treadmill. Don't go to the gym. Go outside and interact with the world, in a way. This is all about getting moving again. And so, again, you're not going to do this if you're sick. But if you're just feeling run down or slightly ill, or like I had a little bit of vertigo, a little bit of nausea, what's going on? Go outside, interact with the day and see if it helps it or changes it or makes it worse, and then you'll know.

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For me, I like to go out and interact with the earth, with the air outside, and get myself an awareness perspective. And this is really important for many of you who have mild depression or are dealing with anxiety or panic attacks or excessive worry.

This is something I have experienced; all of these things. And one of the things that I let myself do is broaden my awareness and witness myself.

Here's what it looks like when you're on a walk. If you go on a walk and you let your brain think by itself unsupervised, you will make everything much, much worse. You will either make yourself more depressed or more anxious because what happens is the brain likes to ruminate. It likes to worry. It likes to produce anxiety. It likes to tell you to go back in the cave. It likes to tell you that you're sick. It likes to feel sort for you.

So, do not go on a walk and let your brain be unsupervised. And you don't need to go on a walk and do thought work. But what you can do is go on a walk and witness yourself walking. Pull your awareness away from the specific thoughts that are going on in your brain and witness yourself walking. Witness yourself being in the world. Witness yourself having a life.

And one of the things that I do when I'm out walking on a day when I just can't, is I just say, "This is you having an experience of being a human on a day that's on the other side of 50:50. This is normal. This is part of life. I am watching you experience your humanness."

And what this does is it helps me stop being upset about not feeling right. It helps me stop being mad about not feeling good. It helps me not be mad about being anxious or depressed or not feeling physically well.

It allows it to be normal. It allows me to experience myself in my not-ideal state without comparing it to an ideal state. Because what most of us do is we wake up and we feel off and we feel yuck and then we start getting mad that we don't feel motivated, that we don't feel better, that we don't feel inspired, that we don't feel beautiful, that we don't feel thin, that we don't feel successful.

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So, we don't want to be comparing ourselves to our ideal state. What we want to be doing is witnessing ourselves as human beings having a human experience.

The amount of peace and joy and love that can come flooding into you when you have compassion for yourself being a human is extraordinary. And it doesn't mean you start feeling better in that moment. This is what's so crazy about it.

It's almost like you still feel kind of like ass, but you have compassion and love for yourself about it. So, it's like the mixture of those emotions. And I like to picture myself up in the sky, like, watching myself having a human life.

And sometimes I'm like, "Aww, look at you having a run-down day," or, "Look at you feeling off. Look at you having anxiety. Look at you having depression. Look at you being mad at the life that you have," and just witnessing it from that place of compassion as I go on a walk.

Now, some of you may not want to do this on a walk. Some of you may want to do it while you're meditating. Some of you may want to do it in the shower. But I do want to promise you, when you can back up from yourself and see that these days are normal, this thought process is normal, feeling this way is a normal part of the human experience, half of your worry will disappear.

Because when you wake up and you start thinking there's something wrong with you and then you're mad because there's something wrong with you, you will compound it.

I'll give you an example of this. The other day, I was having a meeting with my CEO, Erika Royal, and I started to have light flashes and, like, stars twirling in my vision. And this usually happens right before I get a migraine. And this doesn't happen often to me, but I've had a couple migraines and they always started with these light flashes.

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And so, I started noticing them and I started feeling myself panicking that I was about to get a migraine and I was, like, worried and I was freaked out, "Why are these lights doing this? Why is this happening in my vision? Am I going to be able to complete my day?"

The day before, I had had some pretty bad vertigo. I was like, "Something's probably wrong with me. I probably have a diagnosis. I'm probably going to die." All of this stuff started happening.

And what I did is I just got off the phone with her and I just went and laid down. And one of the things that was really helpful for me is I had asked her, "Hey, does this ever happen to you?" And she said, "Yeah, that's happened to me before."

And it really helped me drop into the place of, "This is normal. You're okay. This is you having an experience of being alive on a Monday as a human." And I laid down in my bedroom and I watched myself from afar. I opened up my perspective of my awareness and I watched myself from away from myself.

And it was incredibly powerful. And I was able to love on myself from afar and see what it's like to be a human in the world and to recognize that it's challenging sometimes and that it's scary sometimes and that it's hard sometimes. And that sometimes we're in pain, and sometimes we're experiencing things with our body that we don't think are normal. And it's all part of being a human.

The other thing that I want to recommend that you do – and this is something that just happened to me today – is one of my friends reached out and just say, "Hey, I just need a friend today. I just need someone."

And I want to really encourage all of you to reach out to each other and ask for help when you need it. For some of you, that will be reaching out to your coach. For some of you, that will be raising your hand in Scholars to get coached. For some of you, it will be reaching out to a friend or a loved one or a family member and just saying, "Hey, I need you right now."

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And I want to give you some advice for how to utilize your loving friendships when you're having a day when you just can't.

One of the things that you can do is call them and just complain. And sometimes, that will help. I have found that's usually better when you're mad about something, just getting it off your chest.

Typically in a day where you feel like you just can't function, where you're just not feeling right, you're just feeling off, you're feeling maybe physically something, I have found that just talking about what it's like to be a human and telling your friend, "You do not need to solve this for me. I do not need you to fix anything. I do not need you to try and talk me out of this. I just want to talk about it out loud."

When you're willing to talk about something, this is how you can create space from your situation and your own brain, is talk about it circumstantially, "This is exactly what I'm experiencing right now. I'm having these flashes of light in my vision. I'm having thoughts that I'm probably going to get a migraine. I feel a bunch of fear. That is the way of it right now. That is what is going on for me."

Or, I was talking to my friend, "I have vertigo. I feel dizzy. I feel off. This is what's going on for me." It's like, the statement and just the camaraderie of having someone hear that without trying to solve it, without trying to fix it, without trying to explain it.

And I think, as friends, learning how to hold space and just let there be space for the truth to be told can be powerful. It doesn't mean that we don't offer advice sometimes. And it doesn't mean that we won't make some suggestions later. But let there be space around the truth first.

Because sometimes, I think we just feel alone. We just feel like, "I feel off today and I want someone to know. I don't want them to tell me to stay in bed and not function in my day. I just want them to know today is not my best day. I don't feel that great today and I want someone else to know about it without trying to solve it." I highly, highly recommend it.



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I feel like sometimes when we call our friends and our coaches and they're trying to solve our problems too quickly, it can create even more anxiety and worry that there's something wrong with us. When you separate out your circumstances from your thoughts on days like this, it helps tremendously.

So, in the previous example, when I was seeing flashes of light and seeing the spirals of light in my vision, that was just the circumstance. The thoughts were, "I'm going to get a migraine," which I ended up not getting a migraine, by the way, because I went and lay down, "I'm going to get a migraine, there's something wrong with my brain, this has happened too many times, there is something terribly wrong with me." Those were just the thoughts.

But the circumstance was innocent. It was just the truth. It was just there. It actually didn't mean what I made it mean. So, being able to not just back up and look at yourself as a human being having a human experience from afar, but then to look at your brain and sift through, there is the experience of being alive and having experiences and having pure circumstances, and then there's also what we make it mean.

And by separating those out, we can see how powerfully we are the cause of a lot of our own misery. When we wake up and we feel anxious or we feel depressed or we feel run down or we feel physically ill, we can make it better with our thoughts, or we can make it worse.

And when we don't separate it out, we think we just feel bad because of the circumstance. And the truth is, a lot of the time, we do have physical sensations where we don't feel good. And we can acknowledge that physically we experience nausea or physically we experience vertigo, or a lot of us have had COVID, we feel run down, we feel tired, our lungs feel tight. There's a lot of physical symptoms going on.

But if we don't separate that out from the complaining and the meaning and the thoughts that we're piling on top of that, we may end up feeling much

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worse than is necessary. We may create so much unnecessary suffering on top of that.

And I am not in any way suggesting that you should cover up those negative thoughts with, "Rah-rah positive stuff." That's not what I'm saying here. Although some of you may want to do that. Some of you may want to rally and get yourself in a more positive state.

All I'm suggesting here is that you recognize the difference between the truth and your brain, you recognize the difference between a circumstance and a thought. And then you can see that, in many ways, we don't have power over how we're feeling physically.

In many ways, there's involuntary viruses and diseases and aches and pains going on in our body that we can't immediately control. And instead of feeling completely powerless about that, we can see how much power we have in terms of what we make it mean and how we talk to ourselves about it and how we interpret that.

So, if I wake up in the morning and I feel anxious and I say, "Today, I feel anxious and I'm still going to have a great day," or, "Today I feel anxious and I'm going to carry it around like a purse," or, "Today I feel anxious and I'm going to do some of my work but not all of it. Today I feel anxious and I'm going to take care of myself in the best way I know how."

And I will say, on the days that I recognize the difference between the circumstances and the thoughts, and I do decide to change the thoughts or let them go, I get through the, "I just can't," days so much more easily. Not by pretending I'm not in pain. Not by pretending I'm not ill. Not by pretending I'm not run down. But just by acknowledging that there is the truth of that and then there is me making it worse or better.

One of the things that I have found, which is surprising, is when I don't feel well, either emotionally or physically because of how I've woken up during the day, one of the most powerful things I can do besides getting up,

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getting moving, and getting dressed, is having my space around me be clean.

I have found that by organizing my space and cleaning up my space and keeping everything neat – and that's the last thing you may feel like doing when you wake up on a day when you just can't – is giving yourself small things to do.

It's like, you know, just washing the dishes, cleaning off your desk. Maybe your floor needs vacuuming. And it doesn't have to be the whole house, but just doing a little bit, creating some results. Because when you let your brain be idler, especially when it has a trigger of something negative, meaning a circumstance that's creating you to not feel well, your brain will be off to the races.

And if you give it a small task, a small goal that will give you a result, you'll be able to experience as a new positive circumstance – and I say positive circumstance because that's the way you'll interpret it – it makes a huge difference.

I have found this to be really helpful when I'm feeling mildly depressed. I know logically I don't want to clean my house. I don't want to clean anything up. I want to just throw everything all over the place and stay in bed. But when I do small efforts, wiping off the kitchen counter, organizing the books, putting some things away, I feel this sense of completion, creation, instead of just brain consumption, instead of just brain idleness creating more negativity. I feel like creating results is powerful on these kinds of days because the last thing you feel like is a creator.

And the last thing I want to say about a day when you just can't is, go to bed early. These are the days where I have seen so many of my clients and myself kind of, quote unquote ruin the day at the end by feeling sorry for ourselves.

And it can be a buffering palooza if you don't consciously just put the day away, go to bed. A lot of times, we justify, "Well, I'm going to drink. It's been

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a rough day." Or, "I'm going to eat, it's been a rough day." Or, "I'm going to yell at everyone in the house because it's been a rough day." Or, "I'm just going to leave the house a complete mess because it's been a rough day."

Do not do this to yourself. Make a commitment to go to bed early. End your day early on purpose. Like, set an alarm, "I'm going to go to bed and end this day that I just can't, and lay in bed."

Now, you may have trouble sleeping. You may still have worry. That's another time when you can kind of go to this awareness exercise where you watch yourself having trouble sleeping.

It's like, "Oh, look at me having trouble sleeping. I'm going to watch that happen." Or, "Look at me, I can't find anything on Netflix that I enjoy. Look at me being aggravated in my bed."

Whatever we can do to just be the witness of ourselves instead of trying to buffer away that pain will increase our skill at being able to manage being a human being. Being a human being means you are, some days, going to wake up and not want to do your day. You're not going to want to talk to the people. You're not going to want to do the work. You're not going to want to show up on the Zoom call. You're not going to want to go to the store. You're not going to want to pick up the kids. All of it.

But if you can keep yourself moving, keep yourself creating, watching yourself be a human being without judgment, you can decide what you do want to do and what you don't want to do. And at the end of that day, congratulate yourself for being a human being on the other side of 50, on your 50:50 life, and being able to get through that day. And then, tuck yourself in.

You may not have sweet dreams that night. But you can congratulate yourself for being a human being. I feel so many of you right now having days where you're not motivated, you're not excited, and you're not inspired.

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And I just want to tell you, it's okay. I have those days too, where I'm physically just not there, I'm mentally just not there. I just tell myself I can't. And then, I go about actually doing it. And you can too.

Hopefully, some of these suggestions will help you. And if they can't, there's always just pulling those covers over your head and staying in bed for the whole day. But remember, that next day is coming. And when that day comes, you're going to have twice as much work and twice as many reasons to beat yourself up.

I would appreciate so much if you would try some of these and not beat yourself up. Take care of yourself in the best way you know how and listen. Be a human being. Half the time, it's going to be rough. But you've got this.

Have a beautiful week, everyone. Talk to you soon. Bye.

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