

Ep #411: How to Overcome What You've Been Taught



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo episode 411.

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: Oh my gosh, we're all a little bit nervous today. It's a very big day. I'm not nervous, but some of my guests are nervous today. We are going to talk about so many cool things. We are going to talk about how to overcome what you have been taught in your childhood, through your socialization, through maybe cultural programming, through all of it.

And I'm so excited today. I received an email, I'm just going to read you part of it, from some of my coaches. Everyone on here is a certified coach, yes? I'm just confirming. Everyone's a certified coach.

So I got this letter, it said, "We're writing on behalf of the Asian Life Coach Collective. Our group represents LCS certified coaches identifying as Asian. We're so appreciative of the inclusive approach LCS has taken to diversity, promoting and celebrating differences as coaches show up to serve their communities. Featuring Asian coaches on your podcast would inspire listeners, whether or not they identify as Asian, to become Scholars, or potentially join The Life Coach certification program."

So when I read this initially, I was like, how can we do this in a way that everyone can really learn something positive? And the email goes on and it's great. And one of the things it says is, "We believe our Asian cultural and patriarchal programming can only be addressed by giving our clients a safe space to be heard and permission to trust themselves."

And so we're going to talk about it. I have a panel of Asian coaches. We're going to talk about it from their perspective. But one of the things that I've learned so much over the past couple years is how we all have very different programming based on our cultures, based on who raised us.

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And I think for me, I hadn't recognized how profound those differences are. And that was one of my shortcomings I think as a coach and as a human was not really understanding we are all raised with very different messages based on our culture, based on how we look, based on how we identify.

And so I'm excited to talk to you all, understand what your experience is like as someone who identifies as Asian, but also to apply it to me and be like, "Oh, was I taught that same thing or was I taught something different?" And we can have a discussion about how maybe that impacted me in a different way versus you all.

So I'm excited to get started. I'm just going to call on you and we're just going to start chatting. You know me, I'll interrupt a lot and ask lots of questions and we're going to have an amazing conversation.

And everybody that's listening, I want you to really try and learn, first of all, maybe you don't have a lot of experience with - maybe you don't have a lot of Asian friends, you don't have a lot of experience with Asian culture. This will help you just become a more broadened, expansive, understanding human being. But also, how can this apply to you and yourself?

So let's do it. Let's start with you, Li. Introduce yourself. Hello, good morning. We'll start with you. Introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about you and what you do in terms of coaching, and then tell us a little bit about how you think what you learned growing up socially, culturally has affected you, and maybe how you've had to unlearn some things.

I was thinking about this. There are some things we want to unlearn, but there are some things that culturally we may have learned that we're really thankful for, that we learned because of our specific upbringing. So I'd be curious about both of those.

Li: Okay. I may ask you to repeat the question.

Brooke: No, you have to remember exactly everything I just said. I already forgot what I asked so I'll ask you something different.

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Li: I'm so happy to be here, thank you for having us. My name is Li Huo. I currently live in Los Angeles with two kids and a dog and a husband. I emigrated to this country when I was eight years old. I think ever since then, I always felt this back burner pressure of just pressure.

Brooke: Where did you emigrate from?

Li: I emigrated from Taiwan. I didn't speak a word of English and within a year learned the entire language. And then the following year, represented my school at a reading competition. I know, it was a long time ago, but I'm still proud of it and I'm still going to talk about it.

Brooke: I would lead with that always.

Li: So anyway, there was no time for idle daydreaming. I knew that right from childhood, I could read between the lines that my parents sacrificed so much to bring me here. And so I had to repay this debt by being the best that I can be.

I'm also the oldest. And in the Asian culture, there's an added expectation, there's an added layer of expectation. I was always told over and over again, "You're the oldest, don't screw up, you are an example to your brothers." So I had to be the example of I guess perfection.

Add to that another layer, my youngest brother actually was born with a congenital condition that would require a caretaker for the rest of his life. So now I knew I had to succeed on behalf of the family so that I can provide. And again, an example of someone who has succeeded.

And so, how did I learn to be successful in life? Well, I had to be good in school. I had to make sure whatever I undertook guaranteed success and a win. I couldn't take things that were unknown results. And so that I think is very much the Asian immigrant creed, is to know what you're after, make sure you can win, put your head down, don't complain, work hard, and I can succeed.

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So guess what field I went into? Medicine of course, right? That's such an easy choice because it has a predictable formula, even though the path is long and arduous, there's step-by-step process. There was no guess work. And all around me growing up, all I knew were doctors and engineers. That's all I knew.

I didn't know anybody who was in business or an entrepreneur. So that's what I did. I followed that path. And along that long path to medicine, I did pause a couple of times like, oh my God, what am I doing? But I just couldn't contemplate other careers because I didn't know how to get there.

So the unknown was not a consideration for me. So I did it all. I did all the stuff. I went to college, medical school, residency, got my stable job in HMO with great benefits, and great pay, marriage, a big house, two kids, three cars. I just checked off all the expectation boxes. For 13 years I was living like this. Then I crashed and burned.

Brooke: Now, let's talk about that. Why do you think you crashed and burned? Because you never consulted what was true for you, what you desired? It was just kind of like, this is the track, this is what is expected of me, I'm supposed to become an engineer. Also the socialized examples that you had in front of you.

Li: Absolutely.

Brooke: There wasn't a lot of Asian entrepreneur examples for you at the time is what I hear you saying.

Li: None. I grew up in the Midwest. I think that also summarizes - if I came out to California sooner, I would see yoga instructors. I'm like, how come I never thought about becoming a yoga instructor? I love yoga. Or even a lawyer.

Because language, I always had the perception that my English ability was subpar compared to everybody else because I'm an immigrant. So I never thought of law because I was like, that's a lot of reading, that's a lot of

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writing, that is not my best foot. My strong points are in science and math where I didn't have to communicate in the English language.

So that has always stuck with me, the thought that I'm not really eloquent, I'm not capable. And so that's really what it was. As far as crash and burn, I think I was circling the drain of burnout for a few years. This was about 10 years ago. Burnout wasn't being discussed in the medical field.

And then a workplace trauma sort of pushed me over the edge and I left my job. I left my full-time job in medicine, and that was a really dark time. I was sort of grappling with my whole identity. There was a huge financial shift. And I realized that I was lost for those four years.

But then I found you two years ago. As you know, quite a few physicians have become life coaches. They recommended that I listen to your podcast, so I did that. And registered for Scholars right away. And then within two months knew that I wanted to be certified.

So the big a-ha moment that came to me was this, and this was huge. When I was studying your Study Vault, and all of a sudden, I realized, oh my God, I am not over the pain that I was running away from. I never dealt with it. All that trauma that I experienced, I didn't deal with it. I was continuing to self-criticize myself and punishing myself.

And so of course I was living small, and of course I was trying to look in the past to try to reinvent myself because that's what I knew. So those four years, I look on the surface, I look like I was doing busy, fun things. But really, I was just circling again the same path. I wasn't moving forward because I didn't know how to process my pain and I was still punishing myself in a subconscious way.

And your coaching tools showed me that, and it was amazing. So now I'm like, it's okay if I don't know the path going forward. And I have decided that I'm going to let go of medicine and do coaching full-time. So this is huge.

Brooke: So what is that like from a family cultural perspective in your life? Tell me everything.

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Li: First of all, I can't even explain coaching to my parents. So they don't know what I'm doing. All I'm saying is I'm running my own business and I'm going to be successful. That's pretty much it. Even I think friends and family are still grappling with the whole idea of what is coaching? "Wait, you're a doctor and you're going to not practice to be a coach? What is that?"

Brooke: That's legit.

Li: What's really amusing to me is this; I remember when I started to drive. My mom would literally say to me, "Where are you going?" I'm like, "I'm going to..." she goes, "Well, have you been there?" And I was like, "Well, no." She's like, "Well, how are you going to get there?" I said, "Well, I'm going to look at a map and I'm going to go."

And her whole thing is well, if you've never been there, how are you going to get there? You need to wait for someone else to take you there. And I'm like, what? That means you're never going to do anything. You're going to wait for someone to show you how to get there.

That applied to all areas of life. And that's where I got it. Unless I know the outcome already, which guarantees success, then I'm not going to do it. So this whole thing with entrepreneurship, having my own business, life coaching, we're in uncharted waters. We're in the wild, wild west.

Brooke: That's what makes it so awesome.

Li: Yes. And I'm totally excited, but I want to say to my parents, "You guys, as immigrants to this country, especially for my mother, going to a different country where you don't speak the language, you don't have any family, you don't know the culture, there's no way you can find evidence of that in the past. There's no manual, there's no clue. And yet you took the biggest risk and emigrated here to give us a better life." The dream is a better life.

Brooke: That is so interesting. That is so well said. It's like, that is that entrepreneurial spirit, that is that I will chase my dream and go after it. That wasn't predictable. That wasn't guaranteed. Very interesting.

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Li: I mean, she didn't even drive a car. So now you're coming to this country, you have to figure out how to maneuver...

Brooke: You figure it out.

Li: You have kids who are dependent on you, and you're trying to advocate for your kids, but you don't know how to because you don't even speak the language. All of it is a huge risk and all of it is moving into a future that you have no evidence of the road map from your past. And so that's sort of where I'm really embodying this and really trying to change. And I am changing. I have changed.

Brooke: And setting such an amazing example. So tell us what type of coaching you do.

Li: So I empower female healthcare professionals to prioritize themselves and to create time for self-care and self-discovery. So what I find is a lot of women, once you get to a certain level of accomplishment, you got your job, you got your career, you're married, you have kids, you have the dog, you have the big house, and then we stop dreaming.

And yet we feel stagnant. We feel stagnant by the rinse and repeat pattern that you always talk about. But yet we won't take the time to really allow ourselves that space and permission to discover what we really want, now that we've arrived. We can continue to want different things and a different future.

Brooke: It's so good. And especially if you were raised with your head down and that not being an opportunity, and that not being an option, hey, consider what you want to do and why, then you have to take a pause and be like, okay. So okay, if you are a health professional and you want a life coach, how can they find you?

Li: They can follow me on Instagram @coachingwithli. Or they can...

Brooke: And that's Li. Coaching with Li.

Li: Yes. I have a website too. www.coachingwithli.com.

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Brooke: Coachingwithli.com. Awesome. Okay, let's go - is it Chao? Am I saying it right?

Chao: Yes.

Brooke: Alright, let's go.

Chao: Brooke, it's so nice to be here. And I'm actually the one Li is talking about. I'm the first generation of immigrants to the US. So glad to be here and I just want to share a little bit, take everyone back to the beginning of my immigration journey.

I remember that day vividly because I actually migrated from China to Florida, which is Gainesville, Florida. That's the part - I don't even know what Gainesville looked like. Small town, I remember that day it was really sunny, had the Florida weather. I was venturing out, trying to find a restaurant to eat because I have no idea how to even order stuff.

Brooke: How old were you?

Chao: I was 22 at the time.

Brooke: Oh, okay.

Chao: And I was like, okay, I'm just going to pretend I know everything. I'm just part of the society. Walking to the Subway restaurant, and when the server started asking me what kind of bread do you want, what kind of cheese do you want, I am just freaking out.

I tried to find the only words I know and this is a sentence I squeezed out. I was like, can you just give me the most popular one? And to this day, I still remember her response. She said, "Everything's popular here."

Brooke: Oh no.

Chao: I was literally feeling so...

Brooke: Cut me a break. Jeez.

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Chao: I was so ashamed. I felt like I don't belong here. I turned around and walked out.

Brooke: Oh wow.

Chao: And from that point, I think I took it near and dear to my heart, I need to do something to make sure I feel like I belong here. Now I look back, I know - we all know the Model. I keep changing the environment, I actually find the most American name I can find for myself, Hunter, and people are like, why you choose Hunter? I was like, can't you just tell? I'm looking like a hunter. And then...

Brooke: Listen, it's funny to me that you picked the word Hunter but it's the opposite of feeling like you belong. And this is something I've really learned recently is when you try to be more like somebody else in order to feel like you belong to that group of people, you lose yourself in that process. And even if they do accept you, they're accepting some guy named Hunter, which isn't even who you are.

Chao: No. Sometimes I went to the neighbor's party. They're like, wait, who are you? I was like, "Oh, I forgot, did I tell you I'm Hunter or I'm Chao?"

Brooke: Interesting.

Chao: And that's when I actually started looking - also, during this whole immigration journey, I tried to find a six-figure job so I can feel that happiness. Because it seems like everyone is working at a high-tech company, they make six-figure jobs, they live a comfortable life. That's how I was thinking I can find my happiness.

And also, I actually relocated myself from Florida to Washington DC. I was like, it's got to be the place because that's the most diversified place I can find. It doesn't solve the feeling of belonging. Like you said, it actually drifts me away from feeling belonged.

Brooke: Wow, that's so interesting. And I wonder, one of the things that I've learned is when you are in an environment where it is just mostly white

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people, even if you're born here and raised here, that's a whole different experience, right? Being in this country, being an American, and having that difference and not feeling like you belong, not seeing yourself represented well on TV, and in the movies, and that sort of thing.

And then to emigrate here and to feel like you don't understand the restaurant situation, or how the norms and trying to figure that out and become that so you feel like you belong, and then feel the complete opposite must have been very isolating. So how did you deal with that?

Chao: So after all this changing and moving and then finding a new job, I remember that day, I found your podcast. I was just obsessed with that because I was like, oh, that's actually - I keep changing the C and expect a different result or different feeling.

And then that's where I find the coaching and actually showed me, oh, this is what I'm doing. I started typing into - just play around with that feeling belonged. Sometimes I put in the feeling line because I feel grounded, I feel spacious, I feel purposeful.

Sometimes I put it in the thought line because sometime I was like, what can I think in order to make me feel good, feel like part of society? The sentence that I came up with, to this day I still live it is just be yourself. The world will adjust.

Brooke: Yes. And we want you to be yourself. We got enough of this. I used to try to go in and be like everybody else, but everyone else was being everybody else. It's like, I would go into these rooms with all these dudes and I was trying to be a bro.

What they needed was a woman in that room, and I showed up and was trying to be like them. And now I show up and I'm like, this is what we got here. This is who I am. And it's so much more interesting. So much more interesting to have you be who you are and to have us experience that as belonging because we understand each other's differences.

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So for example, if you're trying to be someone that you're not, I'll never understand you. I'll never understand what it's like to be you in this world, which is what is much more interesting. You telling your story is fascinating to me. What has it been like for you? I don't want you to be the same.

And I used to make this huge mistake, feeling like we're all the same, therefore we all belong, which perpetuated you being Hunter, right? You're like, you're perpetuating my belief system that look, we're all the same.

And really, it seems so obvious to me now, but me not understanding how we're different - see, I felt like understanding how we were different would make us separate. And it's the opposite. Understanding how we're different makes us feel like we belong to each other. So, so, good. So what have you unlearned?

Chao: So I think the biggest part for me is I grew up in China. The question that we always ask ourselves is will I ever feel like I belong here? Or part of the group. And then what happened is if the answer is no, I don't belong, or if nobody acknowledges us, or nobody likes us, that means something is wrong with me, I need to change. I need to change to fit in.

Brooke: So true. How many of us have thought that?

Chao: And then just unlearning that, holding space - I still remember to this day the first lesson you taught us during the certification is hold space for the client. And actually, holding space for ourselves and give ourselves the safe space to express any of those.

Anxious, or fear, or scared, I think that will be really helpful for us. Just come true to ourselves, instead of always people pleasing, try to fit in, try to just be a member of this group.

Brooke: So great. So tell me about the coaching that you're doing.

Chao: So I am actually a Scholar coach, and also, I help immigrants...

Brooke: Which means you work inside Self-Coaching Scholars, coaching our clients. Amazing.

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Chao: And also, I help immigrants to find their success without compromising who they are. So what I mean by that is oftentimes people come to me, they're like, "I have to enjoy going to happy hours in order to be considered as a team member," or, "As an immigrant, I have to learn how to play golf in order to be considered for next promotion."

And then the third thing I think is really near and dear to my heart is they feel like they have to speak up, they have to stand their ground all the time in order to be seen and to be heard. So I help them to just see what they truly want and go after it.

Brooke: That's really interesting actually, that's beautiful how you're representing yourself and your company. That third point is really good. It's kind of like, the opposite of becoming Hunter. It's then all of a sudden becoming Super Chao. Like I'm going to come in and tell everyone what's up and how to behave. You know what I mean?

There's somewhere in the middle where you can just be who you are and show up as who you are, and recognize that not everybody is going to like you and that's okay. Not everyone's going to accept you and that's okay. But you accept you.

Chao: Yes.

Brooke: So it's really interesting actually, I was talking to a group of people that were considering joining certification. And there was a woman that English was her second language and she was terrified to join certification because she didn't think she would be able to pass the test, and she didn't think that she would be able to overcome her accent and be able to communicate with her clients.

And from my perspective, my feedback to her was I don't think - that's the least of anything that you should be worried about, I think those things are all doable. What would you say to her based on your experience?

Chao: I think back to what we talked about. Between Hunter and Chao, there's actually a lot of space in between. And actually, when I accept

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myself, because before I was always thinking I have to have perfect English in order to be considered American. Now, when I accept my accent, accept who I am, I can actually go after my dream, even with broken English.

Brooke: It's so much better. I don't know, just people being who they are is so awesome. It's what I love about this experience. And what's the alternative? Hiding? Not showing up? I love the example that you're setting. How can people find you?

Chao: People can find me on Instagram by searching @iselfcoaching, or they can find me on my website, thechaosun.com.

Brooke: The. That's his name. The Chao Sun. Let's go. Alright, that's awesome. It's so, so awesome to meet you. I love it. Okay, let's go to you Rae. Am I saying that correctly?

Rae: Yes.

Brooke: Okay, Rae, let's go. Welcome.

Rae: Hi Brooke. It's a great honor to be on your podcast. You might not remember me. I dared you, my official name is Rae Hung Tsai. I actually dared myself and asked you if I can translate How to Feel Better booklet.

Brooke: Oh yes.

Rae: In 2019.

Brooke: I vaguely remember.

Rae: When I was a new Scholar.

Brooke: You were a new Scholar, okay.

Rae: And I remember it was about self-confidence and I was working on self-confidence because I was always shy. Very quiet, I never spoke in classes, teachers come and always, "Rae Hung is very quiet, is very shy," all that.

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But the self-confidence, because I need to dare each day, we need to dare, the first day I dared myself to write you an email saying this is the reason you should hire me to translate your booklet. And you loved the dare and you paid me after I finished translation.

Brooke: That's amazing. So tell us a little bit about your experience.

Rae: So I came from Taiwan for my graduate school, came here, I live in Maryland with my husband, empty nest. And I have two kids, 26 and 29 years old, son and daughter. And because I'm an educator, I actually retired. I met my impossible goal in 2020, got hired by The Life Coach School as a Scholars coach.

Brooke: Yes, you did.

Rae: And then I got to retire early because I was a school library media specialist. I love to read and I had my dream job, but in 2019 I felt stuck because I kind of lost my passion and enthusiasm about teaching. And then Chao told me about your podcast, I got hooked, and I was also obsessed with all the episodes, one after the other, and then became a Scholar. And I actually enrolled in CCP before Chao.

Brooke: Uh-oh, what's happening?

Rae: And now I'm in the master coach training.

Brooke: Yes, congrats. Good for you. That's no joke.

Rae: And I started the Asian coach group. I was the one who sent you the letter, but the letter actually we did - it's a group effort. And now we have about 70-80, I think it's near 80 members. And I'm also a coach here, the affinity group, one of the coach here is for Asian groups.

Brooke: I love that. That's so great.

Rae: And I just started a new podcast.

Brooke: What's it called?

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Rae: Asian Life Coach Collective.

Brooke: Asian Life Coach Collective. I love it. What do you talk about on the podcast?

Rae: So each episode, I invite actually Chao, Em, Li, Payal, they were my guests. And every episode there's a topic. And then we talk about - we share useful concepts because I believe Asians, we need to unlearn our beliefs. I used to believe I'm not a leader.

And Katie told me during one of the quarterly reviews, she said, "Rae, you are a leader. And you can be a CCP instructor, you can be guest speaker, you can be this and that," and I said, "My English is not perfect yet." And Katie said, "Okay, wait until your brain is ready."

Brooke: I love you, Katie. Katie's in charge of all of our instructors. She didn't say wait until your English is perfect. She said wait until your brain is ready. God, I love you, Katie. Perfect.

Rae: Because I was told by many people I shy away from being in a principal position. And I say, okay, I can be assistant principal but don't tell me to be the principal because I'm going to leave. And I did. And I belong to a charity organization 26 years, and they said can you be the CEO? I said, "No, I don't want to be the leader," so I left. Then I just ran a different program.

Brooke: So wait, let's talk about that for a minute because I know for sure you're not alone in that. There are so many people listening that would express that same. How much of this has to do with your English? How much of this has to do with your culture upbringing? With being a woman? Tell me where you think that came from.

Rae: I think being a woman, because my parents were very poor. So I actually grew up practically - I did my homework, I prepared for exams in the market because they sold vegetables. And I remember, I memorized English vocabulary on the bus.

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I went to evening school for high school for my college. And when I had my diploma, I showed it to my dad who didn't really have a lot of education. Only three years of education. And he asked me, "What is this for?" I said, "It's my diploma. I finished my high school." And he said, "Can you be a secretary? Can you be this and that?" I said, "No." I said, "I can go to college."

He didn't want me to go to college. He thought I should just help because I helped the family since I was in second grade. And also, I just didn't think I was smart. And I didn't believe because I always believed other people are better than me, I'm not good enough, and so it took me quite a while until more people told me you're good at this, you're good at that.

My principal, I was in a middle school as a school library media specialist. She actually looked at my portfolio, she said, "Rae, do you want to be a principal? Like, go through an administration program?" I said, "No, I don't want it." And somehow, I believed I needed to be perfect. And I need to work hard to be perfect and I would never be perfect.

Brooke: Nobody wants you to be perfect, Rae. Perfect people are boring.

Rae: I know. Until I went through Scholars and also certification program, and now the master coach training, it's mind-blowing. I finally realized, okay, I'm a leader. Because I'm tired of hiding, I'm tired of playing small, and I feel suppressed. I didn't have a voice. And I didn't think I had a voice. But I had so many opinions.

Brooke: And now we can hear them, which is beautiful. What an example you are.

Rae: Thank you. And I remember one day, I coached Em, like a Scholars session, and I didn't have any one after her. So we talked about it would be great if we can start an Asian coach group. And so we started the group and I felt this is what we have.

Because before, I couldn't find any one, like Asian coaches, when I started in 2019. I couldn't find - I typed in Taiwanese, I typed in Chinese, and only

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one, Charlene Lim, I only found her and I connected with her. But now we have 70, 80 Asian coaches. It's so amazing.

Brooke: It makes me so happy. I'm so proud of you all for starting this group and for having the courage to do that and for asking me to be on the podcast. This is extraordinary. And I think for so many people listening that are making - like this woman that wasn't going to sign up for CCP because she was afraid that she wouldn't pass the test because English is her second language.

I told Stephanie, I said, "If that's a reason why someone isn't signing up for certification, we are not doing our job. We are not doing a good enough job of asking people to come in." Of course, we will do what we can because we need more representation of someone that would feel comfortable with you coaching them, that may not feel comfortable with me coaching them.

That is our work. That is my work. That's what I have been really dedicated to these past two years. So thank you for showing me how it's done. That is such a beautiful example. So if someone wants to get coached by you, they can go to Scholars or they can find you where?

Rae: I don't coach. I'm a mentor.

Brooke: Oh, you're a mentor in Scholars now, okay. Of course you are, Rae, of course you are a mentor now. Congratulations.

Rae: Thank you.

Brooke: You're mentoring in Scholars, you don't have a URL where people can find you? Do you have an Instagram or?

Rae: I do. I have Instagram, @raetsaicoaching. I also have a website, raetsaicoaching.com. And I empower Asian women. I want to help them to find love, self-confidence, and compassion and feel grounded.

Brooke: Beautiful, perfect. So that's raetsaicoaching.com. And I will have all of this in the show notes. And I really want to encourage each of you listening, you can come to the website and see us all on video. We're very

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cute. And you can also get the URLs to go see their businesses and be inspired by them, be inspired by their journeys and what they've created.

Rae: And Brooke, can I add one more note?

Brooke: Yes.

Rae: Because for the master coach training, I created a podcast this year. I didn't know anything about podcasts. And because I want to empower Asians, so I started Asian Life Coach Collective podcast. And for the master coach project, I need to have 4000 downloads by the end of February, and I'm wondering if anyone can help with downloading, that would be super.

Brooke: Alright, listen to me. Everybody go download this podcast. Everybody listening to this podcast right now, go download it. It's on iTunes. Do this. These master coach projects are hard I hear.

Rae: Tell me about it.

Brooke: Go check it out. I love it.

Rae: A lot of drama.

Brooke: Okay, let's go to you Em. Hi.

Emily: Hi.

Brooke: Tell me everything.

Emily: So I just want to say that kind of our theme here is that we're about sort of overcoming whatever programming and societal or cultural programming. And one of the huge things that hasn't been talked about much so far is that all of the people that you've talked to, and Asians in general have this cultural programming around just even talking about feelings. It's kind of a no-no. It's a big cultural stigma against showing any kind of emotion is considered to be a weakness or vulnerability.

Brooke: Why is that? Tell me more about that?

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Emily: It has a lot to do with this concept of face, which is like, where you have a certain appearance, you have a certain persona that you are. So it's kind of what Brené Brown calls the armor. And so you don't want to show any chinks in the armor, you don't want to have any kind of cracks, or any kind of vulnerability.

And when you have emotion, then you are actually being weak, you're not showing a strong, stoic kind of front. So I just want to say that a big part of our Asian Life Coach Collective group is about de-stigmatizing the idea of mental health in general and the whole talking about feelings, holding space for each other, like this is okay.

And our group really came about back when there was a lot of Asian hate crimes were on the rise, and we were really I think feeling like not only is that a problem for us societally, but within the Asian community, there is actually the messaging that we would get is don't talk about it, it's not okay, hide, be small.

Brooke: Don't talk about the experience of what it's like to be at the affect of these hate crimes. And this was when Covid was first happening, is that what you're referring to?

Emily: There was both Covid and then there was also after Black Lives Matter started, that whole movement, then there was a rise in Asian hate crimes where specifically, people were targeting Asians. And especially vulnerable, older people. There's a lot of stuff in the media about all of that happening.

And people were coming forward and kind of saying, hey, this is not okay. There was a message, I think Joe Biden and his wife did last year if I'm not mistaken. I do feel like that was something that it's almost like, you're hearing it on the media but I think the messaging within the community and within our families was don't talk about that, that's so shameful, it's a weakness. Don't talk about your feelings, don't talk about being scared, let's just pretend it's not happening kind of thing.

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Brooke: So everyone, I just want you all to know because I'm sitting here looking, everyone is nodding voraciously on this call. It seems like a collective experience for all of you where you're feeling afraid, you're feeling like you need to reach out and have a conversation about this, and the messaging is no, don't.

You need to not show any chinks in the armor, you need to be strong here, this is not a problem, which is of course the opposite of what we teach and the opposite of what's mentally healthy as you're going through severe emotions.

Emily: Totally. And so I think the point is there's a lot of cultural and generational messaging that's disempowering, and really just you have been such an inspiration I think to all of us. Obviously, we're here and part of your training because we feel like, oh, all of a sudden there's this truth that's like, we can actually choose our own thoughts, we can choose our own beliefs. And we don't have to just sort of go along to get along. Just kind of buy into it all.

Brooke: So what has your experience been like?

Emily: So I live in Hong Kong and I spent a lot of years in the US, probably 20, 25 years in the US. I am a doctor. I was trained there and I practiced there. I was in academic medicine. So my experience has just been that I'm a contract coach for Katrina Ubell. And so I was so excited to find...

Brooke: I love you, Katrina.

Emily: Yeah, I know. When I did her advanced physician coach program, she actually invited me to join her team, so now I'm part of her team as a contract coach. So now I'm coaching women doctors from all around the world. We have people in Australia and Japan and all over the place, so that's totally awesome.

Brooke: That's amazing. So what do you think, having been here, being in Hong Kong, what do you think we're missing in terms of understanding the experience of being Asian? Not just living in America, but living worldwide.

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What could we learn more as white coaches, Black coaches, brown coaches, all of us? What can we learn more about your experience that would help us be better coaches do you think?

Emily: Wow, what a huge question. I mean, for me, the general message is we're all individuals. And so probably the biggest thing I would say is just don't assume. Be curious. Always be open to hearing each individual's story because each individual is an individual, whatever the outer look is. We're all worthy and we're all of value.

Brooke: I love that. That's beautifully said. So is there a way for us to find you, contact you, talk to you?

Emily: Yeah. So on social I'm @dremwong, and then I have a website with a blog and it's integrityhealing.info. So I write about brain health coaching and dementia prevention, particularly for caregivers. So that's my jam.

Brooke: That's awesome. Yay. Alright, Pay-al?

Payal: Payal.

Brooke: Did I say it right?

Payal: Yes, you did.

Brooke: Let's go.

Payal: So funny story, first time that Brooke coached me on Scholars, I taught you how to say my name.

Brooke: And how many times have you taught me since then?

Payal: That was really the only time because after that, you were on it. You were like, I want to know it. Even after becoming a coach and you coached me live a couple times, you're like, Payal.

Brooke: And now I just messed it up live on the podcast. Darn it.

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Payal: I love that you did that because it lets me tell the story that I was courageous enough to tell Brooke Castillo how to say my name.

Brooke: Yeah, so you should. This is actually interesting. Let's talk about this for a minute, Payal, because I think that sometimes we get intimidated because we don't know how to say someone's name. We don't know how to say it, so we just don't. So, we just don't ask. We're afraid to ask and clarify.

And this happens to me with the last name Castillo, people calling me Casti-lo. And it was interesting. I was naming a man named Rahul and everyone wanted to call him Raul. And I had this experience with him of hearing everyone say his name wrong and not correcting them.

And I asked him one day, I was like, "What is that like to have so many people getting your name wrong throughout our day? That must be challenging emotionally." And it's like he hadn't thought about it. But to me, it was bothering me, and it wasn't even my name.

I was, like, correcting, and then you'd correct them and they'd get it wrong. And listen I understand compassionately that his name was hard for people to remember and hard to say. And that's fine. But we're all going to work on this together and correct each other for as long – even my best friend, I was correcting her, "This is his name. This is how you say it."

I do think it matters, a lot. And to say, "No, this is my name and this is how you say it." And not in a shaming, "You're saying it wrong," kind of way, but in a, "I'm going to help correct it as many times as I need to until we get it right." And I think it really seems like it's a little thing, but it's a big thing.

Payal: It's a huge thing, especially if we've been taught, "Don't stand out. Don't take up space. Just be a fly on the wall." And so, for 20-something years, everyone called me Pay-al, Pay-all, which makes sense because I never corrected them.

Brooke: Oh, right.

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Payal: My best friends from high school, I never corrected them.

Brooke: Why not? Because you just didn't want to stand out? You didn't want to be confrontational?

Payal: You know, I didn't want to make it a big deal. I didn't want to bother anyone with me, little old me.

Brooke: But I think too, as I'm thinking about this, as someone that has a harder time with remembering people's names and with pronouncing them correctly, I think that one of the reasons why we maybe don't want to correct other people is we don't want them to feel badly that they've said it wrong.

And so, I think that in our effort to protect them, it's almost as if we're creating an even more shameful situation because had I been calling you the wrong name for all this time and then you told me that I was calling you the wrong name, I would be mortified over just, "Please keep correcting me. Please keep saying it."

I mean, I would like this to be the rule. Please always correct someone when they say your name wrong and, you know, that's a lot of emotional labor, for sure, to always have to be correcting and always have to be doing that. But I think it's, I don't know, a bummer that you have to do that. And I think it's worth it to be called the right name.

Payal: For sure. And honestly, like, I'm kind of grateful that when people don't say my name right, it's an opportunity for me to remind myself that you matter. You belong. And you're more than enough, so you don't have to justify having to correct someone. That's okay.

Brooke: Yeah, and if they can't remember – like for me not being to remember how to pronounce your name has nothing to do with you. It has to do with me. And it matters to me that I say it properly. And I think that's true for everyone listening, is like paying attention and, "Please correct me if I'm not saying your name right. I want to make sure I'm saying it right. I want to make sure that I keep saying it right. If I don't say it right, please

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correct me again." Like, giving people permission for that, I think, is important.

And I would be really curious, one of the things my diversity coach talked about with us – and I would be curious what her thoughts would be on this – but telling the history of your name and where your name comes from and what your experience is with your name. We did it with all of our employees and it was so interesting, like, how important your name actually is and to be able to hear it. And you don't want people not saying it because they don't know how to say it properly. So, I appreciate us having this conversation.

Payal: I know. Actually, it's perfect, right? Like, that this is how – because every other time you've said it right, and this is my journey in this...

Brooke: And I'm so glad you didn't change your name to Hunter.

Payal: No, I'm not Jennifer.

Chao: I thought it would be Stacey or something.

Brooke: And I know that that happens a lot because I have friends and salons that I go to where the woman is telling me her name is Janet. I'm like, "Your name is not Janet." And it's like, "Well, I want it to be easy for you to say my name, so I changed my name to be something that you would be more comfortable with," which I think is – it's kind of like what we were saying earlier. It's the opposite of really connecting and getting to know each other.

Payal: For sure.

Brooke: So, tell me your story. Tell me all about it.

Payal: So, I actually was born and brought up in Los Angeles. So, I think my story is a little bit different where I didn't have a coming-here story. I was born here. And my parents did all the things to get us here to the land of choice and freedom.

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Brooke: Where were your parents from?

Payal: India.

Brooke: India, okay.

Payal: And I'm so grateful to represent my South Asian community. Because Asian is a very broad term. And when Rae started our group, that was one of the big things we talked about is there are so many languages. Even in the South Asian community, even in India there's 26 dialects. So, we can't even speak to each other in any language other than maybe English.

Brooke: That's so fascinating, right? Interesting. Yeah, so from my, I would say, naïve ignorant perspective, I was like, "Well have the Asian Collective. Are we going to have an Indian collective too?" And Erika was explaining to me, "No, because India is Asia. They'll be in the same collective." And I was like, "What?" I really had to have that broken down for me.

So, listen, I have no shame admitting all my ignorance because I know that I am not alone in this. And so, learning about that – so, what is that like for you? Does that feel right? Does it feel different? Tell me.

Payal: Initially, like, when we were talking about wanting to bring this to you, there was a lot of hesitation with, "Let's wait until we're ready." And I feel like...

Brooke: You've got to be perfect, Rae. You've got to tell them.

Payal: I think that's part of the culture, like, "Let's make sure it's all ready, let's make sure Brooke's going to like this." And I feel like if I believe that story, I'd be living what I've been doing in my last four years, and that's done now. I loved that experience, it was nice, but I want to take up space.

And I had this analogy in my head, you know, in Asia, we all use different spices in our cooking. And so, can we look at it like, yes, the spices are different sometimes, but it all creates this spice in our life that we can all

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share, and it's unified because we're wanting to bring that into our life. And so, I kind of told Rae this, I said, "Now is the right time."

Brooke: But let me ask you this from my ignorant perspective too. I think there's something to there being an Asian Collective and understanding that there are differences. And I really want to understand what those differences are. What's it like to be from Taiwan versus being from China versus being from India? And not grouping it all together and assuming that it's all the same thing and that there is no difference, but also understanding that there is a common experience.

And so, I think that's what I'm asking you, how is that for you being from India versus Taiwan or China, like, what is that experience like for you?

Payal: Yeah, I see what you're saying. So, I feel like there are some similarities where we talk about, like, our hesitation to take up space and kind of speak up. But the difference is like our own individual, ancestral, familial, cultural upbringing. And even that I would say is individualized based on, "Were you born in India? Did you come to the United States when you were eight, or were you born in the United States?" Even within the community, there's a lot of discrimination on this part.

Brooke: Oh really? Oh, that's interesting. So, discrimination against people who weren't born in the US versus people who were. Interesting.

Payal: 100% because there's this, "Well, I'm more assimilated than you are."

Brooke: As if that's the goal, right? Like what Chao was saying, "Okay, the goal is to become as much assimilated as you possibly can so you can then belong because you're less of, what, Indian, you're less from India." Interesting...

Payal: Right, you don't stand out. And so, for me, I did all the things. I was born here, firstborn, female, so perfectionist, type-A, straight A student, senior class officer, all the things. And the goal was, check everything off the list so that you can live in a comfortable life. And in my house – it's

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funny that Li brought this up, but in my house, the options were not doctor, engineer, finance, or law. The options were doctor, doctor, doctor. And not because we had any physicians in my family. It's because it was a safe thing to do.

Brooke: Because there's step by step by step and you know you're going to make a certain amount of money, right, yeah.

Payal: Right, so you know you're not going to starve. You're going to have a job. One time, my mom said to me, she's like, "No matter what, with your education, no one can take it from you. So you can go anywhere. You can go to a small remote village and they'll pay you in oranges."

Brooke: Yeah, you can save someone's life, was the theory...

Payal: There's safety in that thinking, but thinking like that is what led me to playing it safe in my relationships and in my marriage and accepting things the way they were. Like, one of the theories that I understood later was, like, love was conditional...

Brooke: Based on success? Based on honoring the family? What was that based on?

Payal: Yes, in the family, love was conditional because you did well and we were accepting of you. But for me, my journey in coaching was based on, you know, love was conditional in my marriage because if you honored what I want to do or if you honored what my family was doing, then I would accept you.

Brooke: Interesting, okay.

Payal: Which I didn't understand for a long time. I was just doing all the things, putting on all the hats. I have two kids. They're nine and seven. I have boys, so just like you. I'm a boy momma. And it's just been fascinating how I was willing to just sacrifice to be accepted.

Brooke: So, where are you now?

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Payal: So, physically where am I now?

Brooke: Well yeah. Well, you're right here...

Payal: I'm in Los Angeles...

Brooke: But where are you emotionally in your life? What have you learned and unlearned?

Payal: Oh my gosh, I am in a space of full self-love and compassion and acceptance of me, regardless of the people in my world.

Brooke: Wow, how did you get there?

Payal: You.

Brooke: Oh.

Payal: You honestly – I heard about you, like some other coaches needed their hours met and I was like, “Yeah, great, free therapy.” And that’s like, if you know any Indian people or South Asian people, we love a great deal. That’s our thing, coupon, free, I was like, “This is great, I don’t have to pay for this.” But that was like my stepping stone into – I spend 40K on therapy when my marriage was failing and I still wasn’t happy. But coaching took me from a place of okay to living my best life.

Brooke: That’s so awesome.

Payal: It’s amazing. So, thank you so much for sharing and being open. Because in my community – and I’ll say for South Asians – we don’t want to talk about our relationship with our moms, our marriages, our parenting, our in-laws. Even when things were bad, there was like a, “Don’t talk about it. Let’s brush it underneath the rug.” And I was like screaming here saying, “No, I’m not being heard.”

Brooke: Yeah, that’s amazing.

Payal: It’s amazing. So, I live in freedom now.

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Brooke: I love that. So, are you coaching right now? What's happening?

Payal: Full time, Brooke, and I'm so excited. Like, I always say, this girl's on fire. And if I can do it, it's possible for any of my South Asian friends, you know. So, I coach Women of Color in medicine to love their jobs, their families, themselves, by speaking up, taking up space, and asking for what they want without guilt.

Brooke: That's so beautiful. I was just talking to Kris Plachy, my best friend, about this and she was saying that she has this program called Show Up and Shine. And it just sounds so easy, "Just show up and shine." Like, it's the hardest thing and you're doing it, you're living it, you're shining.

And I think a lot of times, we look at someone like you who is doing that and we think, "Oh, that must be so nice." But you're having to overcome so much just to be in your own light, just to have the courage to show up, to shine like that.

So, I also want to say, I'm just noticing – so we're all on Zoom as we're doing this call. She, like, specifically in parentheses told me how to pronounce her name and I still completely effed it up. And I'm still coming back. I'm still going to show up. I'm still going to do it. So, I appreciate you. Thank you so much for doing that. And for all of us, right? For all of us being willing to ask things that we don't understand, to want to get to know how we're different and how we're the same.

And one of the most important things – I think Chao, you brought this up so well – is one of the ways that we can belong is not by being the same. It's by appreciating and loving all of our differences and our different experiences of what it's like.

I feel so connected to all of you now, understanding what it's been like for you to overcome stuff that you've been socialized to believe or been taught culturally to believe and how the Model has helped you question your own thinking and to step into more of who you are. And it's so important for all of our true voices to be heard.

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I'm not going to learn anything from you if you're just telling me what you think I want to hear. I'm going to learn something from you when you tell me something I don't know, something I don't understand, an experience I haven't had.

So, I appreciate all of you. Listen, it is not easy to step out of your childhood brain programing. It is not easy to step outside social conditioning. It's not easy to be different. That's literally in our brains. This isn't even just a cultural thing. In our brains, survival is to be part of the group.

So, for all of you to kind of step out and say, "Listen, I'm different. This is who I am. This is what matters. And I'm not going to try and be perfect for you. I'm just going to be perfectly me." That is so inspiring.

So, you want to say something. What do you have, Payal? Tell me everything.

Payal: I didn't get to share how to find me...

Brooke: Oh no, we're for sure going to share that. We're not done with you.

Payal: I thought you were wrapping up.

Brooke: She's like, "Don't wrap it up. Don't wrap it up." Listen, this is so important, she's like, "I'm speaking up for myself I want to be heard. I want people to find me." Yes, don't worry. No, this is exactly what I'm saying.

I think for us to be able to say, "Wait, this is who I really am." And for you to correct and say, "No," and to say, "Yes," and to show up truly in your own honesty is so powerful. How can we find you, Payal? Come on. What are you waiting for? Tell us.

Payal: Since you're asking, I'll tell you. So, I also have a podcast called Live Awakened for Women of Color in medicine, and I started it on my 40th birthday as a present to myself, so go me. And then, on Instagram @ayalghayalmd, and then my website is just payalghayal.com.

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Brooke: I love it. So, just briefly, what do your clients, Women of Color in medicine, what do they struggle with that maybe I don't know about? Enlighten me a little bit.

Payal: they feel stuck, but they feel ashamed that they feel stuck. Because how can you say you're stuck if you have everything that, on paper it looks good. You have the job, the dual-physician household, the marriage, the kids, the house, the Tesla...

Brooke: I mean, that should solve everything.

Payal: Right, and you're thin, you know, and you have everything, you have your Peloton. So then, how can you say that you're not happy? How can you say you feel stuck? How dare you.

Brooke: Tell me how that might be different for a Woman of Color versus a white woman.

Payal: Because your family sacrificed to come here and you should be grateful for this, as opposed to, "Yeah, we've been here for seven or eight generations so it's not an issue." But here it's like, my parents worked two jobs. My parents cleaned bathrooms, you know, on a regular basis to put me through college.

Brooke: Yeah, and you, because of that, you've had this opportunity to be able to be so successful and you are so successful and we're so proud of you and now you're going to do what? Complain...

Payal: Be a life coach...

Brooke: You're going to complain about this and be upset about this and talk about your feelings out loud about this?

Li: And bring shame to the family.

Brooke: Yeah, bring shame to the family, yeah.

Payal: there's a concept, it's like, what will people think? And in Hindi, there's a phrase, and one of the comedians, he had a whole segment on

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this, on Netflix, and I was like, “Yes. We are obsessed with what will people think.” But we never ask, what do I think?

Brooke: Yes. Yeah, Li...

Li: I was just going to add, I resonate with all of this. But one of the biggest things was when I became, quote unquote successful. There was an expectation in the family to give a monthly allowance. And that was because I succeeded, “We sacrificed for you all, now it’s your turn to take care of the family...”

Brooke: Yes, I have heard that a lot, actually.

Li: Yeah, so that was a big expectation, actually, which I said no to because I was like, between all the holidays and Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, I think I give plenty of money. And so, that’s actually very common, is that they sacrifice everything. And of course, I am grateful. But where do we draw the line? Where can we be intentional so that I’m not resentful of their expectations?

Brooke: That’s so interesting. I have a very close friend that’s Eastern European descent that talks about how that is just not negotiable for her. That is an expectation that is something that she is fully committed to because the alternative is too excruciating.

Li: Yeah, can you imagine me talking, “Well I don’t have any income now. I’m becoming a life coach and I’m an entrepreneur so I can’t give you any money.”

Brooke: Yeah, it’s a whole other layer of consideration. And it’s something that sometimes you don’t even recognize is part of, you know, your conditioning and how you were programmed, literally how our brains are programmed when we’re surrounded by things and learning things like that. So, yeah, thank you for sharing. Yeah, Rae.

Rae: Yeah, I think it’s because, for Asians, we call filial piety. We want to give back what our parents did for us because they sacrificed for us. So,

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we should sacrifice for them. We don't put ourselves first, and we need to put parents first. That's the reason, like, I got coached on feeling guilt because my parents, they are 87 and 90 years old, and I'm here in America and I won't be able to help them, even though I'm still helping them. But I believe physically I need to be there to help them, so they can feel better.

Brooke: Yeah, and listen, here's what I want to say about this. I've actually coached a lot of people on this topic. And one of the things that I think is really important as a distinguishing factor is nobody here is saying you shouldn't take care of your parents. Nobody would – I mean, maybe you shouldn't, but maybe you should. Either way, that is your decision.

But taking care of people because of cultural conditioning that is having you do stuff out of resentment and guilt is not serving you. You can take care of your parents out of love and compassion and desire in a way that is very nurturing to everyone.

But listen, I had to do some deep un-conditioning on resentment and guilt too. And so, I think that's a really important point to be questioning. And so, there are a lot of, I think, cultural things we are taught that are beautiful and that we can honor and from a place of, I don't know, a cherished way. And then there's things we feel obligated and guilted into doing and it's just cleaning that out.

The R line may be the exact same. We're just changing that T and F line to really understand ourselves and what's important and to choose something on purpose, not because we were told or socialized to believe that. So, yeah, I really appreciate that.

Well, that was fun. Thank you, guys, all for joining me. We got a little carried away. I really enjoyed this conversation. I know that everyone listening in for sure did as well. You can go to thelifecoachschool.com to see us on video, to get all the show notes, to find all these spectacular humans, to ask them questions and follow them and download their podcasts for goodness sakes. We've got a master project.

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So, thank you all for joining me. It's been such an honor to meet all of you and to talk to you and to hear every amazing thing that you're doing in the world and I'm humbled to learn from all of you and to expand my knowledge and to become more inclusive and understanding of what it's like for everyone's experience. So, thank you very much.

Have a great week, everyone. I love you all. We'll talk to you soon. Bye everyone. Take care.

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