

Ep #427: Attention Audit



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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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 friends. I am so happy to be here with you. I am in Colorado right now where the weather is perfection. As you know, I'm here with all my kids. We are having so much fun.

These kids, you have to see some of the videos that we have been recording and putting on Instagram and TikTok. Because this was an ingenious idea that I had to employ my children, and so many of you are having fun watching us online, and we are having a blast creating all this content and doing all these super fun things.

So today, I want to talk about something that has been on my mind a little bit in terms of some work that I've been doing with some friends of mine. And I've been spending some time with some friends, and what I noticed with some of these friends is that their attention is all over the place.

Their attention isn't focused and that there are way too many things competing for their attention. And so when we sat down together, I said, "Okay, this is what I want to do. I want to do an attention audit on you and I want to see where your attention is and actually where you want it to be. And it was such an amazing process that I was like, I need to share this with my clients immediately.

Okay, so here's the process. You basically look at your entire attention span. So I like to look at it in terms of every single thing in my life that I give attention to, that demands my attention, or that I want to give attention to. And these are things just throughout your day that you are thinking about, connecting with, doing, focusing on, or being distracted by.

And basically, I sat down with my friend and we did this together, and we basically put two columns. We did one personal and one business. And I

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like to think about we have a limited attention span. Maybe we have 100 units of attention that we are able to spend on any given day.

So as you do this download, you think about the things that are getting your attention, that demand your attention, or things that maybe you want to be giving attention to but you haven't. Maybe you've been neglecting. And just write.

So when I went through this audit with myself, I was thinking about my employees, the trips that I'm about to go on, the work that I have to do, the shopping that I need to do, the houses that I have in my life, the projects that I'm working on, the people in my life, the day-to-day habits that I have.

And one of the things that you'll notice as you go through all of these attention things that are getting your attention, you will notice the areas where maybe you're neglecting to give attention where you want to, or you're giving so much of your attention to something that you don't want to be paying attention to.

One of the really interesting examples in my own life with my attention was when I was younger, in my 20s, I was so obsessed with my weight. And I would say about 50% of my attention span went to paying attention to what I was eating, paying attention to what my body looked like, paying attention to how much I weighed, paying attention to calories, paying attention to any book on dieting, paying attention to videos on how to work out.

I was literally obsessed with giving my attention to that. And that was at the expense of a lot of other things that I could have been giving my attention to in my life. When I did this with my friends, one of the reasons why we did personal and business is I think there's this fallacy out there that we should be giving equal attention to our personal lives and to our business lives, or our work lives.

And I don't think that's true. I don't think we should be giving a 50%-50%. I don't think that's even useful in a lot of ways. But what I do think is that we should divide up our attention, we should allocate our attention on purpose.

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And we should decide consciously where we want to be directing our precious attention to.

And if you think about, for some of us, we have children and we have spouses or significant others, and we have family of origin, and we have friends. And when we write down each of their names in that personal line of attention that we're actually giving attention that we want to be giving, it can be really revealing.

And one of the things that I think some of us notice is that we delay attention that we want to be giving. We think, "Oh, I will give them attention later, after I'm done with this," and then we never end up doing that. There are other people in our life that we're giving a lot of attention to, or things that we're giving attention to, and we're calling that an attention drag.

When we give attention to those things, it drags us down, and there are other things where it's an attention delay. So once you've made this list of what you want to give attention to, I think another very telling and interesting evaluation - and those of you who are coaches could do this with your clients.

How many of those things that we're giving attention to are going to happen in our future? How much attention are we giving to planning consciously our lives?

One of the, I think, large reveals that I had with my friends when I was doing this is that so much of their attention was focused in the here and now, which in a lot of ways is good, but also not good in the sense that if you're not planning your future, your present will require a lot more of your attention.

For example, I'm always talking to my assistant team about planning dinner reservations ahead of time. And this is just one small example, but it's actually so huge. If you need to get a dinner reservation tonight, the amount of attention that that will require is significant.

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Because you're going to have to call around multiple places that can try and get you in, and then you're going to have to get on a waiting list, then you're going to have to wait for them to call you back, you're going to have to pay attention to the phone ringing, whether they call you, whether they can get you in.

But if you're paying attention to the future and you're thinking about the future ahead of time and you make that reservation three weeks ahead of time, it's very easy to get in, much easier to get in than the night of, and then you can take your attention completely off of that item.

And so when you look at your attention audit, notice how much of your current attention is having to be dragged because of a lack of planning. And how much attention are you giving to things that aren't getting you the results that you want?

Do you like the balance of attention that you have to give everything? One of the things - I did this exercise with them. I'm actually looking at my own attention audit myself. What I realized is that I have so many things that want and deserve my attention, that I want to give attention to, and not enough attention to do it.

And so I have to really recognize - the way I did this with myself is if I have 100 units of attention, how do I want to allocate it over a week's time? And I think a week's time is actually a really interesting way to do this process because we don't have enough attention to pay attention to every single thing we need to within one day.

But if we can incorporate this into our Monday Hour One, and kind of use our attention audit to plan our free time and plan the things that maybe would not make it on to the calendar, actually plan those things first, I want to call my mom, I want to call my kids, I want to call my best friend, I want to give attention to that, I want them to feel my presence and feel my attention, even if I'm not with them.

And if I can consciously plan that, and maybe I don't have time this week, but I could plan, "Hey, I'm going to put it on my calendar for two weeks from

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now, I'm going to schedule an hour so I can call and talk to my mom, or I can call and talk to one of my kids," then I'm being conscious and intentional with my attention.

If you think about having an attention budget, like you have only a certain amount of it, I think allocating it on purpose can actually be super empowering and satisfying and gratifying because you can start paying attention to the things that you really want to be focused on and that you really want to be giving your energy to.

One of the questions that I asked them, I said, "Do you have maybe 10 units of attention or 10 minutes of attention that you could give to one of these areas where you may have been neglecting paying attention to?" And by being able to do that, being able to focus your energy on that one thing, you'll be able to kind of make small deposits over time that will add up.

Versus, not using that 10 minutes and having months go by when you don't talk about or talk to people or work on projects that would really benefit from just a little bit of your attention.

Think about this when you go through your list. What are the things that you give your attention to that energize you? When you focus on something and make progress on something, what are the things that energize you, and what are the things that drag your attention away and de-energize you?

One of the things that you all are probably going to have to contend with that I didn't have to contend with is social media. I do not give my attention to social media ever. I give attention to writing ads, and I give attention to creating videos so my sons can create on social media, but I do not put my attention on consuming.

And some of you are really going to need to look at how much attention you're giving to the television, and how much attention you're giving to literally wasting time consuming food that you don't need, or that you're not hungry for, alcohol that you don't need, drugs that you don't need, maybe

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for some of you it's pornography, maybe for some of you it's just watching YouTube videos on cats.

And when you do this attention audit, what you will realize is that you are making trade-offs, and you may be doing this unconsciously. You may notice that you're doing a 10-minute consumption of social media because it's so addicting, when you could take that 10 minutes and send a text to someone that you love, or reach out to someone who might be a good colleague to have in a business, or giving your attention to learning something new that you need to learn for your business.

How much of our attention is being grabbed in ways that has been designed to get your attention addicted to it? And I think for many of you, this is a major issue. When I'm talking to my kids, they spend a lot of their time and their attention on video games.

And I tell them, "Hey, if that's how you choose to spend your attention and it gratifies you and gives you a release from work, I'm all for it. I just want to make sure that you are making these decisions consciously." And if you've never done an attention audit, my guess is you probably don't even know.

When you do this attention audit, I want you to think about it in a global way. Think about your whole world. What do you want to be paying attention to in your world and in the world, and in the people that are around you that you know, and how much attention do you give the people that you don't know?

How much attention do you give to music? Is that conscious? I think many of you have heard me talk about that when I'm in the car, or when I'm going on a walk, or when I'm just wanting to have something on to listen to, it's usually an audiobook.

And most people, it's music. And I often wonder if that has given me an edge in my life, by constantly stimulating my brain with knowledge, constantly learning my whole life, instead of giving so much attention to music or social media, if that has really given me a slight edge.

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I think it must be because I'm really the only person, really the only person that I know that consciously makes a decision not to put my attention on those things. And so it does get me into trouble sometimes when I don't know what's going on in the world, so I have to rely on my friends and family to let me know what's happening.

But it also gives me more space so I can pay attention to the things that I want to grow and the things that I want to love in my own life. When you are in denial about unfinished things, I want to be really clear at how much attention you are giving these things under the surface of your awareness.

If you have ever had the experience, which I'm sure you have, of unfinished homework that you know is due, you may be in denial about it. You may not be planning it. You may be procrastinating. But it is an intense attention drag on your energy to have unfinished projects and unfinished business.

For some of my friends, this is debt that hasn't been paid off, or a house that hasn't been cleaned, or a project that hasn't been completed, or a phone call that hasn't been returned, or a promise that hasn't been kept.

And you want to make sure that as you're going through this attention audit, you give yourself enough time to kind of access the things that are pulling at your attention, dragging at your attention, even unconsciously.

And if you want to know what those things are, it's that unfinished business, those things that you are in denial about, the things that you aren't healing and that you aren't solving and that you aren't fixing, but are constantly present under the surface.

You want to have a clear and present and planning mind. When you can put attention equally on your future to plan your life, you will be so much more available to your present. I think there's confusion about this in terms of meditation and being in the present moment and paying attention in the present moment.

When you are in your present moment and your past self has not taken care to plan that present moment, it is very challenging to be at full

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attention. When you have planned your life beautifully in the past for this present moment, it is much easier for you to be present here.

Planning in the present moment because of lack of planning in your past is much more intense and time consuming than planning for the future. So do not feel like if you are putting your attention on the future, that you're somehow not in the present moment. You're actually preparing yourself to be more present in the moment.

I also want to give a word of warning. This was a very upsetting exercise for one of my friends. He was very agitated and frustrated by this process because it brought so many of those unacknowledged things that were dragging his attention, that he didn't want to be paying attention to, he didn't want to be finishing, he didn't want to be taking care of, that he was very overwhelmed and frustrated by seeing everything written down on paper.

So one of the things that we did right after the attention audit was a thought download. And I just want to warn you that then you will be left with the reality of your circumstances with how you've been using your attention and all of your thoughts about how you've been using your attention.

And many of you should schedule a coaching session right after you do this process and get coached on it, but also, I want you to just use it as an awareness exercise where you really understand what's going on in your life and where you're putting your attention.

Please let me know. I'm very curious how this attention audit went and I'm really highly considering putting a program into Scholars about this because I think it's super helpful.

And then join me next week. I'm going to talk about what came out of this attention audit and how we started working on some of those unfinished things that were going on in my friend's brain, and we created a whole new tool to handle it. So I'll talk to you then. Have a good one.

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