Ep #473: Tolerance

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With Your Host

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Ep #473: Tolerance

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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.

Hey beautiful friends. I'm excited about this topic today. Every once in a while, I have a personal question that I'm living with for my own life and I go back and forth in conversations with myself trying to understand what my own answers are to the question.

So I love a question that I don't yet know the answer to. I'm like, "Huh." It really makes me think about my life and who I am and who I choose to be and my identity and my personality. And one of the things I have been tossing around in my head is the kind of person that I am and who I've always been and enjoyed, and whether or not I want to change that part about myself.

And it has to do with tolerance and having a high level of tolerance and a low level of tolerance for things. And I've been thinking about the idea of tolerance kind of philosophically, in a way that makes me go, "Huh."

Because typically, I think in a lot of ways, people with a high tolerance level are just more chill. They're just more easygoing, they're just not bothered by things. And in many ways, I think it's easier for them to be kind, it's easier for them to be non-reactive, it's easy for them to get along with people if you have a high level of tolerance.

But I also think that a high level of tolerance will allow unacceptable behavior from people around us that could actually be harmful, that could put us in situations with other people that maybe we shouldn't be in because it's not the best environment for us.

So how do we balance between being tolerant of bad behavior, being tolerant of people being rude, being tolerant of people expressing their ideas with aggression or with racism, with belligerence, that sort of thing,

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should we be tolerant of those things or not? And what things should we be tolerant of and what things we shouldn't, right?

It's a pretty big question and applies to a lot of different things in our lives. And in many ways, I've been thinking about it in terms of demanding excellence and demanding the best performance from my employees, or the people around me, or just being, "It's no big deal."

So I can give you some examples for my own life and things that I have been seriously questioning whether I should be more tolerant and more chill, or whether I should be hardcore intense and have a low tolerance for these things.

And one of the reasons why I think I grapple with this question so much is I think I've been around people who are very tolerant of things not being great, of things not being excellent, of things not being even working well in their lives, and just kind of, "Meh, it doesn't really matter."

And when I look at that, I feel like there's a tolerance for mediocrity, there's a tolerance for kind of this low-grade dissatisfaction. And I actually think it's riding the edge of one side of danger if we're going to use an intense word, versus the other side where people have no tolerance for anything that isn't exactly the way they want it, and they lose their mind when any little thing happens to go "wrong." And how do we find and ride the balance in the middle of that where we're tolerant of the person but not of the behavior, or not of the situation?

Because I kind of play around with this a little bit in my own life where, maybe with an employee, I'll be like, "Oh, it's no big deal, oh, it's no big deal, oh, it's no big deal," and then it just keeps happening, versus when someone makes a small mistake and I say to them, "Listen, this isn't going to be okay. You can't be making mistakes like this ever. This is not acceptable as someone who works for me doing this sort of thing." And then it never happens again, even though it's a very low level of tolerance for mistakes, I think creates a much higher level of excellence.

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But this low level of tolerance creates an environment that's very different than a high level of tolerance. A high level of tolerance creates a very relaxed employee who feels much more comfortable, probably more at ease, probably more enjoyment in terms of everyday functioning, whereas if I'm treating an employee with a very low level of tolerance, in a kind way but in a strict way, like this can't happen, I feel like they may be more on edge, more nervous, less comfortable around me, but also achieving at a higher level, which brings a level of enjoyment.

And that is what I have heard from many of my employees who work at a higher level than they've ever been asked to work at before. And that brings them another different type of comfort and joy.

And I see this in my own life with being around people who are more demanding and less tolerant of nonsense, of things that don't work, or of maybe high expectation teachers, high expectation authority figures in our lives.

And so I was having this conversation with my partner the other day and we were talking about should I be more tolerant of things that aren't working, and should I be more tolerant of losing at things? Would that serve me better? Or should I remain less tolerant of those things and demand excellence of myself and of other people?

And here's the truth; there is no right answer. And I don't think one brings me or anyone a deeper level of happiness. It's a tradeoff, right? So for example, in my home, everything works. There's nothing that you're going to try and do, there's no button you're going to try and press or piece of equipment you want to turn on or use, whatever, that doesn't work.

Everything works. I have a low level of tolerance for any kind of clutter, any kind of item in my house that isn't actually functioning the way it's meant to be functioning. To me, that is very important. I have been to tons of friends' homes, acquaintances' homes that have a myriad of things in the home that are broken, that don't work, that half work, that they've never used, that they don't have the instructions for.

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So I'll see something and be like, "Oh my god, this is so cool," and they'll be like, "Oh, that doesn't work." And I'm like, "What?" It doesn't bother them that it doesn't work, it's not a big deal that it doesn't work. They're very tolerant of it.

Same thing like - I've talked about this a lot I think in terms of games and my level of tolerance for losing a game. Any game. If I play a game, I want to win that game. Now, I notice that some people can play games and they don't care if they win or lose. They seem so happy either way. I'm fascinated by this. Fascinated.

And there's this part of me that feels like I want to be more like them. Being upset over losing something is such a bummer. I don't want to be upset. I want to be like, "That's what happens, sometimes we lose, it's okay." And I'm genuinely not.

We just watched the Kings Game 7, that's a basketball team out of Sacramento. They were playing the Warriors. And the genuine nervousness I have watching a game like that, how I feel in my stomach and how badly I feel when we lose is a little bit ridiculous in some ways. I just don't have the tolerance for it.

And watching my son play golf, and watching him try and win, and him when he loses, it's very difficult for me to just be like, "Oh, that's alright kid, you gave it your best shot." The two of us together are just devastated by this. We just don't have a tolerance for it.

And I think that I like that about myself in many ways, and I don't like it either. I like that I'm always striving for better. I like that I want to win. I like that I demand excellence from myself and other people. But I also don't like how it makes me feel more on edge and more intense than I think is often necessary.

So the answer that I've come up with and hopefully I can help you do it too, because I think a lot of us who demand excellence from ourselves and other people, who want things to work, who want to always be bettering

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ourselves, who want to always win, I think that we can find a middle ground or even a kind of two-thirds ground that will make our lives easier.

That will make us calm down, not be reactive, be more tolerant of other people who aren't like us, who aren't as intense, who aren't as hardcore, and not feel like we're giving up the essence of who we are and settling for something that's less than what we ultimately want.

And so for some of you, you may use a different word besides tolerance. I was using the words like easygoing, chill, not bothered, versus hardcore, intense, with a low tolerance. And is it good or bad? And is there a time and place for all of it?

So one of the things that I have decided as I've kind of been living within this question is that I do want to be more tolerant and I never want to give up striving for excellence. And is there a really amazing mixture of being easygoing, hardcore, chill, and intense, and a combination of a low tolerance for bad behavior from myself and others, but not bothered by things that don't really matter to me?

And I think the answer is yes. I think there is a cool combination of both of those where we don't have to pretend, and that for me is the most important thing because listen, if I lose a game, I can pretend that I don't care that I just lost at Monopoly, but I do care that I just lost at Monopoly, even though they're six years old and I lost. I really care.

And so, can I care that I lost without overreacting, without being unnecessarily intense, with being easygoing, and also with wanting to continue to try and win in every way that I can, but not in a way where I'm not even enjoying the process or enjoying my own behavior?

And I think I have a tendency, and knowing this about myself, I have a tendency to err on the side of being too intense, and having too high of expectations, and to overreacting when they're not fulfilled. And knowing that, knowing that I have a very low tolerance for all of those things helps me kind of manage myself.

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Having that understanding, I can manage myself and say, "Okay Brooke, you're probably always going to err on the side of being too intense, so dialing that down will probably never cost you excellence. It probably won't ever cost you the kind of intense life that you want to live, but it also might help you release from having to in everything, or being so upset by everything."

And the last podcast that I did where you could really look at defeat and really understanding how to deal with defeat is kind of part of this question. And how do we move forward and never beat ourselves up and always love ourselves through the process and always be encouraging ourselves to grow, but not in a way that's kind of patronizing to our own capability, and where we're not going to all of a sudden just think, "Everything's fine?"

This is one of my fears. "Everything's fine, no one needs to worry about anything, I'm not upset about anything, nothing bothers me." I genuinely want things to bother me. When something's broken in my house, I want that to bother me. When I don't win, I want that to bother me. I just don't want it to bother me so much that I'm constantly trying to outrun my own losses and my own broken items and my own things at my own expense.

So here are a couple of questions that I'm going to use and maybe you could use when you're trying to be more tolerant in your own life. And for some of you, you may have the opposite problem. You may want to be less tolerant of having everything be broken in your house, or having people mistreat you, or have people talking to you in an unacceptable tone of voice. That sort of thing.

Maybe you want to err on the other side of this equation and be less tolerant and more bothered and hardcore about your own boundaries and about what kind of behavior you will accept. Maybe it's from your employees, maybe it's from your children, maybe it's from your family or friends, whatever.

So you know who you are. You know if you're too easygoing so it's at your own expense, or if you're too intense at your own expense. So here are

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some questions that we can all ask to kind of help us ride that middle ground I think.

Does this really matter to me? And why? So let's say someone is talking to you or someone's showing up late all the time, or talking to you in a mean tone of voice, or calling you at all hours and demanding that you pick up the phone. Something like this.

And you're tolerating that behavior and you're tolerating putting up with it, and you ask yourself, does this really matter? Do I actually care that this person is doing this? And if the answer is yes, then you can decide, I want to be more intense here, I want to be more verbal here, I want to be less accepting here.

I know that sounds crazy, but I want to be less tolerant, less accepting, and more bothered in this situation. Or if the answer is no, this doesn't matter to me at all, I don't want this to bother me, I don't want to be intense about this, I don't want to be hardcore about this - because for example, for me, I'm very bothered when I don't perform at the level and I'm very bothered when people, especially people that work for me, don't do what they say they're going to do, or they don't think through things before they do them.

So that's like, I want to be bothered when they don't do that. But there's other things like people making fun of me, people talking about me, making comments on the internet, people being rude to me, that stuff, I just don't want any of it to bother me. It makes me feel disempowered. I want to feel powerful in my own right. That stuff doesn't matter to me.

So that's the first question. Does this matter to me? Why? Or maybe why not? And what action do I want to take in my life to demonstrate more tolerance or less tolerance in this area? And that's it.

And I have really grown a lot thinking about this question and deciding who I want to be. It makes me feel super empowered, like I can just be a person who isn't bothered by certain things. And one of the things that the podcast let me do, in the last podcast that I created, it just helped me turn situation

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where I have a low tolerance, where I'd be super bothered, into learning opportunities.

Where instead of being just mad and upset about a defeat, I can use it as an opportunity to learn. And instead of being mad about how I'm allowing someone to treat me, I can use that as an opportunity to develop a lower level of tolerance for being treated that way, and to use that as a learning opportunity to grow who I am as a human.

One of the things that's happened for me as I've turned 50, and I feel like I'm at my midlife, I'm halfway through my life, so to speak, is really questioning who I am and who I want to be on the regular. And feeling empowered to make that decision.

And I will say, I'm making a decision to be more tolerant in some ways with myself and with other people and with situations. And after I made that situation, I've had people in my life, it's so fascinating, so many people in my life just being like, "Wow, what has happened to you? What is going on?"

And I had one person say, "Are you losing your touch? Are you losing your edge?" And I'm like, "Maybe a little bit." Maybe I'm losing it a little bit but I think it's worth that sacrifice in order to be a little bit more chill more of the time. I'm never going to lose my fire, I'm never going to lose my ambition, I'm never going to lose my demanding of excellence, but I am going to be a little bit more tolerant and a little bit more chill, and that feels good to me.

So let me invite you to do the same. Look around at your life. Where are you being too tolerant? Where are you putting up with too much nonsense? And where in your life are you really being too bothered and having a low level of tolerance?

Ask yourself, does this really matter and why? And what action steps can I take? And of course, that's going to come from your thoughts originally to be more tolerant or less tolerant in this area.

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I hope this is as useful of a question to you as it was to me. It's been a life-changer for me. Have a beautiful week everyone. I'll talk to you next week. Bye-bye.

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